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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Women's Federation for World Peace International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 May 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Migrant women and mental health

Mothers are the cornerstone of society and essential to conflict resolution, peacebuilding and the nurturing of the next generation of leaders. Too often they are targets of aggression and sexual violence during flight and conflict. Among women victims of human rights abuses, one of the most vulnerable groups is forced migrants or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). A pervasive repercussion of the extended stress and trauma of homelessness and all its insecurities is severe degradation of psychological and spiritual well being of victims.

Women and children IDPs are suffering from high levels of mental health disorders. These are very often completely neglected or miscalculated for the influence they have in an extended family or community. Among these mental health issues are Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), anxiety, sleep disorders, depression and suicidal tendencies- which easily lead to substance abuse, conduct disorders and can perpetuate a cycle of suffering. Much of this is preventable if diagnosed and treated.

The Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women and peace and security in October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. All of these roles are jeopardized by this disorder. Resolution 1325 also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence. Mental health is included in the spirit of this resolution, and should more actively be protected.

For Syrian refugees arriving in Germany, a study estimated that as much as half of them suffered from psychological trauma. Among refugees in the US, studies have shown rates of PTSD and major depression in settled refugees to range from 10-40% and 5-15%, respectively. Children and adolescents often have higher levels with various investigations revealing rates of PTSD from 50-90% and major depression from 6-40%. In refugee camps closer to the conflict, the above mentioned rates are estimated to be much higher. This has dire consequences on the prospects of turning the circumstances around, engaging youth towards development and integrating families into local communities.

It is of utmost importance that the UN Human Rights Council recognizes the importance of mental and psychological help to women and children in refugee camps, detention centers, and on the routes of forced migration. All nations participating in this Council should take action to bring basic psychological support to women and children in refugee camps. When their traumas prevent them from taking an active role as protectors of their families and as critical agents of change, children are suffering, families are breaking apart and solutions become more and more complicated and costly. Resolution 1888 stresses that women are important agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and peacekeeping and specifically mandates that peacekeeping missions protect women and children from sexual violence during armed conflict.

Improvement in the mental health of mothers cements the foundation for healthy families and resilient societies, no matter how dire the circumstances have become. And these are the building blocks for peace and reconciliation- as well as the prevention of resurgence of violence. We hope the UN Human Rights Council will consider the right to psychological, as well as physical well being of forced migrants as a basic need within the framework of peace and sustainable development, and help take the necessary steps towards the application of appropriate support programs for refugee women.

Recommendations:

1. NGO led, government financed programs created to promote communication and safe environments among women refugees, fostering engagement.
2. Engage men and men's groups in camps and detention centers to protect and defend women and children from sexual and emotion abuses.
3. Educational tools, including peace education and women's empowerment programs with a forward-looking focus should be provided in all camps and detention centers

4. Sexual violence should be tackled aggressively and innovatively, as it is an important source of trauma for women and children.

<http://www.bptk.de/aktuell/einzelseite/artikel/mindestens-d.html>

<http://refugehealthta.org/physical-mental-health/mental-health/>
