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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 Hunger Project, 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

Beijing+20: Evaluating progress on the situation of indigenous women and highlighting future challenges

By: Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas

Land without monoculture or agrochemicals

The situation of indigenous people who have been stripped of their land is a pending issue. Forced evictions have drastic effects on indigenous women, who suffer rape, prostitution, trafficking in persons, grave health ramifications and larger overall workloads.

We are concerned about the promotion of development that gives no thought to the future by prioritizing monoculture and the use of agrochemicals, creating health problems and contaminating land and water. For instance, in the Chaco area in Argentina, hundreds of indigenous families are being affected by higher numbers of deformities among newborn babies and of cancerous diseases, as studies carried out by universities and environmental organizations have shown.

We call for the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization) to be respected and brought into effect and urge countries to sign and ratify the Declaration if they have not yet done so.

We call for more information to be gathered on the negative impact of the extractive industries and the use of agrochemicals on the sexual and reproductive health of indigenous women.

We need more statistical data reflecting the types and conditions of employment of indigenous women in urban and rural areas to use as a basis for drafting national policies on land and housing. It is vital that such policies are designed from a territorial and collective perspective that includes the environment and Mother Earth.

Economic growth must be more harmonious, acknowledging the holistic framework of indigenous peoples for self-determined sustainable development, integrating approaches centred on human rights, ecosystems and land, and involving women as key players, recognizing their knowledge and their intrinsic relationship with the environment.

More education, interculturality and quality work

We welcome improved access to educational establishments for indigenous girls, adolescents and young women aged 6 to 22. However, statistics from Indigenous Women in Latin America: Demographic and Social Dynamics, a study produced by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 2013, show that rates of school attendance fall in correlation to an increase in age, exacerbating both ethnic and gender inequalities. The statistics also hide geographic inequalities between different peoples.

We call for guaranteed and quality Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) with a gender perspective, a wider scope of programmes, the involvement of indigenous women and peoples in its design, training for educators and rigorous assessment of its quality and impact.

Support for specific opportunities is needed so that indigenous young people can more easily access universities and enter the labour market under fair conditions and with full rights.

Sexual and reproductive rights and interculturality

According to data from *Indigenous Women: New Protagonists for New Policies*, a study produced by ECLAC in 2014, fertility rates among indigenous women have fallen but remain higher than those of non-indigenous women. Likewise, levels of early motherhood among indigenous girls have fallen in countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama but not in Ecuador, where they have increased. Despite this progress, in countries such as Costa Rica, Panama and Brazil such levels are more than double those among their non-indigenous counterparts.

The gap between indigenous and non-indigenous women can be clearly seen in statistics for prenatal check-ups, attended deliveries in health centres and postnatal care, and is particularly wide in cases of maternal mortality. In Guatemala, maternal mortality among Mayan women is 211 per 100,000 live births, while among non-indigenous women it is 70 per 100,000 live births. In Panama, where the national rate is 71 deaths per 100,000 live births, in Ngöbe-Buglé *comarca* (county) there are 344 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births (ECLAC, 2014).

These statistics reflect, *inter alia*, weak institutional coverage, the lack of cultural adaptation, insufficient accessibility, lower quality and undervaluing by health-care workers of care practices in traditional culture, including the disregard for traditional midwifery practices in rural and indigenous communities.

We recommend that sexual and reproductive health programmes be created for indigenous girls and boys, adolescents and young people that are of intercultural relevance, go beyond biology by incorporating spiritual dimensions and indigenous world views, and rely on the participation and feedback of indigenous women and girls.

We urge systematic and culturally sensitive investigation, monitoring and evaluation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic among indigenous people and support for activities that promote access to tests for sexually transmitted infections among indigenous women and girls, who are highly vulnerable social groups among which an increase in the transmission of HIV/AIDS has been recorded. The figures recorded among the Awajún people in the Peruvian Amazon are alarming.

Violence

In recent years, indigenous women have contributed their own world views and day-to-day experience to the fight against violence in all its forms. That contribution is not reflected in the design of public policies, which lack a holistic, intercultural and context-specific approach and which address, alongside sexual violence, other areas and forms of expression such as structural violence, spiritual violence and

violence in armed conflict, which all have specific consequences for indigenous women.

In Canada, according to official statistics, indigenous women and girls are between five and seven times more likely than other women to die as a consequence of violence.

A number of factors make it difficult to clearly view or effectively tackle the violence suffered by indigenous women. The chronic lack of information is one of the main challenges. Added to this are the absence of an intercultural approach, the scarcity of services in rural areas far from care centres and laws that do not get to the heart of the problems of rural and indigenous communities or of their traditions, customs and values.

We would like to highlight the major challenge of setting up specific agencies and gathering further statistics and carrying out more investigations to tackle all forms of violence against indigenous women, combining a rights-based approach with gender and intercultural perspectives and including specific questions on ethnic self-identification in all sources of data on violence.

Exercising power and decision-making: greater presence

Progress in the political arena has been made in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, where 41 indigenous people, including 9 women, are among the total of 130 deputies in the Chamber of Deputies (for the period 2009-2015), and in Nicaragua, where 3 indigenous people, including 2 women, were among a total of 92 deputies in the National Assembly for the period 2006-2009 (ECLAC, 2013).

We note the recommendation by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) that calls on States to adopt measures to increase the participation of indigenous women in government action and in decision-making structures at all levels and to guarantee equal access to government agencies, political parties, the administration of justice, trade unions and other bodies.

Support must be given to empower indigenous women, to strengthen their leadership skills and to facilitate their full participation in decision-making processes at all levels and their involvement in political, economic, social and cultural life.

Progress has been made and much of it is owed to the work and persistence of the indigenous women's movement with the support of entities of the United Nations system. In addition, during the last two decades, we have come together and worked with the broad and diverse women's movement, fighting common battles. Nevertheless, gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous women remain, and therefore specific measures need to be taken so that those gaps are eliminated once and for all.

We present UN Women with the challenge of creating a universal policy and programme for indigenous women for the seven geocultural regions of the world and of designing them with our participation and our input.