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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 Relations Students’ Association of McGill University, 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

We, the International Students' Association of McGill (IRSAM), are a federally incorporated non-profit organization established, and operating, at McGill University in Montréal, Canada. We are the only active, exclusively student-run organisation with ECOSOC consultative status on the global stage today. IRSAM is an independently run student group at the university, comprising a diverse cohort of McGill students. Volunteerism is the heartbeat of IRSAM, with all of our programming being executed by full-time students, devoting precious hours and diligent effort to promote student engagement in global affairs within our university, and in our respective local and international communities.

This year has marked one decade of IRSAM consultative participation at the United Nations, and it would be impossible for us to overstate our gratitude to the international community for the countless opportunities we have had. The wealth of the experiences and knowledge our members have brought home from the United Nations has helped us forge positive change in all of the communities of which we are members, without exception.

IRSAM recognizes, after a thorough examination of the priority theme for the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, that the cardinal challenges facing rural women and girls are interlaced by the thread of inaccessibility. IRSAM's mandate lends the focus of our general membership to two particular areas, each with unique obstacles in accessibility for specifically rural women: Education, and Health Services. IRSAM appreciates how crucial to development, both on the individual and societal levels, proper, complete, and equitable education programs are, and that girls in rural regions have a disproportionately greater, and more diverse, set of obstructions to that foundational right established by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Likewise, the development, and quality of life, of rural women and girls are hindered by medical infrastructures that are either inadequate in their services when they are reasonably accessible, or absent from rural regions altogether. These inequalities, when considered in the context of the already-existing obstacles for women to educational opportunities, appropriate health services, and the taboo label those health services have been given, place the heaviest burden of any marginalized demographic squarely on the shoulders of rural women.

IRSAM also appreciates that the definition of "rural" in the context of the priority theme is broad, and should remain malleable for this discussion to be germane to the largest amount of women possible. Rural women, based on their region, will encounter staggeringly different levels of accessibility to any and all resources central to their development, but learning from, and ameliorating, those discrepancies must be a priority for the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in order to open avenues of empowerment to all women and girls.

IRSAM, as an organization that zealously studies, and engages with, international relations, understands that politics is the medium of international affairs. In the contemporary international community, gender empowerment and politics cannot always be mutually exclusive entities. Celebration of the progress fomented because of the United Nations, and a sober evaluation of the opportunities for progress yet to come, are also not mutually exclusive. Cognizant of that, IRSAM will return to the Commission on the Status of Women this year seeking out breakthrough solutions for women across the globe, and looking to give a voice to the unique perspective the youth of our members provides.