

**Statement by
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Mr. Chairperson.
Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour to address the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I extend a warm welcome to the Ministers, Heads of National Machineries, and other high-level representatives, including those from Ministries of Finance or Planning, as well as all other delegates and participants. The large number of high-level participants from capitals, as well as the significant presence of United Nations entities and civil society, once again demonstrates the strong interest in the issues taken up annually by the Commission and their relevance for work at national level.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Chairperson, and the members of the Bureau of the Commission, for their leadership in the preparation of this session.

The Commission continues to play an important catalytic role in advancing the policy agenda on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission's new working methods were successfully initiated at its 51st session in 2007 and have increased the focus on implementation of policy outcomes at national level. The Commission provides an important global forum for enhanced exchange of national experiences, lessons learned and good practices.

It is encouraging to see how the agenda of the work of the Commission influences the work of bodies at global, regional and national levels. Over the past year, a number of organizations, including, among others, the OECD/DAC Gender Equality Network, the UN Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community have organized meetings specifically focused on the priority theme of this session and engaged their constituencies in preparatory processes.

Distinguished delegates,

In accordance with its new working methods, the Commission will consider the priority theme: "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women" at this session under agenda item 3(a) and will develop recommendations to accelerate action in this area at global, regional and national levels.

The report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme is before the Commission in document E/CN.6/2008/2. The report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2008/5) on implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy also focuses on the priority theme.

To contribute to the consideration of the priority theme, the Division for the Advancement of Women convened an Expert Group Meeting in Oslo, Norway, from 4 to 7 September 2007. The meeting was generously hosted by the Government of Norway. The report of the Expert Group Meeting has been disseminated through the website of the Division, and copies are available in the back of this room.

The Division also held a four-week online discussion on the priority theme in June/July 2007, with more than 1,300 registered participants from 145 countries. The report of the online discussion is available on the Division's website.

Distinguished delegates,

Under agenda item 3 (b) on Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men, the Commission will convene an expert panel (on Thursday 28 February from 3-6pm) to explore the gender perspectives in all aspects of climate change. The Commission aims to build on the momentum of the December 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, which signalled Member States' commitment to address climate change, including through the Bali Action Plan which launched negotiations for the achievement of a comprehensive global agreement by the end of 2009. An issues paper is available to guide discussions.

In accordance with its new working methods, the Commission will review progress in national level implementation of agreed conclusions adopted at a previous session – the agreed conclusions on “Women's participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding” adopted at its 48th session in 2004. An interactive dialogue (on Friday 29 February, from 10am to 1pm) will be facilitated by keynote speakers. An issues paper is available to guide the discussions.

In this context, I am pleased to inform delegates that the agreed conclusions adopted at the 51st session on “Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” have been published in a brochure in English. These agreed conclusions will also be available in a similar format in all languages in the near future. The availability of the agreed conclusions in this format will strengthen their use at national level and facilitate the review process to be undertaken in two-three years time by the Commission, under its new working methods.

In preparation for consideration of the priority theme of the 53rd session in 2009, the Commission will also hold a lunch-time panel on “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS” (on Wednesday 27 February in CR2). An issues paper is available to facilitate participation in the panel.

Distinguished delegates,

Under agenda item 3 (c), the Commission has before it a number of reports and conference room papers.

The report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, contained in document E/CN.6/2008/6, and the report of the Secretary-General on women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts (E/CN.6/2008/7), are before the Commission. The Commission also has before it the report of the Secretary-General on ending female genital mutilation (E/CN.6/2008/3) and the report of the Secretary-General on forced marriage of the girl child (E/CN.6/2008/4).

The joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is contained in document E/CN.6/2008/8. A note by the Secretary-General on the strategic framework for the biennium 2010-2011: sub-programme 2, Gender issues and advancement of women, is also before you for consideration (E/CN.6/2008/CRP.4).

The report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth, and thirty-ninth sessions, contained in A/62/38, has been made available to the Commission. A note by the Secretariat transmitting the results of the fortieth session of the Committee, contained in E/CN.6/2008/CRP.1, is before the Commission. The Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, will address the work of the Committee in greater detail.

Under agenda item 4, a Note by the Secretary-General transmits the list of confidential communications concerning the status of women (E/CN.6/2008/SW/COMM.LIST/42/R and Add.1/R). The report of the Secretary-General on the future work of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women, contained in document E/CN.6/2004/11 and Add.1 and Add.2 is also before the Commission.

Under agenda item 5, the Commission has before it a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to the Council's policy recommendations, contained in document E/CN.6/2008/10 and annexes I and II, as well as a note by the Secretariat on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development as an input to ECOSOC (E/CN.6/2008/CRP.2).

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

The General Assembly, in resolution 62/133, requested the Secretary-General to present an oral report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-second session with information provided by the United Nations bodies, funds and programmes and the specialized agencies on recent follow-up activities to implement resolutions 61/143 and 62/133, including on the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. Out of 36 entities and 2 inter-agency mechanisms that had initially contributed to the Inventory of United Nations System Activities on Violence against Women, 25 provided updates of action undertaken. UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict provided information for the first time. Copies of the updated inventory are available in the room.

Entities have supported national efforts to eliminate violence against women, including the development of legislation, policies and national action plans and advocacy and awareness raising initiatives. They have also worked on supporting national efforts through capacity building – in this regard, various United Nations entities have developed guidelines and handbooks, and implemented capacity building, technical cooperation and training programmes at the local, national and regional levels. Some have undertaken initiatives aimed at strengthening national capacities and efforts for the collection, processing and dissemination of data on violence against women. Others have convened expert group meetings to contribute to policy development. United Nations entities continue to carry out research and analysis and have published various reports on the issue.

UNFPA and DAW serve as co-convenors of the Task Force on Violence against Women of the Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE). The Task Force is spearheading the implementation of joint programming on violence against women in 10 pilot countries. With the funding of a Coordinator for the Task Force, as well as commitment of resources for the assessment phase in these countries by UNFPA, this initiative is now well on its way. Baseline studies are being undertaken in several countries and planning workshops will take place in up to eight countries this year. Donor support to this initiative would ensure that the recommendations and action plans emanating from the planning phase can be effectively implemented in a timely manner.

The General Assembly has requested the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) to intensify its consideration of ways and means to *enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations Trust Fund* in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women as a system-wide funding mechanism. Work has been initiated both within the interagency network (IANWGE) as well as the Trust Fund's Project Appraisal Committee to review the Trust Fund's current terms of reference and modalities, so as to comply with the terms of the General Assembly resolution.

Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to brief the Commission on some of the major activities undertaken by the Division since the 51st session of the Commission.

I am pleased to provide information on the follow up to the request of the General Assembly to undertake work on indicators on the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women. Together with the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Statistical Division, and in collaboration with the other four regional commissions, the Division organized an expert group meeting in October 2007 on this issue. The experts were joined by a significant number of observers, which testifies to the interest in this issue. The expert group proposed a set of international indicators on prevalence of violence against women. The report of the Expert Group Meeting is available. The Commission will hold a joint dialogue with the Statistical Commission during lunchtime on Thursday 28 February. We hope that the Commission on the Status of Women will consider these proposals at the current session, and recommend a set of indicators to enhance Member States' capacity to assess the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.

Over the past year, the Division continued to provide technical assistance to Member States, on request, to enhance the capacity at national level to implement commitments made in the intergovernmental processes, including in the Beijing Platform for Action and its follow-up, as well as obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Allow me to highlight activities in some areas.

The Division continued its programme of support to countries emerging from conflict to implement the Convention, and held workshops in Liberia and Haiti. We are confident that both countries will soon submit their reports under article 18 of the Convention. The Division also supported a national workshop on reporting under the Convention in Antigua and Barbuda.

Collaboration with the Regional Commissions was also continued, including through a workshop organized with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Amman, Jordan, for judges and parliamentarians from ten countries in the region. In addition to implementation of the Convention, the workshop focused on measures to reduce violence against women. I would like to extend our appreciation to those States which have provided extrabudgetary resources to allow the Division to further expand work in this area.

The Division has put a strong emphasis on follow up to the Secretary-General's study, and General Assembly resolutions 61/143, and 62/133, on intensification of efforts to eliminate violence against women. I am pleased to report that the study is now available in book form in French and Spanish, in addition to English, and copies have been made available to Member States.

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I am very pleased to draw your attention to a CD Rom the Division has produced on the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Copies have been distributed to all Member States. The CD Rom provides easy access to 25 years of work of the Committee. Following an introduction and overview of the Committee's work, the CD Rom provides the full text of all concluding comments issued by the Committee up to the 39th session, which was the last session of the Committee serviced by the Division. Servicing of the Committee was transferred to OHCHR on 1 January 2008. The French and Spanish versions of the CD-rom are under preparation.

Lastly, I wish to express the full support of the Division for the Advancement of Women for the Secretary-General's campaign on violence against women.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

The Division for the Advancement of Women stands ready to support the Commission in the work of this session. We look forward to strong outcomes that will ensure increased resources to accelerate implementation at national level, strengthened attention to gender perspectives in the follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus and in the urgent work on climate change, as well as enhanced participation of women in all conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

Thank you