Commission for Social Development  
Sixty-First Session  
5–14 February 2024  
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: “Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication”

Statement submitted by The 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.
Statement

The Fertility Education & Medical Management (FEMM) Foundation offers 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. FEMM’s is committed to improving the standard of care for all women.

Women’s health plays a crucial role in eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. FEMM provides knowledge that is essential for empowering women and promoting their overall well-being. By improving women’s health, FEMM makes a positive and important contribution to reducing poverty and inequality, through investing in health and education for women and families directly.

Investing in women’s health improves health and life outcomes, and also has a ripple effect on families, communities, and societies at large. Healthy and strong women are better able to contribute to their families and communities, which leads to positive impacts on education, social development, and economic growth. By creating new approaches to women’s health that ensure access to information and healthcare, FEMM invests directly in women, families and communities.

From menarche to menopause, women’s health is deeply impacted by healthy and normal – or abnormal and unhealthy – fluctuations of hormone levels. A study in the journal Frontiers in Public Health showed that these fluctuations affect the whole body, including the woman’s central nervous system. They regulate mood, behavior, and even cognitive abilities. This has an effect on women and girls’ performance at school, as well as their ability to participate fully and actively in the workplace. At all ages, women’s healthcare should be personal and individualized in order to help them to identify and treat underlying conditions and provide the information and informed consent for women to make the choices that are best for them.

As our scientific knowledge base of women’s health and fertility advances, FEMM is proud to be contributing to both knowledge and services that provide stronger outcomes to women, free education to women around the globe, and improvements in basic health management of conditions such as irregular bleeding, pain, depression, mood swings, and weight gain.

FEMM knows that hormonal health is essential to reproductive and overall women’s health. Ovulation is a sign of health in women because it is proof of sufficient hormone levels in all the hormones that influence women’s health. FEMM researchers have developed better diagnostic criteria to identify and treat root conditions that are currently treated mainly at the symptomatic level. They are even discovering links with conditions not typically considered related to reproductive health like coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes which are linked to abnormal ovulation followed by irregular cycles. FEMM takes a new look at the health of contemporary women in ways that will help them take charge of their health and thrive in their communities, including their workplaces. Informed decisions lead to healthier decisions, and FEMM’s programs are ready to be incorporated into existing health and education systems and address the often-ignored health needs of women.

Two specific conditions that are under-researched, under-treated, and poorly understood are endometriosis (found in about 10% of reproductive-aged women and girls) and polycystic ovary syndrome (present in 4%–20% of reproductive-aged women). There is a need for earlier diagnosis of the former, which at its most chronic state causes infertility and ongoing pain. Early diagnosis and treatment of the latter
can reduce the risk of contracting serious complications like the mentioned coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

FEMM’s Medical Management program trains doctors to diagnose and treat reproductive health problems, with a holistic view of a woman’s body that incorporates research on the complex hormonal interactions between different body systems. FEMM has developed innovative protocols that allow doctors to identify underlying problems with precision and treat them effectively. This medical support provides treatments that help women to live healthy lives. These protocols are being implemented in hospitals and medical practices in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Saint Lucia, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, Ukraine, and the United States.

FEMM also enables women to make informed choices about family planning. It gives women access to adequate forms of family planning and information about reproductive health that is accurate and respects cultural, religious, and ethical beliefs. Programs focused on providing reproductive health commodities often fail to ensure that women have the education needed to understand their bodies and what products they are being offered and may not always respect values.

Information-based health education and medical care is uniquely suited to meet women’s needs while respecting individual choices and values. It offers reproductive and hormonal education in person and online. This helps women to understand the way various family planning methods work and their potential side effects. It educates women about the science of their bodies, how to identify when they are fertile, and how to achieve or avoid pregnancy.

FEMM has developed an app to help women take control of their health. The FEMM App is available free of charge for both Apple and Android devices. Women can track their 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 and available in multiple languages. Women can track as much or as little as they like and add symptoms and observations. It also provides insights into what a woman is experiencing in her cycle, can flag potential health concerns, and can also connect women with specially trained medical professionals for treatment.

FEMM is low-cost and meets the underlying needs of women. Comprehensive health care for women can now be provided through basic health delivery systems, making this approach to women’s health more effective, cheaper to deliver, and providing better health outcomes. This makes FEMM a sustainable way of incorporating advanced endocrinological care into standard healthcare infrastructures. By incorporating this care into other efforts, such as reproductive health policies and programs, it becomes easily accessible to women and girls.

FEMM is prepared to address the needs of women through accessible educational programs and cutting-edge medical support. It is ready to share its best practices for how to transform medical systems and work with public and private medical providers to make hormonal and fertility care accessible to all women.

The FEMM Foundation invites this Commission and Member States to recognize and promote healthcare that authentically meets the needs of women. This will make it possible for them to thrive in society and remove hindrances to poverty reduction.