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

Statement submitted by World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations, 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 World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, founded in 1948 and currently embracing 40 women's associations in 33 countries of Ukraine's growing diaspora, welcomes the particularly timely incidence of the priority and review themes of the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The observance of the 75th anniversary of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations in 2023 has been a testament to the dedication of generations of Ukrainian women whose goals were to sustain both the dignity of the Ukrainian woman, as well as the dignity of the Ukrainian nation. With members scattered throughout an international diaspora, WFUWO's first four decades were a struggle against a repressive Soviet regime determined to break Ukraine. During the past three decades, WFUWO has had the good fortune to work with women from a now independent and democratic Ukraine.

At the time of this writing, with WFUWO delegates meeting in Przemyśl, Poland, for our federation's 12th congress in October 2023, Ukraine has been under attack for nine years. Originally invading in 2014, Russia intensified its invasion of Ukraine with a vicious brutality in February 2022. Millions of women and children have been forced to flee beyond Ukraine's borders to live as refugees. Millions of Ukrainians have been internally displaced. After decades of relatively calm, prosperity, and growth, Ukrainian women again are subjected to severe poverty and sex trafficking.

UN News reported on September 23, 2023, that members of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that they have documented "torture and sexual and gender-based violence" in Ukraine resulting from Russia's invasion. Commission Chair Erik Møse noted that in the Kherson region, "Russian soldiers raped and committed sexual violence against women of ages ranging from 19 to 83 years" and that "frequently, family members were kept in an adjacent room, thereby forced to hear the violations taking place." The Commission also stated that its investigations in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia indicate the "widespread and systematic use of torture by Russian armed forces ... which in some cases led to death"

In an April 27, 2023, statement, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) demanded "the safe return of Ukrainian children forcibly transferred to Russia or territory it temporarily occupies" pointing out that the documented evidence of this practice matches with the international definition of genocide. Further, PACE stated that "there was evidence that deported children had faced a process of 'russification' through re-education in Russian language, culture and history," citing examples of children being banned from speaking Ukrainian, exposure to propaganda, and visits to "patriotic" sites or military training, adding that these transfers of Ukrainian children were "clearly being planned and organised in a systematic way" as Russian state policy, and had the abhorrent aim of "annihilating every link to and feature of their Ukrainian identity". The abduction of Ukraine's children is so blatant that the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for President Vladimir Putin and Russia's children's rights commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova for war crimes on March 17, 2023.

The forthcoming military support from the West and the generous flow of humanitarian aid both provide hope for a post war future. But in addition to that support, we call upon the international community to more fervently condemn and punish Russia. While the invader's actions alone convey intent to destroy Ukraine in part or in whole, Russia's words must be considered, as well. Top Russian government leaders and state-controlled information agencies declare that their goal of

elimination will be accomplished. On April 3, 2022, the official Russian press agency RIA Novosti published an article “What Should Russia Do With Ukraine?” that historian Prof. Timothy Snyder of Yale University, a eminent scholar of the Holocaust, has referred to as “a genocide handbook.” Statements in the article include claims that “the essential nature of the Ukrainian nation is anti-Russian” and that even Ukrainian identity “is an anti-Russian construct” created by the West to destroy Russia, therefore must be destroyed in order for Russia to protect itself and survive. If Russia’s plan succeeds, there will be no Ukrainians in Ukraine.

Already there is ample documented evidence that with regard to Ukraine, criteria to identify genocide as listed in Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 have been met.

In 2019, in paragraph 17 of the Agreed Conclusions of the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, concerns were raised about the “increasing challenges caused by humanitarian emergencies, displacement, armed conflict, and the adverse impacts of climate change, all of which are exacerbating the disadvantages, vulnerabilities and inequalities that women and men, girls and boys and their families face in accessing social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure.” These conditions, and even more dire scenarios, are being visited upon Ukrainian women, their families, communities, and nation in real time.

As an acknowledgment of the horrific reality that has been forced upon Ukraine, as an acknowledgement of the language and actions being used to justify brutal destruction of Ukraine and Ukrainians, WFUWO calls upon the international community to act with moral imperative and declare Russia’s targeted acts of destruction against Ukrainians as genocide.

Ukrainians hold firm to the conviction that this unprovoked and unnecessary war will end soon. Ukraine’s strategies for victory and plans for recovery, reconstruction, and renewal, are promised to be gender equal. Thus, the strengthening of institutions and financing with a gender perspective, and the examination of evolving social protection systems, public services, and infrastructure with respect to their accessibility and sustainability are efforts critical to Ukraine’s post-war future. We welcome all such efforts. Just as important are the proper naming of the war crimes being perpetrated, compensation for the victims, and the meting out of justice against the perpetrators of such calculated aggression.