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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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern, and further actions and initiatives; priority theme: “elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls”

Statement submitted by Solidarité agissante pour le développement familial, 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

We are pleased to see that the United Nations continues its efforts to exchange ideas with the whole world to solve the problems of the global community.

With reference to our country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we wish to highlight three missing elements: (a) expertise (particularly in the case of women and girls who often live in poverty); (b) safeguards — the Congolese people cannot even provide safeguards for those who seek to help them; (c) trust — as a result of the lack of expertise and safeguards, people do not trust others. The problem is that the Congolese State needs to provide technical support to the grass-roots organizations that bring people together and help with small matters. It is on that basis that the organizations can reach people to help them become aware of their personality and their role in the community. Without it nothing can work in a world with weapons.

The absence of these three elements has led to poverty, unemployment and all types of discrimination in the country. Children take on the responsibility of their parents, even if their parents are alive. There is no government programme to support the most vulnerable. If a country's vulnerable people are not supported, what will happen to refugees, those displaced by war, etc.? We have enormous difficulties in our country owing to the mismanagement of the State.

Member States should take grass-roots organizations into consideration. Security officers in Africa are not well paid and they cannot ensure security in a country facing famine. A better way must be found of managing these aspects and providing grass-roots organizations with regular support to train officers and inform people how they can become useful members of society. Women and girls suffer all manner of aggression as the Government does not have any programmes in place to help them. The majority of women in our country cannot read or write, but they all want to learn. Unfortunately, there are no programmes to help these people. So how can violence be avoided? Grass-roots organizations must be brought together, supported and monitored. It is also important to provide adequate pay and training for the country's security and police officers, so that they can help people to live in safety. The same problems exist in homes, where the lack of employment opens the door to violence.

African States must recognize what are known as broader synergies: if people agree to work peacefully, even with their enemies, enemies could change their violent state of mind. Without such considerations, nothing will change. Grass-roots non-governmental organizations are the driving force behind development, but so often we do not even have the transport to be able to join our friends from around the world at meetings such as this one.