



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Sixtieth session

14-24 March 2016

**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 Forum Azzahrae pour la femme marocaine, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Forum Azzahrae pour la femme marocaine is a network of more than 109 Moroccan women's associations active in Morocco that work to empower women to exercise their full legitimate rights. The Forum welcomes the selection of the topic "Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development" as a priority theme for the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in the light of the adoption of the post-2015 development plan entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

The Forum therefore wishes to take part in the deliberations and submit the following statement:

- The Forum welcomes the adoption of Goal 5 of the sustainable development goals, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".
- The Forum welcomes States' express commitment to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner.
- However, the Forum finds it regrettable that the plan does not include a goal on the family, something that would have been in keeping with the resolution on the protection of the family adopted by the Human Rights Council in July 2015. The Forum believes that real and sustainable development cannot be achieved in the absence of a family based on marriage between a man and a woman. It therefore emphasizes the need for States to take that concept of the family into account when implementing their commitments with regard to achieving the sustainable development goals.
- The Forum is concerned at the rising age of first marriage in many countries, which is leading to reduced fertility and an alarming decline in birth rates. That situation is holding back development and causing social instability. While in favour of raising the marriageable age to the age of majority, we call for the adoption of policies to promote marriage, which has benefits for women and men alike, not to mention for children who grow up within the bonds of marriage.
- The Forum believes that the role of women in reproduction requires particular attention. Governments should facilitate access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant (Beijing Platform for Action, paragraphs 94 and 97, and Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 72 (i)). As stated in paragraph 72 (b) of the latter document, women should also have ready access to essential obstetric care and well-equipped and adequately staffed maternal health-care services.
- The Forum underscores the social importance of maternity and the role of parents in the family and in the raising of children. It calls for tangible measures to reconcile professional and family life. Such action would help mothers to achieve psychological and mental balance, which is a fundamental basis for achieving gender equality and hence sustainable development. If motherhood is undervalued, parent-child contact is impaired and the role of religious values is undermined, the social cost will be dangerous and tragic.

- Turning to protection of the right of children to a sound education and upbringing, the Forum calls for sexual and reproductive health services, including information, education and guidance, to be made available to male and female children or adolescents in the full knowledge, and with the consent, of their parents or legal guardians. Such action would be consistent with the Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 267 of which refers to parental support and guidance as one of the fundamental elements enabling adolescents to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality.
  - The Forum emphasizes the need to respect the sovereign right of States to implement the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda in accordance with their own national laws and development priorities, in full respect for their various religious and moral values and the cultural systems that they have chosen. That approach is consistent with Chapter II of the Declaration of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the Beijing Platform for Action. Paragraph 24 of the latter states as follows: “Religion, spirituality and belief play a central role in the lives of millions of women and men, in the way they live and in the aspirations they have for the future.... Religion, thought, conscience and belief may, and can, contribute to fulfilling women’s and men’s moral, ethical and spiritual needs and to realizing their full potential in society”.
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