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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 International Council of 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 International Council of Women, a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, has worked for improving the status of women and the well-being of society since its establishment in 1888.

The International Council of Women welcomes the actions taken by the United Nations and the European Union to emphasize the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to transforming the world. We congratulate the United Nations Women for obtaining commitment from world leaders to promote these two important objectives at the "Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action." We also applaud the European Union for adopting "Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through European Union External Relations 2016-2020," a new framework for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the world.

According to the International Parliamentary Union, women representatives only comprise an average of 22 per cent of national parliaments around the world. In the economic sphere, women in senior management positions and on corporate boards remain a minority.

We call on the United Nations Member States to adopt legal measures and policies to increase the participation of women in all sectors of society. Such measures include gender quotas, capacity building programs, higher education and other incentives to speed women's representation to 50 per cent in all government institutions, economic enterprises and social organizations. We urge political parties to implement quotas for women candidates in elections.

We also urge the United Nations Member States to promote the economic empowerment of women through adoption of laws and policies that eliminate the Gender Pay Gap, which is a reflection of discrimination against women workers and disregard for the important role played by women and girls in the economy. We also call on governments to implement measures that provide incentives for and remove barriers to women's employment and entrepreneurship. These measures may include removing restrictions on women's work, providing child care assistance and facilities, sharing domestic chores between spouses, removing structural penalties for maternity leave, provide retraining for returning female employees, removing social barriers to women engaged in commerce, providing tax incentives for employment, promoting gender-balanced investments, providing women rights and access to economic resources and protecting women from violence. The International Council of Women strongly urges the governments to introduce a 40 per cent quota for female directors to improve gender diversity of the boards of public and private corporations.

Despite modernization and development, violence against women continues unabated. Our affiliate councils call on the United Nations Member States to adopt legal measures to prevent gender-based violence. These measures should include stronger penalties for offenders, easing legal access and redress for victims, enforcement of child-protection laws, establishment of support and rehabilitation programs, provision of funding for the collection of data on violence against women, and providing early and broad-based education against violence. International society should take concrete measures to put an end to sexual

trafficking across borders, and we urge the United Nations to take actions to stop this crime against humanity and the dignity of women. Concrete efforts should be made to stop child pornography over the net. And we urge the governments to legislate laws to stop early marriage of teenage girls, as it blocks opportunities for these girls to receive education and realize their potential.

The International Council of Women calls on the Member States of the United Nations to actively implement Security Council Resolution 1325 and engage women's active participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiation and post-conflict peace-building processes so that these issues can be addressed and eradicated.

The International Council of Women is alarmed by the current refugee crisis from the various conflicts in the world. Concerned that many of the asylum seekers are women and children, the International Council of Women urges governments to protect asylum seeking women and children from sexual and gender-based violence, and treat them in accordance with the humanitarian standards and principles set by the United Nations.

The International Council of Women is also concerned about the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and urges United Nations Member States to work towards nuclear disarmament.

The International Council of Women affirms the declaration by the United Nations in The Agenda for Sustainable Development that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment contribute to progress across all the other goals. We urge all sectors to work together with the United Nations to close the gender gap and empower women and girls so that the world can complete the ambitious agenda by 2030.
