



# BRAZIL

**54<sup>TH</sup> COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)**

**2 March 2010**

**Statement by H.E. Minister Nilcéa Freire  
Special Secretary on Policies for Women  
Federative Republic of Brazil**

*(Please check against delivery)*

Mr. Chairman,

One hundred years have passed since the Second International Conference of Socialist Women, held in Denmark, when the Women's Day was established on March 8<sup>th</sup> to pay homage to women's movement and discuss women's citizen rights.

The adoption, in 1995, of the Beijing Platform of Action had deep impact on Government policies and thus on women lives. Fifteen years have since passed.

Throughout History, women have staged many a battle for freedom. Women have played a crucial role in fighting totalitarian governments, building up democratic ones, curbing poverty and legitimating the universal principles of human rights. Furthermore, women have been at the front in every battle against discrimination based on race, class, sexual orientation and aging.

Nonetheless, in Brazil and worldwide those efforts have not been enough to eliminate discrimination and violence against women, albeit undoubtedly some progress has been made.

Mr. Chairman,

In Brazil, the last few years have been decisive in developing social and human rights policies. Ever since the establishment, within the structure of the Presidency of the Republic, of the Special Secretary for Policies for Women, in 2003, two National Conferences have been held in Brazil, which resulted in the First and the Second National Plan of Policies for Women. The Secretary's mandate has been consistently amplified ever since. Let me single out some of the goals Brazil has achieved.

Brazil has adopted legislation to sanction violence against women, the "Maria da Penha Law", in August 2007. On the basis of the new legal provisions, the Brazilian Government has implemented the National Pact on Fighting Violence against Women. The Pact has enabled the construction of a national network of public structures to assist women who are the victims of violence. It comprises Centers of Reference, Home-shelters, Specialized Courts of Justice to prosecute the aggressors. Moreover, we have provided training for over fifty thousand public workers who deal directly with women victims of violence, mainly from the health, social assistance and public security sectors. In the last three years such network has been expanded and 500.000 dollars will be invested in the program until 2011.

The increasing participation of women in all levels of schooling is a concrete trend. The majority of high school and university students in Brazil are women and most of the scholarships for Masters and PhD degrees are granted to women. In 2005 Brazil launched the Program of Gender and Diversity at School, which consists of capacitating teachers in public schools to deal with diversity in the classroom, so as to counter gender stereotypes associated to race and sexual orientation.

On healthcare, the progressive reduction of maternal mortality rates in Brazil is an important achievement. As a strategy of social mobilization, Brazil created a National Pact on the subject and we expect to curb maternal mortality by 15% until 2011.

Another major breakthrough is the elaboration of an Integrated Plan to Combat the Feminization of AIDS, in partnership with UNFPA, UNICEF and UNIFEM. The Plan provides a framework for the development and implementation of policies and actions to enhance the prevention and the diagnosis and treatment for women with AIDS. In this regard, we consider of utmost importance to discuss the need to reduce the price of female condoms, in order to provide universal access thereto, both as a contraceptive and prevention modality.

Regarding the economic empowerment of women, the Brazilian Government has achieved significant results. The Pro-Gender Equity Program, which aims at promoting equality of opportunities between women and men, involved 136 public and private organizations in its three editions. The Program awards those organizations that develop new concepts and practices regarding human resources so as to promote equality between sexes. Through the Woman Work and Entrepreneurship Program, we have been able to guarantee the sustainability of initiatives aiming at resource generation for women. Moreover, we have opened new spaces in professions that were traditionally dominated by men, such as civil construction. We have also managed to guarantee better conditions for rural women workers by means of credit concession and social security.

Furthermore, the Government of Brazil has been working hard to improve female participation in politics. As a result of a partnership between the Government and civil society, 30% of all electoral vacancies have been reserved for women candidates. Furthermore, our political parties will invest 5% of their financial resources in capacity-building and 10% of the time allocated to electoral propaganda to women candidates.

Mr. Chairman,

Although we have achieved many important goals, challenges still lie ahead. In this context, we are confident that the new composite gender entity will be able to support national efforts and policies, manage more significant resources and have a strong presence on the ground.

In closing, I would like to express our full solidarity to the peoples of Haiti and Chile, which have suffered from tragic earthquakes of such disastrous consequences. Brazil will continue providing the humanitarian assistance that is needed in order to support the recovering efforts.

As we celebrate in 2010 the Interamerican Year of Women, Brazil will host the XI Conference on the Latin-American and Caribbean Woman. We expect the participation of 800 friends from all the countries in the region to discuss the role the State can play in the social and economic development of women. Looking ahead into the future, the ECLAC Conference in Brasília aims at mainstreaming gender perspective in regional policies, so as to make a significant contribution to the advancement of the rights of women in the world.

Thank you.