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

Statement submitted by American Association of University Women, 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 American Association of University Women supports the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women; the priority theme, Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development; and its review theme, The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls (agreed conclusions from the 57th session).

We affirm the accomplishments of the Millennium Development Goals to ensure the promotion of gender equality and women's development. We support the declaration of United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon that "We cannot achieve our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without full and equal rights for half of the world's population, in law and in practice. We cannot effectively respond to humanitarian emergencies without ensuring women and girls are protected and their needs prioritized."

The American Association of University Women, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization, has more than 170,000 members and supporters across the United States, as well as more than 1,000 local branches and more than 800 college and university partners. As stated in the 2015–17 Public Policy Program, "The Association believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies against human trafficking and that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support the civil and human rights of all immigrants, including a fair and just path to legal status. We support a strengthened United Nations and its affiliated agencies. We advocate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the 4th World Conference on Women and subsequent declarations. We affirm our active participation in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and our commitment to ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women."

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2014 of 142 countries, the gender gap for economic participation and opportunity now stands at 60 per cent worldwide, and at the current trajectory, it will take 80 years for the world to close this gap completely. We must act now to create a more equitable world for girls and women.

The Association supports United Nations Women's efforts and advocacy to achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030, and we urge United Nations' bodies and Member States to "Step It Up for Gender Equality." It is essential that Member States implement the post-2015 sustainable development agenda — and take action through legislation and investment to ensure gender equality and equal opportunities and rights for every woman and every girl in every country.

We assert that the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without gender equality, and countries must take decisive action to end the persistent gender gaps that remain in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action in order to reach gender equality in the world by 2030.

We challenge Member States to

- Step It Up for Gender Equality and commit to a world that is inclusive and promotes social development, economic growth, and environmental protection for the benefit of everyone.

- Step It Up for Gender Equality and commit to gender equality practices and policies, and provide adequate financing to ensure the realization of these policies.
- Step It Up for Gender Equality and commit to measurable indicators to monitor impact and progress to ensure accountability for institutions and governments.

We also strongly urge Member States to respect the contributions of civil society and organizations like the American Association of University Women that fight tirelessly for gender equality and collaborate with governments at the local, state, and national levels — holding them accountable for policies and financing critical to girls' and women's empowerment and sustainable development.

The American Association of University Women conducts groundbreaking research on issues related to gender equity in education and the workplace. Our work influences the national and global discussion on topics like the pay gap between women and men, sexual harassment in schools and on college campuses, and the underrepresentation of women in science, technology, and engineering.

Our annual publication, “The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap,” addresses the pay gap in the United States; how it affects women of all ages, races, and education levels; and effective strategies to close it. Women's global economic empowerment cannot be realized without closing the pay gap.

- Research indicates that at the current rate, the pay gap in the United States will not close for more than 100 years. It affects women from all backgrounds, at all ages, and of all levels of educational achievement but is worse for women of colour.
- African American women earn just 63 per cent of white men's average earnings — and Latinas/Hispanics earn only 54 per cent.

Through new and traditional media, targeted outreach to policy makers, and member efforts, The American Association of University Women's research serves as a catalyst for action to promote women's empowerment and gender equality in all aspects of women's lives, workplaces, and communities to ensure that the public and private sectors uphold and respect women's human rights.

Our most recent research report, “Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing,” features the latest data on women's achievement in subjects related to engineering and computing, how few women are working in these fields, and what can be done to make these fields open to and desirable for all employees. This report supports the Sustainable Development Goal efforts to “Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.”

- In less than 10 years, the United States will need 1.7 million more engineers and computing professionals.
- In the United States, women made up just 26 per cent of computing professionals in 2013, a substantially smaller portion than 25 years ago and about the same percentage as in 1960.

- In engineering, women are even less well represented, making up just 12 per cent of working engineers in 2013.

The representation of women in engineering and information and communications technology occupations matters. Diversity in the workforce contributes to creativity, productivity, and innovation. Women's experiences — along with men's experiences — should inform and guide the direction of engineering and technology innovation. Member States cannot afford to ignore the perspectives of half the population in future engineering, computing, and technical careers. Future economic empowerment of women will also be substantively tied to their education, training, and employment in these fields.

We affirm our support of all post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, and urge Member States to fully support Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- a) End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- b) Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- c) Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- d) Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- e) Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life
- f) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
- g) Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
- h) Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
- i) Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

The American Association of University Women has spent more than a century advocating on behalf of gender equality for women and girls in all aspects of life. It is imperative that half the population receive the support, training, human and civil rights, legal, environmental, and social protections needed to achieve their career and personal aspirations. This will allow all women and girls to make increased contributions to the world in which we all live and achieve gender equality by 2030.