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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 African Women Lawyers Association, Nigeria Chapter, 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

All over Africa, children, especially the girl-child suffer some of the most degradations. They are constantly neglected in various contexts some of which include gender inequality, economic deprivation, harmful traditional acts, early marriages, socio-economic abuses, violence, conflict and female genital cutting, lack of political will to invest in the education of children and young adults, wasteful resource usages and unbridled- bottomless political expenditure as against national development targets.

It is an established fact that to break away from the above, including many other social-economic limitations, education is the key. Many children, especially girls and young women, have been denied access to good education by the actions and inactions of those entrusted to lead, care for, support and provide the enabling environment in Africa. Education has eluded most children who need it more than those who can afford it. Today in Africa, by the UN's very available data, more than 244 million children aged 6 to 18, are not in school, and more than 40%, or 98 million of them, live in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria (20.2 million), Ethiopia (10.5), the Democratic Republic of Congo (5.9) and Kenya (1.8) – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

African Women Lawyers Association is convinced that the architecture of the education of children, especially in ways that support girls and young women to enrol in school, stay in school and learn in Africa should be reconsidered appropriately. If governments of States in Africa, despite the numerous international support and local fiscal allocations, are not meeting the desired/expected results, why must Africa continue as it is? Apparently, in any sense, it is not the lack of resources that is majorly the challenge of poor-quality education, it is the continued inequity in the deployment and use of the available resources. Ravaged on many fronts by terrorism, mostly perpetrated by Africa's young, the continent cannot continue to assume that the challenges will go away by hope and deployment of heavy-duty weaponry nor by throwing cash to problems.

The African Women Lawyers Association would love to make an affirming submission to the United Nations (UN); urging the UN to push for standard education operations and deliverables across Africa, particularly, flagging of prototypes in countries with higher reported cases of out-of-school children. The future of Africa in education, healthcare services delivery, technology, and other human and social development needs must include first before anything else, the education of the children that Africa is blessed with today. There will be no hope for the advancement and development that Africa is often alluded to as having the potential if the relevant pillars are not installed deliberately today and sustained aggressively.

African leaders have not demonstrated enough capacity of their individual States in taking Africa out of poverty and leading them to the required successes through the education of Africa's young. A continent of millions of out-of-school children translates into a continent of generations of poor households and communities. The number of efforts at fighting security across some African countries today could have been readily minimal if the requisite education investments were made in previous years. Out of school children have aspirations, and ambitions and desire the good things in life too. Ultimately, they, like everyone in the room, wish to succeed and survive. It is not enough to draft policies and evangelize sustainable development goals in Africa. Countries in Africa must be made to fight hard to achieve expected results and make requisite strides in the deliberate developmental education of Africa's young.

Africa's young must be Africa's priority for development and economic advancement. Otherwise, Africa's young would in no distant future become Africa's biggest challenge. Education is cheaper and leads to development when compared to managing security and other social crises. The UN should as a matter of deliberate intervention find strategic, yet sustainable ways of enforcing access to affordable and quality education targeting Africa's children. African Member States must be engaged appropriately and dedicatedly to go over and beyond budgetary allocations, and rhetoric of investing in education and education infrastructure to actually place the relevant booths on the ground.

Leadership is a responsibility and African leaders must end the seeming show of doing their citizens favours, and focus on providing the needed servant leadership. Human capacity development has served developed nations beyond measure and continues to provide the enabling environment for sustained development. Africa must not only copy this process for documentation purposes but must be compelled by mutual understanding to deliver on them accordingly. The United Nations cannot only continue to provide funds, draft frameworks and policies and engage with the people on the ground. But the UN must devise the appropriate measures that significantly and measurably show actions are taken in and to the right directions, and expected outputs and outcomes are clearly harvested. The failure in this regard to persuade, ensure and more roundly pursue the education of Africa's young will inevitably, as currently seen, become the overall challenge of all the nations of the world.

African Women Lawyers Association is convinced that if a greater number of Africa's children are appropriately and adequately educated, the world and most importantly Africa will find its niche in the committee of nations.

Statement endorsed by:

1. Partnership for Justice Ltd/Gte
2. Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center
3. Women's Rights and Health Project Ltd/Gte
4. Foundation International Charitable Initiative for Girl Child and Women Development Foundation
