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entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Zamani Foundation, 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

Women's economic empowerment is anchored by education, both formal and informal

Women have long suffered stigmatization and marginalization globally. The number of women who still face challenges in reaching their full potential, due to an uneven playing field, is too high. Even still, I am encouraged by the women who have remained resilient in the face of adversity and committed to achieving their calling and purpose in life. I ask myself, what the world would look like if more women were empowered. In my research, I was encouraged to learn that the highest share of women in the workforce globally is found in Africa – Zimbabwe being the highest, with 52.8 per cent and a Sub-Saharan average of 40 per cent. However, women across the continent are more likely to be employed in informal work relative to men.

Obstacles to women obtaining economic power

Regardless of the nature of employment – formal or informal – this issue needs to be addressed. An enabling environment has to be created at every level of society, starting within households. The home is where attitudes, ideas, values, and beliefs are shaped and it is important that parents and guardians instil the right values and beliefs, as they work as enablers and catalysts for their children's success. A child's formative years are when cultural values and norms are moulded. It is important for parents to invest their time and be intentional in positively influencing and encouraging their daughters. It is equally important to teach boys the importance of respecting, honouring, and empowering women.

The Commission on the Status of Women is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission on the Status of Women adopts multi-year programmes of work to appraise progress and make further recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These recommendations take the form of negotiated and agreed-upon conclusions on the need to accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Women need to be economically and politically empowered, so that they can rightfully take their place in leadership and in politics. As we are gathered for the Commission on the Status of Women to review the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, let us reflect on the past and ask ourselves about how best to move forward and what processes to implement to empower more women.
