

**Statement by
Carolyn Hannan
Director, Division for the Advancement of Women
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

**Opening session of the 50th Commission on the Status of Women
27 February – 10 March 2006**

Madame Chairperson,
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates,
Representatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations,

It is an honour to address the Commission on the Status of Women. I also extend a warm welcome to the Ministers, Heads of National Machineries and other high-level representatives, as well as to all other delegates and participants at this milestone 50th session. The high level of participation is indicative of the continued relevance of the Commission at national level.

The presence of the large number of representatives of non-governmental organizations at this session also indicates the continued critical contribution of civil society to the work of the Commission.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Chairperson and members of the Bureau of the Commission for their leadership in the preparation of this session.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

The high-level roundtable this afternoon will provide an opportunity for high-level representatives from capitals to share experiences and good practices and discuss strategies and approaches, as well as challenges and constraints, in mainstreaming gender perspectives into national development strategies for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. A discussion guide on the high level round table is contained in document E/CN.6/2004/CRP.2.

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for the period 2002-2006, the Commission will consider two thematic issues at its present session. Consideration of the thematic issues is at the core of the Commission's work, and makes a critical contribution to the systematic follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Focusing on selected topics allows the Commission to further refine the global policy framework for gender equality in order to strengthen and accelerate implementation of the recommendations for practical action at all levels.

The report of the Secretary-General on the theme, Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work, contained in document E/CN.6/2006/12, provides an overview of challenges, opportunities and promising strategies for enhancing an enabling environment for gender equality and the advancement of women, with illustrative examples from the areas of education, health and work.

The Secretary-General's report on the theme Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels, before you in document E/CN.6/2006/13, analyses the current situation of women in decision-making processes and the conditions required for achieving their successful participation and leadership. The report also addresses the impact of women's participation and leadership on promoting gender equality.

Consideration of the two thematic issues will be further enriched by the two expert panel discussions scheduled for tomorrow, 28 February.

To support the consideration of the themes, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized two expert group meetings prior to the Commission. The expert group meeting on enhanced participation of women in development, was organized in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand, from 8 to 11 November 2005. The expert group meeting on the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 24 to 27 October 2005, was a collaborative effort with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The reports from both expert group meeting have been disseminated through the DAW website and copies are available in the room for reference.

Under agenda item 3(b) on Emerging issues, the Commission will organize a high-level panel on The gender dimensions of international migration. The Chairperson's summary will provide an input to the High-level Dialogue in the General Assembly from 14-15 September 2006. An issues paper to guide discussions is contained in document E/CN.6/2006/CRP

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

During this session, the Commission will further consider its working methods and develop a new multi-year programme of work from 2007, based on the proposal contained in document E/CN.6/2006/3. To facilitate the development of the proposed programme of work, consultations were held with the United Nations Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and with representatives of non-governmental organizations. The Division for the Advancement of Women also organized an expert consultation with representatives of regional networks, from 31 October to 3 November 2005, in New York, to identify priority issues in the follow-up to the 10-year review and

appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and this meeting also provided inputs to the preparation of the work programme. The Division would like to express its appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations for hosting the expert consultation.

Under agenda item 3 on Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, the Commission has before it a number of reports and conference room papers. The joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is contained in document E/CN.6/2006/9. The Commission has also before it the reports of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2006/4); the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan (E/CN.6/2006/5); and release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflict (E/CN.6/2006/6).

The report of the Secretary-General, in document E/CN.6/2004/2, reviews progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes. The Commission has also before it the report of the Secretary-General on economic advancement for women (E/CN.6/2006/7) which examines issues relating to the status of women in the labour market. The report draws on responses from Member States and on inputs from entities of the United Nations system on actions taken to support the efforts of Member States to promote economic advancement for women.

A report on the Thirty-Fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination is before the Commission for its information (E/CN.6/2006/CRP1). The Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Rosario G. Manalo, will brief you in more detail on the Committee’s work.

The report of the Secretary-General on the advisability of the appointment of a special Rapporteur on laws that discriminate women (E/CN.6/2006/8) presents an overview of international human rights instruments, policy documents and mechanisms aimed at eliminating laws that discriminate against women, as well as views of Member States and Observers, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report reviews implications of appointing a special Rapporteur and concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

I will revert to introduction of the reports before the Commission under agenda items 4 and 5 later in the session at the time the Commission considers these items.

Madame Chairperson, Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

I would like to conclude with brief information on some key activities of the Division for the Advancement of Women. During the past year the Division has

continued implementation of the project on “Enhancing the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of ICT” in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). A panel discussion organized during the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in November 2005 discussed the need for a regional e-network of national machineries in Africa and presented a framework for future action by national machineries to ensure effective utilization of ICT to advance their goals.

The Division's programme of technical support to States parties in implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is increasingly important in ensuring that international human rights standards for women are translated into actual benefits at the national level. Our activities include sub-regional workshops on implementation and reporting under the Convention for government officials, and judicial colloquia on the application of the Convention in domestic courts. In the past year, together with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), a regional training workshop and judicial colloquium was held in Santiago, Chile, for nine countries in the Latin American region.

As part of our joint workplan with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a sub-regional workshop on follow-up to concluding comments / observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was held in Cairo, Egypt, for six countries in the North African region. In addition, two missions to Sierra Leone were undertaken as part of our programme of sustained and comprehensive support to post-conflict countries to implement the Convention. Similar initiatives are planned for Afghanistan, Liberia and Timor-Leste in the current year.

The Division is also engaged in the development of training materials to support its technical cooperation programme and to assist in efforts towards raising awareness about the Convention and its Optional Protocol. The most notable initiative in this regard is the preparation of a manual on the implementation of the Convention and use of the Optional Protocol which is due to be completed this year. We are grateful to those donor countries which provide financial support for our programme of technical cooperation on CEDAW, in particular the Governments of Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

The Division is currently finalizing the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women which will be submitted to the General Assembly at its 61st session. The study aims to strengthen political commitment and joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate violence against women and to increase momentum for concrete action and enhanced accountability.

In commemoration of the 50th session of the Commission, the Division is happy to announce the publication of a compilation of the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission between 1996 and 2005. Copies will be made available to all delegations. The document will also be available on CD-rom. A brochure commemorating the 50th

session of the Commission and the 60 years of the work of the Commission has also been prepared and will be distributed to delegations. A webpage has been established on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women which will be used throughout the year to highlight the 60th anniversary of the Commission this year.

The Division will provide delegations with an updated Directory of national machineries for the advancement of women during the session. The Division would be grateful to receive information on further changes to be incorporated.

During this session there will be a large programme of parallel events, organized by Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. Approximately 50 activities will be organized in the United Nations and 150 in the Church Centre.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

At this 50th session we must both celebrate the achievements of the Commission and work to ensure its continued relevance at national level, particularly in the context of the Declaration adopted at the 49th session of the Commission which called for accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action. The Division for the Advancement of Women, stands ready to support you, Madame Chairperson, the Bureau and the Commission in this important work.

Thank you.