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Statement submitted by Organisation mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale, 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

Reaching the Sustainable Development Goals through Maternal Empowerment!

Everyday over 367,000 women become mothers. These women have a powerful influence on human development and greatly affect the way citizens think and live their lives. “Maternal Empowerment” is a rapid, sustainable and cost effective means of ensuring long-term global health, security and sustainability. Mothers are potentially massive contributors to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as they birth around 134 million global citizens every year.

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that it is during the earliest human development, from conception to age two, that the human being is “downloading” its subconscious programming from its mother and the environment. This programming is the first step to ensuring the inbuilt attitude that will make sustainable development a reality.

Today we know that long-term education, conditioning and sustainability begin in the womb.

In 2013/14 the United Kingdom’s four major political parties issued a joint manifesto (The 1001 Critical Days: Conception to Two Years Old Manifesto) which was endorsed by many organisations including the Chief Medical Officer followed by The Building Great Britons Report.

They state the following:

“The cost of failing to deal adequately with perinatal mental health and child maltreatment has been estimated at £23 billion each year. As our report shows the two are closely linked and more importantly largely avoidable. That is the equivalent of more than two thirds of the annual Defence Budget going on a problem that is widespread and when unchecked passes from one poorly parented generation to the next. Tackling it should be no less a priority for our politicians and our health and social care professionals than defence of the realm.

This is not “rocket science.” Technically it is “neuro-science.” As a concept it is at last gaining wider acceptance with policy makers and clinicians brave enough to take a longer term view of how intervening early, even before a child is born, is the best way of that child growing up to be a well-rounded member of society. Poor attachment leads to poor social and physical development and behavioural problems. Often this can lead to child maltreatment and then the whole destructive cycle can be played out again by the next generation of parents who have known no better themselves. It has been calculated that as much as 80 per cent of maltreated children could be classified as having disorganised attachment.

Society prospers, and is an enriching environment in which to live, according to the nature of its citizens. The more our citizens are physically and mentally healthy, well educated, empathic, prosocial, hardworking and contributing to the costs of society, the better society will flourish. As there is a rise in the proportion of citizens who are damaged, physically or mentally ill, poor at relationships, antisocial, violent or criminal in their behaviour, and placing a drain on society’s resources, so the quality of society worsens.

The groundwork for good citizenship occurs in the first 1001 days. A society which delivers this for its children creates a strong foundation for almost every aspect of its future. A society which fails to deliver it generates enormous problems for the future in terms of social disruption, inequality, mental and physical health problems, and cost. At its starkest, preventing these adverse childhood experiences could reduce hard drug use by 59 per cent, incarceration by 53 per cent, violence by 51 per cent and unplanned teen pregnancies by 38 per cent.

No section of society is immune. Deprivation may lead to a greater concentration of affected families, middle class mothers can be just as prone to perinatal mental health problems and the impact on their children. Certain groups, such as the families of armed services personnel, are a particularly high-risk section of the population yet go largely under the radar.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Conception to Age 2 — The First 1001 Days, which I (Andrea Leadsom, Member of Parliament) co-chair with Frank Field, Member of Parliament, and which is responsible for this report, was established in 2013. It is one of the largest and most active All Party Parliamentary Group in Parliament with substantial membership and buy-in from MPs and Lords of all parties. Our objective is to ensure that the interests and needs of families during the conception to age 2 period are represented to as many people inside Parliament and Government as possible.

To that end we produced a “1001 Critical Days Manifesto.” It has received widespread endorsement including that of the Chief Medical Officer, Royal Colleges and children’s and health charities. We are urging all parties to adopt it into their own manifestos at the forthcoming election. This report provides further evidence why that is urgent and ultimately unavoidable if we are to deal sustainably with the causes and origins of so many of society’s ills rather than firefighting the spiralling financial and social costs of our failure to do so.” (end of quote)

Mothers are women whose time has come! By including “Maternal Empowerment” in our efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals we will be harnessing a vulnerable group, turning mothers into an active power for a fraction of later education costs to achieve the same results. The World Organisation for Prenatal Education Associations urges the Commission on the Status of Women to take up this aspect of women’s empowerment.