



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

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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 FEMM Foundation, 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**

The FEMM Foundation is a knowledge-based health program for women inspired by women's right to be informed participants in their own healthcare and to make voluntary decisions based on options, information, and understanding. The Foundation is dedicated to health education, medical research, and improving reproductive health care to advance women's health.

Since the beginning the FEMM Foundation has been creatively leveraging the development of science and technology to cater to women's authentic reproductive health needs. FEMM has been using various virtual platforms to empower women all over the world with the knowledge to make informed choices about their reproductive health. FEMM has been making use of technology to boldly challenge doctors and medical institutions to improve the standard of care that they provide to women.

### **Leveraging Science and Technology to Improve Medicine and Reproductive Health**

Technological advancement provides new opportunities in elevating women's standards for their reproductive health, and these can be applied to the increasing understanding of women's fertility within the medical field. Research has shown that the way a woman's reproductive system functions affects her overall health. In short, ovulation is a sign of health in a woman.

Lack of ovulation is a major red flag, and usually signals an underlying and unidentified medical condition. Hormonal imbalances can cause ovulatory dysfunction, polycystic ovary syndrome, endometriosis, thyroid problems, menopausal disorders, depression, and infertility. FEMM has created medical protocols to address these hormonal issues. Treatment, ranging from immunological support, targeted pharmacological interventions as well as lifestyle changes, helps women recover healthy hormonal function.

With inadequate levels of hormones like estrogen and progesterone a woman can suffer from symptoms like migraines, acne, painful and heavy periods, anxiety, hirsutism, etc. However, few doctors and medical systems are prepared to identify and treat the root of these imbalances which are common among women. For many years the leading treatment for these period-related symptoms has been hormonal contraception. However, this does not address the underlying hormonal disorders causing these conditions. It merely masks the symptoms by introducing artificial hormones to produce a state of constant anovulation. FEMM's ground-breaking protocols are also able to offer a sensitive diagnosis and treatment for these common yet untreated period-related symptoms.

### **Using Digital Platforms to Share Knowledge and Diagnose Women**

FEMM has been using various virtual platforms to empower women all over the world with the knowledge to make informed choices about their reproductive health. These include the FEMM app, fertility awareness courses on video conferencing platforms, as well as telehealth doctor consultation.

The FEMM app is and will always be free of charge. It is now available in English and Spanish and on both Apple and Android devices, making it available to more women around the world, with many new downloads coming from women in developing countries. Women who use the FEMM app can track their cycle observations and symptoms to better understand their bodies and health. Just as each woman is different, so are her observations and experiences, which is why the app is completely customizable. Women can track as much or as little as they wish and can

add symptoms and observations. The app also provides insights into what a woman is experiencing in her cycle and can flag potential health concerns and connect women with medical professionals for treatment. Since the COVID-19 pandemic,

FEMM instructors have increasingly been using videoconferencing platforms to teach women how to monitor their ovulation cycles, how to keep track of their observations on paper or on the FEMM app, and how to bring this information to a medical professional. After these courses women have the knowledge to identify regular or irregular cycles and can use this information to seek out a medical professional, as well as to achieve or avoid pregnancy.

FEMM certified medical professionals around the world can reach patients needing medical management via telehealth services. Thanks to these digital technologies, which were vastly improved during the COVID-19 pandemic, more people are benefiting from FEMM than ever.

### **Setting Bolder and Higher Standards for Women’s Basic Healthcare Delivery**

FEMM has had ECOSOC consultative status at the United Nations since 2015 to address blind spots in women’s health programs. Medicine has revealed that regular cycles with ovulation are not only essential for women who wish to conceive, but also for women who simply want to be healthy. Research shows that 70% of women can expect to have regular cycles. Nevertheless, 30% will have irregularities and will require medical management. However, millions of women are still having their symptoms “bandaged” and “masked” by hormonal contraception. More doctors require training to identify and treat these abnormalities. FEMM offers protocols to diagnose and manage them.

Once doctors diagnose women with complicated disorders like polycystic ovarian syndrome or endometriosis, medical systems need to be prepared to offer effective treatment. These women need access to blood testing. This is usually very expensive and is only offered at specialized labs. They need access to hormonal supplements, like progesterone and estrogen, to regularize their cycles. This is not standard medication found at every pharmacy. These products and services are nearly impossible to access in rural areas. Governments must invest in the medications and medical services that are used to help women achieve the highest standard of reproductive health.

### **Conclusion**

FEMM is already providing comprehensive health care for women through basic health delivery systems. When all levels of care are integrated, this fertility-focused approach to women’s health becomes more effective, cheaper to deliver, and provides better health outcomes. This makes FEMM a sustainable way of incorporating advanced endocrinological care into healthcare infrastructures. When women and girls get the care they deserve, it helps them participate fully in their communities, and resiliently face challenges, such as global pandemics and environmental disasters.

FEMM is prepared to work with the Commission and Member States to share its best practices and realize the vision of accessible and affordable comprehensive health care for women.