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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network, 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.



Statement

Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network welcomes this opportunity to address current achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as they affect gender equality and the empowerment of women. It works towards the fulfilment of reproductive and sexual health rights, focusing on the most marginalized women at the grass-roots level.

In the light of the theme of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, attention is being drawn to the connections between gender equality, the empowerment of women, reproductive rights and the inability of women and girls to fully exercise their reproductive rights, including access to safe and legal abortions, without stigma or discrimination.

Drawing on these concerns, Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network and its national allies will emphasize the following considerations in the panel discussions and plenary sessions:

Maternal mortality associated with restricted access to safe abortion services

In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action it is explicitly stated that the high rates of maternal, child and infant mortality present massive challenges to all levels of society and that unsafe abortions threaten the lives of a large number of women, representing a grave public health problem as it is primarily the poorest and youngest who take the highest risk. Most of these deaths, health problems and injuries can be prevented through improved access to adequate health-care services, including safe and effective family planning methods and emergency obstetric care and by recognizing the right of women and men to be informed. These problems are related to the challenges of high fertility and a low modern contraceptive prevalence rate, which have led to unintended pregnancies, poor birth spacing, high-risk births and unsafe abortions.

Inequality and lack of empowerment due to denial of access to contraceptives and information

In 2012, the Government of Nigeria renewed its commitment to increase the contraceptive prevalence rate to 38 per cent by 2018, to increase family planning and to develop complementary budgets for the delivery of family planning services. While some progress has been made in achieving these goals, we are not quite there yet.

Accordingly, given the existence of the human rights treaties, international human rights standards and consensus documents such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, any attempt not to meet this obligation is a breach of the right to have contraceptive services and information.

It is also a violation of women's core reproductive rights. We also recall that, according to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the Government is obliged to ensure the protection of and legal certainty for women with regard to sexual and reproductive health rights.

In consideration of the issues raised, Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network recommends the following:

(a) That all measures be taken all measures to ensure access to free or affordable sexual and reproductive health services, including access to information and safe abortion services;

(b) That attention be paid to cultural, religious, economic, legal, political and social barriers to the implementation of access to contraceptive services and information so that anyone who wishes to use has access to them;

(c) That access to comprehensive non-formal and formal sex education be guaranteed and increased.
