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Statement submitted by Concepts of Truth, Inc., 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

Women's Economic Empowerment and the Impact on Families in the Changing World of Work

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing Declaration) seeks “the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights.” (Beijing Declaration, 9). Although the Declaration acknowledges the important contribution of women and girls in achieving sustainable economic growth and well-being, at what point does the economic empowerment of women and gender equality in the workplace compromise the very dignity and human rights of women and girls that the Declaration seeks to protect?

Historically, work – whether in the home, the office, the fields, the waters or the skies – has provided people with a common purpose: to sustain families and provide for their well-being and development. For some, work was an absolute necessity to provide basic sustenance; for others, work was more a means of personal fulfillment; for everyone, work required the commitment of time. While women have enjoyed unprecedented advances in the workplace, occupying seats on the boards of major companies, filling executive offices, and holding significant titles in most every field, these advances typically result in substantial time commitments outside the home and thus come at a significant cost to the very families that women seek to support.

Recent studies, such as those published in the *American Economic Journal*, found that when women are promoted to high positions in business or politics, their divorce rate increases much faster than it does for men promoted to similar positions. Folke, Olle, and Johanna Rickne. 2020. “All the Single Ladies: Job Promotions and the Durability of Marriage.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 12 (1): 260–87. In a study which looked at the lives of heterosexual men and women working for private companies with 100 or more employees, married women were twice as likely to be divorced three years after their promotion to CEO level compared to their male counterparts. Savage, M, Why Promoted Women Are More Likely to Divorce, [BBC.com/Worklife](https://www.bbc.com/worklife) (Jan. 22, 2020).

Moreover, the pressure on women to excel in the workplace has led many women to limit childbearing, often through abortion. Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote in the 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, “The ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the Nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives.” Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote in her dissenting opinion in *Gonzales v. Carhart* (2007) that undue restrictions on abortion infringe upon “a woman’s autonomy to determine her life’s course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature.”

In research that investigates why young women seek abortions, some of the more frequently given reasons relate to the educational and career consequences of unwanted or mistimed pregnancy. Researchers from the Guttmacher Institute analyzed quantitative data from 1987 and 2005 and found that one of the main reasons women cited for ending their pregnancies was that having a baby would dramatically interfere with their education and work prospects. Finer, LB, et. al, *Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives* (2005) *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2005, 37(3). In another study by the Guttmacher Institute in 2007, women interviewed at three points following an abortion stated that the effect of having a child on education, career, finances and relationships were rated as important reasons for having an abortion. Fergusson, DM,

et. al, *Abortion Among Young Women and Reproductive Outcomes, Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2007, 30(1).

While for some women, abortion may provide short term relief from the physical and emotional stress of carrying an unexpected or unwanted child to term, abortion has significant physical, mental and spiritual consequences. Numerous global studies have confirmed the negative short and long-term health impact of abortion, including the prevalence of immediate post-abortion hemorrhage, infertility, uterine/cervical lacerations, retained fetal body parts, breast cancer, autoimmune disease and numerous psychiatric complications, including severe depression and suicide. See, e.g., Langranchi, A. et. al. *Complications: Abortion's Impact on Women*, The DeVeber Institute for Bioethics and Social Research, Toronto, Canada, 2015.

Abortion is also consistently associated with elevated rates of mental illness compared to women without a history of abortion (see, e.g. Reardon, D.C. *The abortion and mental health controversy: A comprehensive literature review of common ground agreements, disagreements, actionable recommendations, and research opportunities*. *Sage Open Medicine Journal*, volume 6, Oct. 29, 2018, and a woman's ambivalence during the abortion decision-making process is one of the more common risk factors for mental health problems. Coleman, P., et al. *Women Who Suffered emotionally from abortion: A qualitative synthesis of their experiences*. *J. of Am. Phys. and Surg.*, Volume 22 Number 4, Winter 2017. According to 22 peer reviewed studies comprising 877,181 women who had abortions, women were 81 per cent more likely to have mental health issues than those who did not have an abortion, and of those, nearly 10 per cent of the incidence of mental health problems were shown to be directly attributable to the abortion itself, with substance abuse and suicide among the most common problems. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, Volume 199, Issue 3 September 2011, pp. 180–186.

Society needs to empower women by supporting them in their decisions to work outside the home as well as in the home, and encourage them in their efforts to raise stable families, which are the bedrock of a healthy strong culture. We need to be a society that values children not eradicates them. As the *Irish Times* observed, People don't consider abortions when they feel confident about their abilities to nurture children. They don't consider having one when they know they will be supported by family and, more importantly, by society. People consider abortions when having a baby seems like the end of the world. If our society was one that truly supported parenthood, having a baby would not be a crisis. *Lack of Support for Parenthood Main Reason Why Women Have Abortions*, *The Irish Times* (Oct. 13, 2001).

Concepts of Truth, Inc., an ECOSOC accredited NGO, acts to spread awareness of the possible trauma of reproductive loss and its consequences on individuals and societies by providing worldwide access to competent and caring counselors, who acknowledge and affirm the client's emotions and instill in each individual a due sense of human dignity deserving of love. Concepts of Truth, Inc. is committed to providing each person with knowledge that will enrich their sexual and mental health and release them from the pain and guilt of past reproductive loss or sexual trauma. A stable system of reproductive health begins with strong education and Concepts of Truth, Inc. aims to educate the whole person to make healthy life choices that empower future generations using its curriculum, *Concepts of Sexual Health, Sex & You*, which relies on medical facts and research to transmit the truth about core values, self-worth, human rights, dignity, love and responsibility, and the science of sex to empower youth and families to make informed choices for themselves and the heritage passed on to future generations.