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**“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for
the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates, 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 problem of trafficking women and the need for education

Twenty years ago, the Beijing Platform for Action was created to address women's rights and equality. Many countries have made steps in the right direction to achieving basic human rights for women and providing equal opportunities. However, there is still a long way to go until well-being and equality for women is realized. One huge problem that still persists is the trafficking of women.

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action addresses trafficking both in declaration #29: "Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls" and in declaration #23: "Ensure full enjoyment by women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms." Women and girls account for more than half of all trafficking victims, and nearly one hundred percent of sex trafficking victims, making women disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking in general. (International Labour Organization, ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour, 2012.)

Need for action

While the exact number of people in forced labour is hard to pinpoint, the International Labour Organization estimates that there are 20.9 million victims worldwide. (Id. at 13.) With these high numbers of victims, a large percentage of whom are women and children, it is clear that something needs to be done. According to the statistics provided by the International Labour Organization, the Asia-Pacific has the highest number of forced labourers and account for over half, or 56 per cent of the global total. (Id. at 16.) Africa has the second highest number of forced labourers at 3.7 million, or 18 per cent of the global total. (Id.)

The trafficking of women and children may be a well-recognized problem, and many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have commendably aimed laws and regulations to target trafficking. However, these laws are not adequate for addressing the problem.

Education is the key

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime interviewed a woman named Memey, who was a victim of human trafficking who stated, "From my experience, women who become victims of human trafficking usually do not understand what human trafficking is, or that they are being trafficked." (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Put Yourself In My Shoes, 2012.) One way women are lured into trafficking is with false promises of employment. This highlights the need for education. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization estimates that approximately 31 million girls of primary school age and 34 million girls of lower secondary school age were not enrolled in school in 2011. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Gender and Education, 2014.) The data also shows that the gap between boys and girls remains wide. Countries need to provide education for women in general and they specifically need to educate women on trafficking.

Education on trafficking will help women to become aware of what trafficking is and what some of the dangers are. This will help them to be on the lookout and to recognize that promises are not always legitimate and will thus be less likely to fall

into that particular trap. Such an education will teach women about the prevalence of trafficking and the dangers that go along with it. Ensuring that women receive an equal, and meaningful, education in general will also make women less isolated and provide women with a community of peers that they can reach out to. These peers can look out for each other and provide an extra layer of protection against becoming victims of human trafficking.

If women are educated, employment will naturally follow. When women and children are educated, they are given the tools to find meaningful work, which will enable them to provide for themselves and their families. When women obtain work that is given a monetary value, they are less likely to be tricked into trafficking with promises of employment and a better life. Having a firmer space in the work field also helps women feel more connected to their communities and provides an additional support group. Also, having education and jobs that are given a monetary value, will help women assert their independence and not see themselves as dominated by or at the will of men, further decreasing the likelihood of them becoming victims of human trafficking.

Providing education for women and girls is not only preventative, it can help women who do become victims of trafficking to know how to fight and what resources are available. They will better be able to recognize that their situation is a dangerous one and there is a need to get out. Being educated will help victims to know what resources are available to them as victims, such as asylum, visas, or help centres that they might not otherwise reach out to.

Examples of good practices

In 2000, the United States signed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act which laid out a plan of prevention, protection, and prosecution. (www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012.) The Trafficking Victims Protection Act has been reauthorized multiple times since, most recently in 2013. In 2012 the U.S. outlined a comprehensive plan for future action including raising awareness within the travel and tourism industry and augmenting the work of various educational institutions and foundations to combat trafficking.

Similarly, Ghana enacted the Human Trafficking Act in 2005, which includes a three-part plan: prevention, protection and prosecution. (Manda Sertich Marijn Heemskerk, Ghana's Human Trafficking Act: Success and Shortcomings in Six Years of Implementation, 2011.) Both the U.S.'s and Ghana's plans involve and emphasize education.

Since implementing these policies, both the U.S. and Ghana show an increase in prosecutions for trafficking. This shows that they are committed to fighting trafficking and sticking with the plans they laid out. However, it would be helpful to see statistics on whether there are any fewer victims of trafficking since these plans were enacted.

Conclusion and recommendation for action

Adopting laws and regulations to try and combat trafficking is admirable, however, it is not enough. Women are disproportionately at risk to be victims and that needs to be addressed. By implementing educational programs that not only educate women and their communities on trafficking but also give women the tools

they need to make a better life for themselves will help combat trafficking and take another step towards reaching equality.

Human Rights Advocates:

Urges that Member States and the United Nations should implement programs aimed at educating women on the following:

- (a) In general, giving them equal opportunity to an education;
- (b) Specifically, the existence of human trafficking and various ways in which women are lured into it;
- (c) What resources are available to them if they or someone they know fall victim to trafficking.

Actively prosecute traffickers.

Track victims and record statistics to the best of each country's ability in order to evaluate what tactics are working and what additional programs may be needed.
