

Opening statement
H.E. Ms. Marjon V. Kamara
Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women

Deputy Secretary-General,
Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council,
Under-Secretary-General of UN-Women,
Distinguished delegates,
Representatives of civil society,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I extend a special welcome to delegates who have travelled long distances, and warm greetings to those who are following us via our live webcast.

We are honoured by the large number of Government Ministers, senior officials and experts that have come from Capitals for this session, and the participation of Permanent Representatives, members of non-governmental organizations and entities of the United Nations system. Your presence here in this historic Hall gives testimony to the high importance which the international community attaches to the work of the Commission, and to the issues on its agenda today.

We have come together at our annual session of the Commission to assess the status of our work for gender equality and the empowerment of women, to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned. We are here to showcase achievements, and to speak frankly about gaps and challenges.

Most importantly, we are here to deliver results for the women and girls around the world.

This year, perhaps more than ever, the eyes of the world are upon us. They are upon us because we will focus on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. Expectations are high for real results – solid and firm political commitments from all States to do what must be done to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls; clear and specific actions to take back to our respective countries and regions as a blueprint for change; new and improved partnerships to work together towards our common goal in a purposeful manner.

The struggle to end the scourge of violence against women and girls is at the core of the gender equality movement everywhere. Such violence persists in each and every country, in mega cities and in tiny villages. It affects women and girls of all ages, of all economic and social classes, of all races and ethnicities, of all cultures, religions and traditions. We have a common responsibility to act.

I commend all stakeholders for the unprecedented scope of preparations for this session. This should help us focus on the key issues and work purposefully towards a solid, practical and convincing outcome. Expert groups have met to strengthen the substantive foundation for our

work; Ministers have gathered in regional and sub-regional meetings to set priorities; civil society organizations have mobilized their membership to energize their governments' efforts to find solutions; and at global level here at UN Headquarters, stakeholders convened in a forum last December to raise awareness of the urgency of our task, of the imperative of our success, and to build alliances for positive outcomes.

From all these fora, we received one clear message: the current situation of violence against women and girls is unacceptable. Together, we can find the solutions and bring about change. I know that many of you have made the struggle to end violence against women and girls your lifetime mission. I thank you and salute you for that. I will do my utmost, with the support of the Commission's Bureau and of all of you, to help steer this session to a successful conclusion.

While we have made some progress, there is so much more to be done. In the coming days, we will examine ways for more effectively preventing violence against women and girls; and for ensuring that survivors have access to all the services they need. We will discuss these issues thoroughly in the general debate, the high-level round table and in interactive panel discussions. As we do so, we must ensure that the words we speak here in condemnation of violence will be transformed into new and systematic actions on the ground that create real and meaningful change in the lives of women and girls.

Distinguished delegates,

While much of our work will be focused on our priority theme, the Commission will also be called upon to give its view on the key gender equality issues to be reflected in the post-2015 development agenda. This discussion should help to ensure that all opportunities for strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 agenda are fully utilized.

While looking towards the post-2015 vision, we also need to accelerate our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. Following our preliminary discussion at this session, this topic will receive focused attention as our priority theme in 2014.

And we must make greater strides in evaluating progress made in the implementation of previous agreed conclusions adopted by this Commission, and thus enhance accountability of stakeholders for complying with commitments made. This year, we will examine what progress has been made in the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS. We will highlight the successes achieved, the obstacles surmounted and the lingering challenges still to be overcome. I look forward to this discussion, and trust that it will renew our determination to overcome stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes.

Our official programme will be enriched and complemented by numerous side events that are taking place during the session. I encourage all of you to avail yourselves of the opportunity to participate in these stimulating and highly interesting exchanges. It is the vibrancy of these side events, the energy and knowledge of the people you meet, and the inspiration you get from their stories that make the Commission's sessions an enriching experience.

Honourable Ministers,
Colleagues and friends,

We have assembled here with a clear mandate: to create a world where gender equality is never in question and discrimination and violence against women and girls are a thing of the past. We can make this ambition a reality if we demonstrate the political will and commitment to agree on global solutions and to implement agreed strategies at the national level, to the limit of our resources. All eyes are on us, so let us proceed with our work, with every single participant contributing to a productive and successful session.

Thank you.