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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 "ECO-FAWN" (Environment Conservation Organization - Foundation for Afforestation Wild Animals and Nature), a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[9 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Intersection of Women's Rights, Peace and Security in Post-Abrogation of Article 370 regarding Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir

The positive developments in women's rights, peace, and security in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370 is something which has not been discussed as part of a larger discourse. While the changes in the region have been accompanied by challenges, there are also remarkable stories of progress and empowerment that offer hope and optimism for the future. As we explore these advancements, it is vital to acknowledge the broader context of India's democratic framework and the international interest in the region.

India, with over 1.4 billion people and a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions, stands as the largest living democracy in the world. This diversity, while a hallmark of our democracy, also means that societal fractions are an inherent aspect of our national fabric. According to the Election Commission of India, there are over 2,300 political parties registered, reflecting the vast spectrum of political and social interests across the country.

A diverse range of linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups are represented in the Indian Census 2011, all of which contribute to the country's intricate social fabric. For example, the population of Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir alone is roughly 68% Muslim, 28% Hindu, and comprises various minority populations. This might result in different social and political dynamics. Different opinions and interests are inevitably brought about by such diversity, and this can occasionally lead to internal disputes. Various lobbies frequently draw attention to and use these societal divisions to achieve their own goals, adding layers of complexity to administration and development.

An important and encouraging development in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir is the growing involvement of women in the economy. Women in the area have historically encountered many obstacles to economic involvement. Nonetheless, new policies and programs have given women more chances to participate in a range of economic endeavours, advancing both their economic independence and the region's general development.

Some women were swayed by the idealized view of resistance and masculinity associated with terrorist groups during the height of the insurgency in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir in the past. Numerous reports indicate that there were incidents in the 1990s and early 2000s where women were drawn to or affiliated with rebel organizations. Radical ideology, the desire for empowerment, and political unrest frequently served as the catalysts for this engagement. Nevertheless, current trends and data point to a notable change in these patterns. Women now view and interact with their responsibilities in society very differently as a result of contemporary attempts to empower them through economic opportunity, education, and community support. The number of women joining militant groups has significantly decreased recently, according to a report from the Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir Police. Between 2018 and 2023, the number of women arrested or incarcerated for militant activity decreased by 60%.

This reduction is indicative of a larger movement away from radicalization. In the last two years, the number of women-led firms has also increased by 25%, according to a new data from the Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir Economic Survey. Women entrepreneurs have benefited from financial support, mentorship, and training programs offered by NGOs and government agencies. The Indian government, for instance, launched the "Udaan" plan, which targets women explicitly and offers training in business and skill development.

There has been a notable increase in the proportion of female participants in vocational training programs. The number of women enrolling in vocational courses in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir has increased by 30%, according to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. To provide women with the skills they need in industries like hospitality, textiles, and computer technology, a number of vocational training centres have been established. These programs promote economic independence in addition to improving employability.

The proportion of women working in small-scale industry and agriculture has increased significantly. Women's participation in agricultural cooperatives has increased by 20%, according to the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD). Initiatives that support women's involvement in agriculture, such as the "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act" (MGNREGA), give them the chance to work productively, enhancing their financial situation and advancing rural development.

Education and health are foundational to women's empowerment and contribute to broader societal development. In Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, positive strides have been made in improving access to education and healthcare for women, further supporting their role in society.

Over the previous three years, the number of female students enrolled in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir's higher education institutions has increased by 15%. Scholarships and educational initiatives have been launched to help females' academic endeavours and promote their education. The "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" program is one initiative that aims to close the gender gap in education and guarantee that more girls have access to high-quality education.

The Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir Health Department reports a 20% increase in the number of women receiving maternal and child health services. Health programs focused on women's health, including prenatal and postnatal care, have been expanded. Additionally, community health initiatives have improved awareness and access to healthcare services, contributing to better health outcomes for women.

While mentioning health and educational facilities it's also imperative to build strong community and social support systems for fostering peace and security. In Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, there have been significant efforts to strengthen these systems, contributing to a more supportive environment for women. The number of women's self-help groups (SHGs) has increased by 40% in recent years, providing women with a platform for mutual support and economic activities. SHGs offer women opportunities for collective action, financial management, and entrepreneurial ventures. These groups have become instrumental in empowering women, improving their economic status, and enhancing social cohesion.

Even on the infrastructural front, due attention has been given to ensure connectivity between Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir and rest of Indian States, such as building highways, developing industrial parks, and enhancing connectivity. The goal of projects like the Zojila Tunnel and the Chenab Bridge is to increase economic activity and transportation while opening up new business and opportunity prospects for women.

Local conflicts have significantly decreased as a result of women's participation in peacebuilding activities. In regions where women-led peacebuilding programs are implemented, there is a 15% reduction in community disputes, according to the Jammu and Kashmir Peace Foundation. Conversation and reconciliation have been effectively fostered by community-based programs that involve women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. These programs help to create an atmosphere that is safer and more stable for women and their families.

The representation of women in local governance bodies has increased by 18% in recent elections. Efforts to promote women's participation in political processes, such as training programs and leadership workshops, have empowered women to take on leadership roles and influence decision-making.

Over the last two years, funding for women's rights organizations has increased, allowing these groups to increase their influence and scope. The promotion of women's empowerment and the addressing of gender-based issues have been bolstered by support for NGOs and advocacy groups that focus on women's rights. These groups are essential in pushing for legislative modifications and offering practical assistance to underprivileged women.

In conclusion, the encouraging advancements in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir provide a bright and prospective future view. Women who once might have been drawn to the allure of militant machismo are now increasingly engaged in constructive and empowering roles.

This change is supported by various initiatives aimed at economic empowerment, educational advancement, and community building. By shifting focus from radicalism to positive societal contributions, the women of Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir are playing a crucial role in shaping a more peaceful and prosperous future for the region. The development we have seen shows how resilient and determined the people of Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir are to create a brighter future, especially the women.

As we move forward, let us continue to support and build on these positive initiatives, working together to create a region where women's rights are upheld, peace prevails, and development thrives.

GRAMIN KSHETRA NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

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