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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”**

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 welcomes the opportunity to revisit the situation of rural women and girls, earlier taken up by the 56th Session of Commission on the Status of Women, and agrees with the Resolution of the General Assembly [70/132](#) about the importance of improving the global access of rural women and girls to land and natural resources, social services and civic participation, to ensure progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With respect to Ukraine in light of the current humanitarian crisis caused by military aggression in the Donbas region and the persecution of the indigenous Crimean Tatars with the illegal annexation of Crimea, we look to CEDAW General Recommendations no. 30 (2013) on women in conflict situations, and expect the full engagement of women in the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security. We note that Ukraine's rural women and girls are facing deepening problems as this 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women addresses the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

Like other European countries, Ukraine is now an urban state with only 30 per cent of the population being rural, and that mostly older and female, as younger people are abandoning agricultural work. A combination of inadequate infrastructure, limited access to medical care, and hampered economic opportunities (a moratorium on land sale imposed in 2001 was extended to 2018) continues to widen the gap between urban and rural incomes and other indicators of well-being. Accurate and gender-disaggregated statistics are needed for a full understanding of gender impact, but those who remain in rural communities face hardships that also include strict social norms and patriarchal attitudes which affect a spectrum of issues from access to reproductive health services to women's access to decision-making and budget-wielding positions.

Ukraine's 8th Periodic Report in February 2017 to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW/C/UKR/CO/8](#)) evoked concern for the continuing poverty of rural women and their limited access to social services (justice, education, health care, housing, training, employment, business support). There was also concern for the basic needs and physical security of the internally displaced persons who have lost land, property and social resources and the heads of household, most of them women, who are without normal livelihood and in uncertainty as to rightful benefits, while needing to care for their dependents.

We are concerned about the heightened violence against women in both of Ukraine's specific conflict zones, the Donbas and Crimea. The statistics on the military and civilian casualties, the wounded and displaced from the Donbas are periodically updated and still growing. In their homeland peninsula, the Crimean Tatar community is experiencing a high incidence of detentions, threats and other violations of rights to civil activity and journalistic freedom. Since the review theme to be discussed by the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women is women's roles and access to media, we reiterate the assertion of our Crimean Tatar colleagues that Crimea is no longer an open informational space. They report a drastic reduction of media outlets, barring of reporters from the government sphere, and forced exile of print and social media journalists.

Ukraine is not alone in the experience of hybrid war and its effect on women and girls, i.e. their vulnerability to violence, including and especially rape and trafficking. We are equally concerned about the violence as a general feature of

militarized society which has strong repercussions in the under-serviced rural areas. The return home of traumatized soldiers has exacerbated domestic violence, making the ratification of the Istanbul (Council of Europe) Convention critically important for Ukraine. Ukraine must recognize gender based violence and criminalize domestic violence. At the same time, rural residents need support for psychological problems that are stigmatized and unacknowledged — depression, trauma from domestic violence, post-traumatic stress, and postpartum issues. The rural areas are in acute need of shelters and rehabilitation services for victims of violence.

We are concerned that women have been heretofore marginalized in Ukraine's peace negotiation efforts, and women's experiences in the conflict have not been adequately heard. We anticipate the full inclusion of women and girls and their civil society organizations, in contributing their points of view to the peace processes and inserting their priorities into reconstruction initiatives that will build aggression-resilient communities for a lasting peace.

Within this framework, however, we also look forward to new opportunities for women as strong movers of socio-economic development. This is in no small degree connected to the recognition of their potential input for the country's future within the vision of the National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (adopted by Ukraine in February 2016).
