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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 Forum Azzahrae pour la femme marocaine, 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

The Forum Azzahrae is a network of 100 women's associations that work to defend the rights of women and families in the Kingdom of Morocco. It has been invited to participate in the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will coincide with the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

- The Forum values the efforts made around the world by the United Nations and the international community to achieve gender equality and to combat all forms of discrimination;
- It praises the efforts made by the World Health Organization to focus on the real health needs of women and children, and it values its recommendations that these needs be included in the post-2015 United Nations agenda with a view to improving the health of newborns, women and children;
- It warns that progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and towards ensuring that all people live free and dignified lives, is severely disrupted wherever corruption, tyranny, oppression or war are allowed to continue, and wherever there is a lack of transparency, democracy or security;
- It warns that normal humanitarian instincts are being increasingly ignored, which poses a threat to the world's spiritual wellbeing and noble humanitarian values.

Given that it is within the family unit that children first learn about democracy, human rights and humanitarian values, the Azzahrae Forum for Moroccan Women firmly believes that efforts should therefore be made to protect the family structure, as it is an essential aid to achieving development goals and promoting social peace. During the Beijing+20 review, and when setting goals for the post-2015 period, focus should therefore be placed on the following three central aims:

- Ensuring that the rights of the family are protected and strengthened;
- Building on the progress made so far to safeguard women's rights with regard to dignity, equality and fair treatment;
- Further protecting the right of girls to security, a dignified life and an appropriate education.

Furthermore, the Azzahrae Forum for Moroccan Women makes the following requests:

- That a clear target – independent of the Millennium Development Goals – be set for the post-2015 period of strengthening the family unit, given that it is essential for achieving many of the other Millennium Development Goals, and of adopting a family-based approach to solving the societal problems faced by countries around the world;
- That integrated family policies be adopted that help to protect and strengthen parental rights, support family cohesion and stability, and protect families from vulnerability, as the family is an essential building block for protecting children's rights and for ensuring their safe passage into adulthood;

- That the United Nations act urgently to protect all women and girls in conflict zones – particularly areas of armed conflict – whose rights are being seriously violated, whether they be living in occupied territories or under the rule of a dictatorship;
- That efforts be increased to enable women to access education and training, with a view to strengthening their active involvement in decision-making, and that balanced policies be adopted that protect the principles of gender equality and fair treatment for both sexes;
- That women be empowered politically, and that the need for an equal balance between the sexes be taken into consideration when electing individuals to political, social and economic decision-making bodies;
- That thorough follow-ups and evaluations be carried out to ensure that governments are working to fulfil their obligations with regard to the right of girls to a safe and appropriate education, given that illiteracy levels are continuing to rise among girls from vulnerable groups. Girls who continue to go to school in unsafe conditions are at constant risk of sexual harassment, rape, coercion and numerous forms of exploitation, owing to a lack of supervision and protection, both within the school environment, at the hands of their teachers or peers, and outside it, through child molestation and drug distribution networks that operate on a large scale in a number of poor and developing countries;
- That governments be obliged to take prompt, effective measures to make schools more accessible to girls in rural areas and to provide free, safe accommodation at schools. Monitoring, reporting and protection mechanisms should also be developed to guarantee the safety of the school environment and to enable girls to complete all stages of their education freely and safely;
- That every government be obliged to develop an education system that is inclusive of girls with disabilities, and to adopt appropriate indicators to monitor whether the particular needs of students with disabilities are being met in the classroom. Measures that promote positive discrimination should also be taken to safeguard the right of girls with disabilities to work and to a dignified life;
- That the trade in human beings be condemned as one of the worst forms of human and economic exploitation, and that it be classified as a new form of slavery, through which women are forced into prostitution to the profit of criminals. All countries should adopt laws to deter human trafficking, under which no violations should be allowed to go unpunished.
