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Commission on the Status of Women

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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 International Council of Women, National Council of Women of the United States and World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations, non-governmental organizations 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.



Statement

The International Council of Women, the National Council of Women of the United States and the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, believe that, 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, there is a need to take stronger measures to protect women and girls against violence by upholding their human rights and to address inequality in political and economic decision-making.

The International Council of Women notes with pleasure that remarkable progress has been made in eradicating poverty and in improving women's access to health and education since the Fourth World Conference. However, gross violations of the human rights of women and girls are still being committed throughout the world. Many women and girls are still forced into early marriage, subjected to sexual trafficking, sold as bribes or used in child pornography circulated over the Internet. The Council especially condemns extremist groups that actively work to stop the education of girls and force them into a life of servitude and early marriage. The International Council of Women urges the United Nations to increase pressure on States to end all forms of violence against women and girls, as this violence is a gross violation of their human rights.

The International Council of Women is also concerned about the plight of refugee women who are not granted legal status and are forced to return to their home countries, where they face persecution and even death. We strongly urge Governments to grant refugee status to women and girls who are crossing borders looking for food and survival.

The International Council of Women urges each State Member of the United Nations to abide by the international conventions that protect women against gross violations of their human rights, which include all forms of discrimination and violence. The United Nations should also take strong measures to eliminate child pornography from the Internet. It is not up to one Government to put a stop to those illegal activities but to all nations, and they should unite to eliminate such harmful practices.

Forty per cent quota for women on corporate boards

The International Council of Women believes that all States Members of the United Nations should take measures to expand women's participation in decision-making positions to reach 40 per cent.

We congratulate the European Union for adopting a quota of at least 40 per cent of women on the boards of major companies in 2013 and we urge the United Nations to advise countries in other parts of the world to adopt a similar measure. Women's equal participation in company boards will increase the companies' profits and provide role models for women involved in economic activities. Liberating the economic potential of women will elevate the economic performance of communities, nations and the world.

Empowerment of women through participation in political decision-making should continue until we reach 40 per cent in most countries of the world. The United Nations should advise Governments to reach a representation of 40 per cent of women in local and central governments, as well as in national delegations at international conferences.