

STATEMENT TO THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
By the
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN
on
ITEM 8. FOLLOW-UP TO THE VIENNA DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION

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Children are our future generation. How we make them today is what the world will be tomorrow. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely adopted convention having nearly universal ratification. (except by U.S. and Somalia). Yet today children's rights are ignored. One can only observe the millions of children roaming the streets in developing countries. They are there because parents are forced to send them out to make a living as street vendors, too poor to meet basic living standards, or because they are simply homeless. Poverty has pushed them into a dead-end of misery leading them to delinquency committing minor crimes as stealing or serious ones as drug dealing. But the worst situation is when they are forced to work selling their bodies or are trafficked. Girl children are particularly vulnerable.

In the poorest quarters where parents have never had access to education, the vicious spiral of extreme poverty replicates itself inexorably in each generation: Without education, children reaching adulthood are plunged into the same chain of poverty as their parents. This is why the International Federation of University Women gives priority to education and lifelong learning of the girl child and adolescent. As Victor Hugo once said, "Education is the only truly efficient solution to provide all people the means to their own freedom. Without knowing how to read, write or count, a child cannot hope to develop one's own talent one day, become truly autonomous and contribute positively to the construction of tomorrow's society."

With new Information and Communication Technology, educational opportunities are opening. In the 21st century, we are undergoing radical changes from the traditional primary, secondary and tertiary classrooms, and no longer confined to a certain period of life. Distance learning, roving libraries, mentoring are some tools being developed.

Combating poverty is the human and social responsibility of all those who have, to help those who do not have: - from the private sector, community organisations to NGOs. We can only perform effectively if we all act together in partnership and international solidarity. Governments have to implement their commitments to the 8 Millennium Development Goals which have to be tackled simultaneously because reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty is interrelated to education for all, gender equality and women's empowerment, reducing maternal mortality, health, preserving the environment and adequate official development aid.

Thank you Mr. President.