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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third 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 lines in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work

Statement submitted by the Latin American and Caribbean Group of governmental organizations 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.

A new dawn for mankind

"More than ever before, the essential task of education is to ensure that all people enjoy the freedom of thought, judgment, imagination to develop their talents and to realize as much of their hopes as they can."
Jaques Delors

Education, recognized as the most important tool for the development of young generations, is essential for the future of the world. It is only through this manner that the quality of life, the access to opportunities and the social environment may be improved. All of this in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, favor progress and reduce the world violence, drug abuse, environmental damage, social and economic inequality, and AIDS, among other issues.

It is well known that the high level education opens a scenario of opportunities for boys and girls, women and adults, as it subjects them into the comprehension of the world in which they live. It enhances their faculties and improves their social and economic inclusion. "Education for All" was the motto of the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, April 2000), where it was stressed that the right to education is not just the access to it (which at first hand is a great achievement), but an education to life which should include the acquisition of the technical skills and abilities that will enable young people to assume control of their lives in the social context and contemporary world.

* E/CN.6/2011/1

On the same note, the *Beijing Platform for Action* adopted by the *Fourth World Conference on Women* acknowledges the need for women to have full access, in equal conditions to men, to education and training as one of the 12 spheres of concern that demand the taking of urgent measures by the governments and the international community.

In its 41st period of sessions, celebrated in 1997, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted a gender perspective in all educational programs and policies of the educational sector.¹⁰ From then on, significant progress has been made to push the total inclusion of women into the educational sector. The results have been considerable in most of the countries, especially related to literacy rates which are now significantly balanced between both genders. In fact, according to OECD research, in the countries affiliated to it, more women get college degrees than men (46 and 30% respectively).

Regarding other subjects, the terminal efficiency in basic education puts into notice that while the improvement in the coverage has been achieved, the same cannot be said about the quality and permanency. As an example of this, in Mexico more than half of the young people, however, 5 and 10 years of basic education, finish their studies. In 1988, 98% of boys and girls that finish elementary school and begin middle school, only 62% will see their education finished. As a result of this, there are millions of teenagers out of school, drastically reducing the opportunities and raising the expenses that must be met and that their parents must bear.

Male and female teenagers leave the classroom to go to work and balance the economy of their month, without having the opportunity to build a better future that would come about with the finishing of their studies. The ECLAC sustains that at least 11 to 12 years of formal education are required to avoid poverty and all suffering associated with it.

The problem is disturbing to both sexes. For that reason, gender equality and women's. It is important to make emphasis in the need for a promotion of a gender perspective which integrates the problems of women, but also those which affect men in education. Moreover, what it means to be a man and a woman, those models include the glorification of violence, criminal behavior, the promotion of sexual risk behavior, the misuse and overuse of

The consequences of this violence are not only for women, but also for men. For that reason it is urgent to address the violence against men, which has increased by the recession, unemployment and rise of poverty, which have reduced the ability of the man, as the head of the family, to provide for his family. As a result, he frequently resorts to exert violence towards women and children. In doing so, research has shown his control over others, and thus the stereotype of what "being a real man" is understood to be. Being it so, it is also necessary to research and understand the roots of violence against women through male perspective, in order to

Regarding other aspects, it is advisable to facilitate economic and recreational opportunities, with women as well as young men fall back to using sexual intercourse as a way of gaining respect and status in a society. The main reason why many men are involved in sexual risk behavior, which generates an increase in the venereal diseases, which affects men as much as it affects women.

If gender is relational and women's issues as well as the issues regarding men have a strong impact in social development, why does gender remain being only a synonym of women? The correct and primary approach is that education must be inclusive, as it is an issue that involves and regards them both. It is true that women are in a disadvantaged position, but it is also true that men are in disadvantage in several areas. Nevertheless, it is also true that interventions aimed at the improvement of women's situations, will hardly be effective, or sustainable, if men are not involved, as coworkers, responsible for their actions.

True development will not be achieved as long as the idea that "men are women's greatest enemy" remains. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that in many occasions men are the ones who deny evolving in his pre-conceived masculinity. Being this so, it is in this area where the hardest work with young men should be done.

Along with the promotion among young people of equal relationships, it is essential for both sexes to promote positive views about men's involvement in the sharing of responsibilities related to home and family work, such as responsibility for children and adult care, and for general well-being, including sexual and reproductive health of teenagers and young people. Educational programs which involve young men have proved to be more effective when they allow them to recognize pain suffering in a peaceful way, without developing violent behaviors towards women or other men.

In different social contexts, changes have been made in the way men perceive women's demands, and as men agree with the importance of women's preparation and development. The approach to gender which recognizes that both women and men reproduce gender roles makes an emphasis on the importance for young men both involved in the development of safe and healthy relationships. These new models of relationships will help to build a more pacific and equal society. Our previous arguments allow us to conclude that it is absolutely necessary to ensure that resources be destined to the achievement of gender equality in order to encourage an integrating perspective. Such a perspective should help in comprehending the gender issues between young men and women, and the positive effects in the young people's environment, through their own actions.

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ⁱ *International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century: The Learning Objectives Report*, Paris, 1996.

ⁱⁱ United Nations General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Paris, 1948.

ⁱⁱⁱ UNICEF/UNESCO. *A Human Right to Education*. New York, 2001.

^{iv} Comisión de las Naciones Unidas para la Mujer. *Entow up to the World Conference on Women: Review of*

Mainstreaming in the Organizations of the United Nations System. *Procedimientos de la Comisión de las Naciones Unidas para la Mujer*

achieved in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

(E/CN.6/1997/2). March, 1997.

^v Hausmann, Ricardo (2010). *The Global Gender Gap 2010: A World Economic Forum Report*. Geneva, Switzerland.

^{vi} *Highlights from Education at a Glance 2010*. OECD.

^{vii} Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa México. INEE. 2009: indicador AT02b-A.

^{viii} Vélaz, Consuelo de Medrano Ureta (2005). *Retos de la Educación Básica en América Latina*, Fundación de la Casa de la Cultura.

^{ix} Barker, Gary. (2005). *Dying to be Men: Youth and Masculinity and social exclusion*. Oxford, U.K., Routledge.

^x Barber, Ian (2006). *The Other Half of the Sky: Gender issues in development*. World Bank, Washington D.C.

^{xi} Some examples of this program are: A.I.O.S. Misión Mujer program in Mexico; Men Make a Difference Campaign (A.I.O.S.), White Ribbon Campaign (Canada),²⁸ *Man and Gender* (Mexico), *Conscientizing Male Adolescents* (Argentina), *Stepping Stones* (Kenya).