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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 FEMM 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

The FEMM Foundation is a knowledge-based health program for women inspired by a woman's right to be informed participants in her own healthcare and to make voluntary decisions based on options, information, and understanding. The Foundation is dedicated to health education, medical research, and improving reproductive health care to advance women's health.

Women's health is an important aspect of the right of women and girls to access social protection systems and benefit from public as well as private health services and sustainable infrastructure, which leads to an experience of equality and empowerment of women. In order for women and girls to be able to truly achieve their optimal hormonal and reproductive health, it is important to educate women about their health as they are at risk of serious illness and complications when symptoms are left unidentified and unaddressed.

Rural women and girls, as well as women and girls in areas of the world stricken by poverty and disaster, suffer from a lack of quality healthcare and have serious problems when in need of emergency medical assistance. A woman who is aware of how her body functions can monitor her health and seek assistance before she needs emergency care. She can also decide on the care she receives in an informed manner. Women of all educational backgrounds can learn to observe and monitor health indicators.

In order to empower all women and girls, we need to strengthen institutions that equip them with knowledge about their health and bodies. FEMM helps women learn about how her body works when she is fertile, which helps them know how to achieve or avoid pregnancy. It informs women about how each family planning decision works and how it relates to her long-term health. The premise of FEMM is to empower women to make informed decisions about her health by understanding her own body and fertility. As the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics affirms, it is necessary for women to engage in the process of making informed choices by which they can freely make decisions about possible health interventions. Decision making is placed in women's hands so they can exercise their right to good health. The foundation of informed choices is knowledge and information which is 'accurate, unbiased, complete, and comprehensible'.

FEMM facilitates the provision of this information to all women with its simple and accessible app. The app plays a pivotal role in equipping women with the knowledge they need to achieve their ultimate right to health. This is necessary to achieve women's empowerment and provides information that helps them make informed and healthy decisions. FEMM assists women in taking control of their health through advances in science and technology to meet the fundamental requirements of women in terms of reproductive health. The FEMM App is available free of charge and can be downloaded on Apple and Android devices, allowing it to reach women worldwide, with many new downloads coming from women in developing countries. A woman who uses the FEMM App can keep track of her observations and symptoms in order to gain a better understanding of her body and health. The app is completely customizable to mirror women's unique perceptions and experiences. Women can track as many or as few symptoms and observations as they desire.

Women need good healthcare to meet their needs when identifying health concerns. FEMM's Medical Management program trains doctors to diagnose and treat reproductive health problems, with a holistic view of a woman's body that incorporates recent research on the complex hormonal interactions between different body systems. This interaction, and the delicacy of the hormonal activity in a woman's body, is essential to the experience of health in the entire female body. FEMM has developed innovative protocols that allow doctors to identify underlying problems

with precision and treat them effectively. This medical support provides treatments that help women to live healthy lives.

Women face unique and frequently unaddressed health struggles related to their biology. They often accept symptoms such as irregular bleeding, pain, depression, mood swings, and weight gain as normal, and do not realize that these are often signs of underlying hormonal imbalances and abnormalities. Even when women do seek medical care for these symptoms, most health care providers and programs struggle to diagnose them and often can only treat the symptoms. Additionally, women combat stigma and myths associated with normal biological processes, such as menstruation.

Underlying hormonal conditions can affect women and girls' long-term overall health, sometimes irreversibly. This can also affect a woman and girl's ability to complete her education, engage in work, and plan her family. It may interfere with her ability to participate in all areas of her life. Poor health hurts gender equality by undermining women and girls' ability to realize their potential and drive development in their communities. Recalling paragraph 31 of the agreed conclusions of the 61st CSW session, the right to the highest standard of health is vital to allow women to participate equally in private and public life, as well as have equal leadership in the economy. Thus, women and girls who have untreated medical conditions can be empowered through both knowledge and good, accessible medical treatment. Charting provides the easiest and least invasive method of observing estrogen and progesterone patterns, which in turn provides evidence of healthy follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH) levels. If a chart indicates that any of these hormones may be out of balance, a blood test is suggested in order to identify the primary hormonal disturbance (which is often not directly estrogen or progesterone).

FEMM knows that hormones are essential to reproductive and overall women's health. Ovulation is the sign of health in women because it is the proof of sufficient hormone levels in the nine essential hormones that influence women's health. FEMM teaches women to understand this information and the signs that this presents in a woman's body. In this way, women using the FEMM program are able to identify abnormalities as they arise, seek health treatment when necessary, and ensure that their symptoms or complaints are not dismissed.

FEMM also enables women to make informed choices about family planning. There is a right to adequate family planning and information about reproductive health that is accurate and respects cultural, religious, and ethical beliefs. Programs focused on providing reproductive health commodities often fail to ensure that women have the education needed to understand their bodies and what products they are being offered and may not always respect values.

Information-based health education and medical care is uniquely suited to meet these needs while respecting individual choices and values. FEMM offers reproductive and hormonal education and helps women to understand the way various family planning methods work and their potential side effects. It educates women about the science of her body, how to identify when she is fertile, and how to achieve or avoid pregnancy.

FEMM is low-cost and meets the underlying needs of women. Such healthcare services represent an essential component in ensuring women's empowerment through accessing vital health services. Comprehensive health care for women can now be provided through basic health delivery systems, making this approach to women's health more effective, cheaper to deliver, and providing better health outcomes. This makes FEMM a great way of incorporating advanced endocrinological care into healthcare infrastructures. There can be no sustainable eradication of poverty without ensuring proper women's health and we can ensure that women get the care they deserve in order to help them participate fully in their communities.