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INSTITUTO NACIONAL
DE LA MUJER

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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CHILE
54TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
New York, 5 March 2010**

Mr. Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once upon a time, in the hemicycle of the United Nations General Assembly, there was a President who began by saying: "I come from Chile, a small country but one where today each citizen is free to express himself or herself as he or she sees fit, with unlimited cultural, religious and ideological tolerance, where there is no room for racial discrimination".

Today I can paraphrase those words and say that I come from Chile, a country governed by a woman, Dr. Michelle Bachelet, who in her determination to create a more equitable society implemented policies, plans and programmes that narrowed gender gaps in the various spheres of national life and, as soon as she assumed office, achieved parity in her Cabinet, which was unprecedented in Chile, and adopted a gender agenda which has been a road map for the formulation of public policy in our country.

And so today, in the year of our bicentenary, we can say that in Chile we are closer to achieving equality of opportunities and rights between women and men.

Allow me then to convey to you greetings from Her Excellency President Bachelet and to announce the commitment of the Government of Chile to fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action.

We should also like to express the hope that this will be a year for stocktaking, renewal of efforts and coordination, on the occasion of the commemoration of Beijing + 15, the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and the OAS Inter-American Year of Women.

In this connection, Chile welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women (A/64/588) and hopes that Member States will succeed in organizing the governance and funding of this entity, so that it will have substantial and foreseeable financing, with regular and significant contributions.

In addition, we are proud that UNIFEM has invited President Bachelet to act as champion of human rights, as International Spokesperson for the agenda for the protection of women and girls in Haiti.

Mr. Chairperson,

Once democracy was restored in Chile - a process in which the women's movement played a crucial role - the new Republic recognized the tenets of this social movement and created an institution dealing exclusively with gender issues, the National Service for Women (SERNAM). From then on, successive democratic Governments promoted measures to mainstream gender in public policies and the State system.

Over the past four years, the slogan **We are all Chile** was adopted, reaffirming the determination of the Government of Chile to adopt a gender-based approach. The **Gender Equity Agenda 2006-2010** provided guidelines for action by Ministries and Services, stressing that without the advancement of women, considered as persons with legal rights, the country cannot grow.

The vision of a more inclusive country inspired the adoption of measures to combat discrimination against women in the labour sphere, such as the measure to eliminate the salary gap and the rules enhancing the rights of women workers in private homes, women workers in trade and women with small children, among others.

In this connection, SERNAM implemented major programmes, such as the one for female heads of household, empowering them as entrepreneurs and as workers. The programme to promote good labour practices with gender equity is supported by the Code of Good Labour Practices with a gender perspective, which is compulsory in the public service and was the basis for work with the country's largest private firms.

The pension reform with a gender perspective was symbolic: it included measures to enhance women's participation in the national economy and to reduce the inequalities affecting their access to social security. The reform values the contribution of domestic work and motherhood and entitles all Chilean women, including those who have not engaged in paid work, to a pension and an additional benefit for each child. As a result, we see today that 60 per cent of those who benefited from this reform are women.

Another measure improving the standards of living of women and their families is the social protection system which covers Chileans throughout their lifetime. The initial programme **Chile is Growing With You**, in addition to providing care for pregnant women and their children, enables low-income women to be more independent by providing child care facilities allowing them to enter the labour market or obtain an education. The number of public crèches has quintupled, providing preferential access and extended hours for children of working mothers.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the area of public health, the Plan of Explicit Guarantees entitles everyone to treatment for the 66 most common medical conditions, including comprehensive care meeting women's most important health needs, such as pain relief in childbirth, and treatment of breast and uterine cancer and depression, which affects a large number of Chilean women. In addition, free health care is guaranteed for persons over 60 years of age through the public health system, of which women are the main beneficiaries.

We should also like to emphasize that, after a lengthy process, in which the determination of the Executive Branch to promote this policy was demonstrated, the law on Information,

Guidance and Benefits relating to Fertility Regulation was finally promulgated. In the words of our President, this legislation establishes “rights in the area of fertility that will enable us to move forward, always bearing in mind the health of the population and the rights of women”.

This legislation ensures that over one million women regulating their fertility through the public health system will be entitled to information and guidance and have access without charge to the various contraceptive methods approved by the health system, including emergency contraception. It is also very important that the new rules require all schools in Chile to provide sex education, which will help to prevent teenage pregnancies and promote responsible sexuality.

Mr. Chairperson,

We have worked hard to achieve progress in the prevention and social and penal repression of gender-based violence. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/143 on **intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women**, Chile has taken a series of initiatives to increase public awareness of the problem of violence against women. These initiatives have resulted in a gradual increase in complaints and a decrease in violence. For example, in 2000 one out of two Chilean women was the victim of physical, sexual or psychological violence; in 2008, the figure was one out of three.

In recent years, the legislation on domestic violence has been improved and the Prevention of Violence Programme, spearheaded by SERNAM, has been implemented, providing for 90 women’s centres and 25 shelters in all regions of the country, which are engaged in grassroots preventive work, and protection and comprehensive care of victims. At the same time, steps are being taken to launch a special programme of psycho-social care for male perpetrators of violence, with the aim of reducing repeat offences.

In addition, Chile was the first Latin American country to develop an **Action Plan for resolution 1325 on women, peace and security**, aimed at comprehensive and cross-cutting implementation of measures to protect women and girls in armed conflict and to promote their participation in the processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction of democracy.

Accordingly, we also co-sponsored **Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009)** on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

In this connection, Chile welcomes the recent appointment of Ms. Margot Wallström as the **Secretary-General’s Special Representative on sexual violence against women and children in conflict**, with the mandate set out in Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) co-sponsored by Chile. We hope that she will be given the necessary resources to perform her mandate in a timely and effective manner.

In the area of human rights, achievements include ratification of the Rome Statute, the international instrument setting up the International Criminal Court, as well as creation of the Human Rights Institute and the Museum of Memory, which will do preventive work and facilitate complaints about any action infringing human rights and will improve the policy for awarding compensation to persons whose rights have been violated.

Mr. Chairperson,

With regard to gender mainstreaming, Chile together with Estonia facilitated the Economic and Social Council resolution on *Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, 2009/12*. We endorse the content of this resolution, because it seeks equality with dignity and full enjoyment of the rights of women and girls.

At the national level, Chile has since 2000 been implementing a strategy for mainstreaming gender in public policies and in public agency management systems, through instruments of a political and technical nature. Starting in 2009, the gender equity system has been included as a strategic element of quality management and quality assurance (ISO 9001:2008); this should raise standards for monitoring and enhancing the gender commitments of each ministry and public service.

Mr. Chairperson,

In a participatory process involving over 15,000 women and organizations throughout the country, SERNAM drafted a third plan on equal opportunities and rights for women and men, 2010-2020.

In conclusion, 15 years after Beijing and with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, we reaffirm Chile's commitment to gender equality. We are confident that on the occasion of its bicentenary Chile will redouble its efforts to promote women's empowerment and women's rights. And we know that women will continue to work together, as they have done throughout Chile's history, to achieve a more fair and inclusive society.

Thank you.