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**Opening statement
by
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on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
at the
37th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
(CEDAW)
New York, 15 January 2007**

Distinguished experts,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General and on my own behalf let me once again congratulate members of the Committee who were newly elected at the fourteenth meeting of States parties to the Convention in June 2006. Your knowledge and expertise will greatly enrich the work of the Committee.

I also extend my congratulations to the seven members of the Committee who were re-elected. Your contribution to the work of this Committee is well known. I am confident that you will continue to play a critical role in the efforts to promote and strengthen respect for women's human rights. The vast knowledge and wide-ranging expertise of the new members, combined with the wealth of expertise and experience of the continuing members of the Committee will enhance progress in the implementation of the Convention, not only at the national level but also at the international level as well.

Madam Chairperson,

Allow me to once again pay tribute to the outgoing Chairperson, Ms. Rosario Manalo, for her leadership and outstanding achievements during her stewardship. My gratitude also goes to the other members of the Bureau who served with her over the last two years, namely the three Vice-Chairpersons Ms. Meriem Belmihoub-Zerdani, Ms. Silvia Pimentel, and Ms. Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling, and the Rapporteur Ms. Dubravka Šimonović. Their hard work and dedication ensured a successful transformation of the working method of the Committee from a single chamber to two simultaneous chambers.

Madam Chair-person,

Allow me also to acknowledge with great appreciation the commitment, dedication and effective and substantive contributions to the Committee made by Ms. Huguette Bokpe-Gnacadjia, Ms. Salma Khan, Ms. Krisztina Morvai and Ms. Victoria Popescu, experts whose terms on the Committee ended on 31 December 2006. I have no doubt that they will continue to support the implementation and dissemination of the Convention. I look forward to continued collaboration with them in our common objectives and wish them success in their future endeavors.

I congratulate the members of the bureau on their election and wish them success as they take on the responsibility to oversee the work of the Committee to ensure continued progress in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

The 37th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is taking place at an important time in the life of the United Nations. It is exactly two weeks since our new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, assumed office. We look forward to his leadership and pledge our full support to him as he guides our Organization in the years ahead. His tenure as Secretary-General has started very auspiciously for women. Of the five appointments he has made so far three are women, translating into 60%. One of them, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, appointed as the Deputy Secretary-General, is a former member of this Committee. Ms. Alicia Barcena Ibarra is the Under Secretary-General for Management while Ms. Michele Montas was appointed as the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General has thus signaled right at the outset his commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and his readiness to place women in key high-level positions, as called for under articles 7 and 8 of the Convention. I have no doubt that members of the Committee will join me in congratulating Ms. Asha Rose- Migiro, Ms. Alicia Barcena Ibarra and Ms. Michele Montas on their appointments and wishing them success in their new functions.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

I would like to bring to your attention a number of issues pertinent to the work of this Committee, and to the question of the promotion of gender equality. Firstly, the Secretary-General's study on violence against women was launched during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, in October 2006. I wish to thank the two experts of this Committee who served on the Advisory Committee for the study, Ms Dorcas Coker-Appiah and Ms Heisoo Shin, for their most valiant contribution in shaping the approach, content and recommendations of the study. Ms Hannan will provide further details about the study and the resolution adopted by the General Assembly. Regrettably, violence against women and girls remains unabated in whatever form and manifestation, depriving them of the full enjoyment of their human rights. This Committee must remain vigilant in ensuring that States parties protect women and girls from violence.

Experts will recall the discussions on reform of the United Nations over the past years. I had several times the opportunity to brief you and to hear your views and

comments. Of particular interest to this Committee is the decision of the Secretary-General to transfer the responsibility of servicing this treaty body to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Committee will meet later today with the High Commissioner on this particular question.

Another issue I would like to bring to your attention pertains to the gender architecture, a matter I discussed with you at your thirty-fifth session. In November, the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment issued its report. That panel, at the specific request of the Secretary-General, reviewed as well the contribution of the United Nations system to achieving gender equality and made recommendations on how gender equality perspectives could be better integrated into the work of the Organization. It reviewed the gender architecture and provided the Secretary-General with a proposal for the establishment of one dynamic entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. The entity, headed by an Executive Director with the rank of Under-Secretary-General, would reflect a consolidation of OSAGI, DAW and UNIFEM.

The Secretary-General has transmitted the report of the Panel to Member States for their consideration, with his strong support for its recommendations. At the same time, following an intensive in-house consultative process, a report on Gender architecture for the United Nations: revised estimates to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 was submitted to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions requesting, *inter alia*, the establishment of a post at the Under-Secretary-General level for the Executive Director of the Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women entity. I will be pleased to discuss this proposal further with the Committee in the course of the session.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

I would like to assure the Committee that my Office and the Division for the Advancement of Women are committed to ensuring that the Convention and the Optional Protocol achieve universal ratification and are as widely known as possible. Although the target of universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000 set out in the Beijing Platform for Action has not yet been achieved, further progress has nevertheless been made in the ratification of both the Convention and the Optional Protocol. I am happy to report that since your last session, the number of States parties to the Convention has increased by two with the ratification by Cook Islands and Montenegro, bringing the total number of States parties to 185. I am also pleased to report that four Member States have become party to the Optional Protocol, namely: Armenia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and the Republic of Korea, bringing the number of States parties to 83. With the acceptance by Slovenia of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, on the Committee's meeting time, the total number of acceptances now stands at 48.

Once again, you have a full schedule planned for the three weeks ahead of you, and I wish you success in your important deliberations. I pledge the full support and

commitment of my office and the Division for the Advancement of Women in facilitating your task in every way possible to ensure the smooth completion of your heavy workload.

Thank you.
