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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 ISIS – Women’s International Cross- Cultural Exchange, 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 Fourth World Conference on Women and the resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action bear great significance to the rights of women and girls affected by armed and other kinds of conflict. For these women and girls, the process leading to the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action brought considerable visibility to and validated not only their experiences, but also their agency within and after situations of conflict, thus amplifying the message and call of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

For many women, women's groups and organizations such as Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange, have offered the encouragement to envision a world where women can live in peace, as well as create and redefine peace. The Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange has not only put the spotlight on issues of concern for women affected by armed conflict, but has tasked all actors, including governments, the international community, and civil society, to focus their actions and resources on changing this reality. The same actors were given the responsibility to define and implement accountability mechanisms, as well as track and ensure progress in achieving the ambitious vision of the process leading to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action process and its outcomes.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted the grave and massive human rights violations that women and girls suffer during and after conflict or displacement, as well as the life-long social, economic, and psychologically traumatic impacts. It addressed the experiences and gender-specific challenges faced by refugee, displaced, and migrant women, whose role in decision-making is often minimized. It acknowledged the unrecognized informal peace-building roles of women across societies. It also recognized women as central actors, whose full participation in decision-making, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution was critical to ensure lasting peace.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects this through Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16, which are focused on achieving gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies. In the past 25 years, and with the boost of the Security Council Resolution 1325, related resolutions, regional declarations, and national action plans, some progress has been registered in increasing women's representation and participation in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and crisis response. However, progress has been slow: the numbers remain low, their influence is limited, and the barriers to women's meaningful engagement are largely underaddressed within institutions of power. This has maintained the sanctioned, widespread exclusion of women from decision and policymaking on emerging peace and security issues, such as preventing and countering violent extremism.

As was the case in 1995, women and children still represent the majority among the world's population of refugees and displaced people. Also, women are the first responders to crisis within communities and are central to post-crisis resilience and recovery. However, women continue to be excluded from leadership and decision-making structures within humanitarian settings. Moreover, despite the global commitment to increase quality and sustained funding to local responders, women's groups and women-led organizations seeking support for gender-responsive humanitarian action are not prioritized. This low share of aid to women's organizations and women's priorities has an impact on the realities of women and girls affected by forced displacement, including critical issues such as ending sexual violence or ensuring trauma relief for survivors. Research has confirmed the value to both the individual woman and to national governments of prioritizing trauma

counselling for the conflict-affected, as part of ensuring socioeconomic resilience and post-crisis recovery.

While significant gains have been made in ensuring that legal and policy frameworks are in place and that commitments have been made at all levels to tackle key women, peace, and security concerns, the gap remains in implementation. Resources are often not allotted towards implementing well-written policies and plans, and women's groups continue to push for gender-responsive budgeting in post-crisis settings and call governments to account for insufficient efforts to end impunity for conflict-related sexual violence.

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice and inclusive, accountable institutions for all or the spirit of the process leading to the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is imperative that more attention is paid to underaddressed areas of critical importance to the peace and security of women and girls affected by conflict.
