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Statement

by

Mrs. Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek

**Federal Minister for Women and Civil Service
of the Republic of Austria**

**On the occasion of the
56th Session of the
Commission on the Status of Women**

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Check against delivery!

Madame Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union. It is a privilege and honour for me to address the high level plenary of the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In Austria, around 75% of the population live in rural areas. Examining the situation of women in rural areas is therefore an important women's policy issue. When we talk about women in rural areas, we mean both women farmers and women living in the countryside. It is important to take into account their different needs and challenges.

While the focus in the mid-1960s was on showing the realities of everyday life for women farmers, increasing attempts were made in the 1980s to reveal and change the disadvantaged position of women in the countryside. A vital impetus towards gender equality in rural areas was then provided by the gender mainstreaming strategy from the mid-1990s onwards.

Women play an important role in agriculture and currently account for around 41% of agricultural and forestry workers.

The number of female-headed farms has increased significantly over the past ten years. Compared to other EU countries, Austria has a high percentage of agricultural businesses lead by women. A key factor therefore is the strong participation of female farmers in educational programmes in Austria which ensure that hardly any women farmers nowadays lack educational qualifications.

On average, 38% of agricultural businesses are headed by women. However, the percentage decreases as the size of the business increases.

The participation of girls and women over 18 years in education is lower in rural regions than in urban areas. One of the main reasons for this is the concentration of

educational institutions in large towns and cities. Limited job opportunities, low provision of childcare facilities and adequate infrastructure are challenges for many women. Traditional attitudes, such as women being expected to bear sole responsibility for child care and the care of older relatives, still make life difficult for many women in the countryside.

Decision-making structures in rural areas are often dominated exclusively by men. Increasing female participation in local decision-making bodies is of great importance here. This issue is being addressed in the "equal opportunities" section of the Austrian Programme for the Development of Rural Areas.

Differences between urban and rural areas are also reflected in the level and distribution of incomes, with the pay gap between women and men being greater in rural regions than in urban areas.

For many women, especially young women, life in the countryside is becoming increasingly unattractive. Migration from rural to urban areas is often the final consequence. This occurs most frequently among girls and women aged between 18 and 26.

It is therefore particularly important to close existing gaps, such as the continuing pay gap, and to take into account the needs of women in rural areas.

In Austria, the most recent amendment to the Equal Treatment Act marked an important step towards greater salary transparency. Companies over a certain size are now obliged to produce sex-disaggregated staff income reports. This has created a powerful instrument that enables action to be taken against discriminatory wage inequalities. The only countries in Europe to have established a legal basis for income transparency are Sweden and Austria.

Furthermore, job advertisements must now state the minimum wage and how much more the employer would be prepared to pay. Administrative penalties are being imposed for non-compliance. The online salary calculator is another important step towards greater transparency.

Role models and stereotypes can prevent women and men in both urban and rural areas from achieving their full potential. The introduction of a "daddy's month" in the public sector on 1 January 2011 which allows fathers of newborn children to take time off, is intended to motivate a greater number of fathers to take on more responsibility for child care. Ultimately, the reconciliation between work and private life is an issue that affects women and men alike.

Women's policy measures, such as improving the situation of women in rural areas, require budgetary resources. A country's budget represents its policies converted into figures. It reveals how much importance is accorded to equality in a society. Applying the gender perspective at all levels of budget planning and management needs to be a matter of concern to us all. In Austria, gender budgeting was enshrined in the constitution on 1 January 2009. From 2013 onwards, the Federal Budget Law requires each federal ministry to determine gender equality outcomes. In a next step, concrete measures and indicators in order to realize the respective gender equality outcome have to be defined. This opens up major opportunities for the implementation of gender budgeting and thus for gender equality policy in Austria.

Madame Chair, I would finally like to briefly inform about the current efforts that Austria is making to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Back in 2007, Austria was one of the first countries worldwide to adopt a National Action Plan on implementing this important resolution. Austria marked the tenth anniversary of Resolution 1325 in autumn 2010 by undertaking a comprehensive revision of this Action Plan. The revised Action Plan was adopted by the Austrian federal government in January 2012. The key goals of the new Action Plan are to increase the participation of women in peace-support and conflict-resolution measures, to prevent violence against women and girls, and to increase the representation of women in international peace operations as well as in decision-making positions in international and European organizations. In particular, the Action Plan takes into account the indicators developed by the United Nations and the European Union in recent years, which will enable the progress made in implementing Resolution 1325 to be measured more effectively in the future. The implementation of the National Action Plan will continue to be assessed annually by an interministerial working group, with close involvement of civil society. Austria

would be happy to share its experiences in this area with partner countries in order to assist these countries to draw up their own national action plans.

Madame Chair, in concluding let me take this opportunity to express our recognition for the success of UN Women in its first year of existence, in which all the key institutional foundations were laid. We are looking forward to continuing our collaboration and will do our utmost to support UN Women in carrying out its important work.

Madame Chair, the concerns and needs of women in rural areas need to be the subject of greater political debate. We are confident that this year's CSW session will make a major contribution in this area.

Thank you.