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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Dianova International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Statement submitted by Dianova International prior to the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

In 2015, which marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the entire international community should undertake a renewed and strong commitment to human rights in general, and to women's empowerment in particular, with a view to reaching the goal of gender equality. This goal is both a fundamental right and a crucial condition for achieving sustainable human development. However, despite the great progress that has been made, no country, even among those that have made most progress with regard to the issue, has been able to eliminate gender-based discrimination entirely.

Discrimination against women and girls is a human construct, and can therefore be eradicated by changing the behaviours and attitudes of both men and women. To that end, the international community can draw support from a number of universally recognized and accepted texts and treaties, the shared aim of which is to put an end to discrimination against women and to promote gender equality.

Access to education, especially in rural areas, is particularly important for women's empowerment, as education enables women not only to make informed and responsible decisions with regard to reproduction, but also to break the cycle of exploitation and poverty. This is why the greatest possible effort should be made in this area, while at the same time tackling the root cause of these problems by combating gender stereotypes and encouraging more respectful relationships.

We, the member organizations of the Dianova International network, call upon the Member States that are taking part in the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to implement the on women's rights instruments that they have all ratified, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the General Assembly's Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and Security Council resolution 1325.

At a time when many countries in the Middle East are threatened directly by religious fundamentalism, we are particularly worried by arguments based on religion, tradition or culture in order to justify the status quo with regard to the promotion of women's rights, as such arguments perpetuate violence and discrimination against women.

For these reasons, we call on the Commission to establish a roadmap for women's empowerment, based on the following:

Promoting basic education for women and girls, particularly in rural areas, to help them to manage their own health and that of their family and to develop skills so that they can contribute to the development of their communities;

Eliminating the legal, social and financial obstacles that form the basis for discrimination against women and girls; promoting the creation of a broad range of support services and mechanisms for the protection of women's rights that are accessible to all women, regardless of their age;

Creating a high-quality sex education pathway, starting at the primary-school level, in order to help women and girls to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health, as this would also help to combat poverty and create social cohesion;

Developing high-quality, accessible services for the provision of information, contraception, maternal care, and care and treatment for sexually transmitted and blood-borne diseases, among other services;

Promoting women's participation in all spheres of public and private debate, particularly by setting up quotas, and encouraging all other forms of positive action aimed at enabling women to build up a critical mass in terms of participation at all levels of government and in the boardrooms of public and private companies;

Adopting and implementing policies and mobilizing resources to enable women who are victims of violence to access protection measures, care and justice;

Putting an end to practices and customs that endanger the health and security of women and girls, such as forced marriage and genital mutilation;

Combating all forms of human trafficking, and taking administrative and legislative measures to prevent and combat the exploitation of women and girls in prostitution and pornography; fighting against the stereotypes used in advertising; combating all new forms of exploitation of and violence against women and girls that have emerged as a result of the development of new technologies, in particular those that involve the Internet and social networks;

Promoting meaningful partnerships between governments and civil society, in particular women's organizations and third-sector organizations, during the implementation and development of the post-2015 agenda;

Identifying and promoting initiatives and best practices with regard to the inclusion of women in governing and managing bodies, particularly those implemented by third-sector organizations.
