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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**

Statement submitted by Collectif des femmes africaines du Haina, 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

Promote actions aimed at developing the leadership and full citizen participation of migrant women in the world

In resolution 64/169, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent, citing the need to strengthen national actions and regional and international cooperation for the benefit of people of African descent in relation to their full enjoyment of economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights. The primary objective was to raise awareness of problems confronting persons of African descent. The International Year encouraged discussions leading to solutions aimed at overcoming those challenges but implementation of those recommendations appears to have been weak.

The Secretary-General established the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda. The Agenda needs to pay more heed to migration in order to make the most of its global economic and social advantages. Necessary measures include helping migrants contribute to development by, for example, having the diaspora play an active part in development and by taking mobility and demography into account when preparing sectoral policies. We wish to transcend the victimization that acts as a constraint in current global thinking about migration and integration policy.

Today we are witnessing a global shift in momentum towards broader participation of women in political and public decision-making, so much so that it now constitutes a benchmark for gauging a country's level of democracy. Many countries in the North subscribe to that movement but the part played even there by migrant women, especially those from countries in the South, is barely discernible.

While it is undeniably true that problems such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, polygamy and rape as a weapon of war cry out for an urgent and lasting solution, it is also true that they are not the only real problems of migrant women: alongside those very serious problems, there are women who show real determination to participate in efforts to shape the world. We are not workers difficult to employ for lack of training or a degree; we are workers whose skills are underestimated and undervalued. Only our survival instinct has forced us to trade degrees for a housewife's apron. It is true that all work is noble, but some policies serve a diversionary purpose.

The process by which access to decision-making is acquired involves a series of value choices. Access to that sphere is often facilitated by personal contacts and informal networks, which exclude a large number of women migrants who then have no choice other than to accept the jobs available in the host country, even though many such women are better qualified and educated than the jobs they suggest. This state of affairs makes it hard for host countries to perceive the skills and human capital in migrant women and maintains the impression that women immigrants are underqualified.

We need to encourage the establishment of a global agenda to prevent precious and scarce skills going unnoticed by offering women from a visible minority the chance to benefit from a helping hand. This psychosocial approach will be designed to provide women migrants with the confidence and network they may lack; the idea

being that such a relationship based on exchange and sharing will enable the visible minority to access decision-making circles.

We have come to this fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women at United Nations Headquarters to say that the world will be forged with the inclusion of minorities or not at all. Many have travelled to the United Nations today to remind it of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They have come en masse to resubmit this plea before the United Nations and remind it of its pledges to assist those most in need. They have come because they hope to shed the pejorative connotations attached to being migrant women and to be here in their own right and say: long live cosmopolitan ambitions, long live globalization and the goals it strives for, long live women as active players in development.