

**Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly
Third Committee
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Introductory Statement

by

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address the Third Committee on Item 64: Advancement of Women, and Item 65: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century." I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, on your election as chair of this Committee and convey my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. Rachel Mayanja, has already provided you with a broad overview of the global context and the work of the United Nations to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. I will introduce the reports of the Secretary-General under agenda items 64 and 65.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

Under the agenda item on the Advancement of Women, the Third Committee has regularly focused on the elimination of violence against women to enhance efforts at national, regional and international level to promote and protect the human rights of women. This year, the Committee will consider the questions of *Violence against women migrant workers*. The biennial report of the Secretary-General (A/60/137 and corrigendum), was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/143 of 22 December 2003. The report provides information on the legal and policy measures adopted by Member States, as well as activities undertaken by entities of the United Nations system and other organizations, to address violence against women migrant workers.

The report shows that, despite the measures undertaken, such as legislative changes, setting up of national strategies and mechanisms to combat violence against women, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for victims, conclusion of bilateral agreements to ensure the safe repatriation of migrants and regulating the employment of workers, violence against women migrant workers remains an issue of concern. In addition to highlighting areas that need priority attention, the report also emphasizes the need for Member States to ratify the international instruments dealing with migration issues, particularly the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols and all relevant ILO Conventions.

Let me now turn to the report of the Secretary-General on *Violence against women* (A/60/211) responding to General Assembly resolution 58/185 which requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth study on violence against women and to submit a report, with the study as an annex, to the Assembly at its sixtieth session (A/60/211). The report also responds to resolutions 59/167 on “Elimination of all forms of violence against women, including crimes identified in the outcome document of the 23rd special session of the GA” and 59/165, on “Working towards the elimination of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honour”.

The report presented is an interim report drawing the Assembly’s attention to the fact that the study on violence against women will be submitted to the General Assembly at its 61st session. The report reviews the status of preparations for the study. It highlights the context, value added, goals and scope of the study and gives an overview of ongoing and planned preparatory activities, in particular efforts to ensure the active participation of all stakeholders in the process. The highly consultative process undertaken is critical for building momentum for effective follow-up and implementation of the action taken by the General Assembly on the basis of the study.

Towards this end, further consultative activities will be organized to facilitate contributions, and exchange of views of all interested stakeholders in the coming months. We were very pleased with the level of participation in the consultation held on 6 and 7 September, and the important issues raised on that occasion. I am also pleased to report that we have received additional contributions since the Secretary-General’s report was prepared. We are now seeking a balance of US\$50,000. I would also like to join Ms. Mayanja in thanking the Governments of Austria, France, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands for financially supporting preparation of the study.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

The Committee also has before it the biennial report on the *Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas* (A60/165) which was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 58/146. The report focuses on the empowerment of rural women, including in relation to access to land and property rights, employment opportunities, education and training, participation in decision-making, and the impact of HIV/AIDS, migration and information and communication technologies. The report also outlines activities carried out by organizations of the United Nations system to improve the situation of rural women.

The report illustrates that the process of globalization has direct and indirect effects on the empowerment of rural women. Benefits include increased opportunities, such as wage employment in non-agricultural sectors, and participation in local decision-making and networking, including through information and communication technologies. On the other hand, the report notes that privatization of productive assets, such as land and public goods, can exacerbate rural women’s socio-economic marginalization. Women’s empowerment may also be constrained by unequal household divisions of labour, lack of access to education and health services, discrimination, stereotypical attitudes, and violence. The report proposes recommendations to strengthen the positive effects of globalization for the empowerment of rural women, which should build on the framework provided by the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

I now turn to the two reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The report on the *Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/60/206)* responds to the mandate provided in resolution 58/145 of 2003. It covers a two-year time period, from the end of July 2003 to the end of July 2005. The Committee also has before it the *Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/60/38)*. The Committee's Chairperson, Ms. Rosario Manalo, will brief you fully on the status of the Convention and the work of the Committee. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Committee plays a critical role in championing women's substantive equality that goes well beyond the absence of discriminatory legislation – a critical, but insufficient condition in the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men called for in the Convention. I would like to particularly draw the attention of Member States to the Committee's request for extension of its meeting time, which is essential to ensure that the Committee can continue to function as an effective accountability mechanism for women's human rights.

I would also like to highlight the attention placed by the Committee over the past year on the relationship between the Convention and policy processes and instruments within the intergovernmental framework. The Committee focused in particular on the linkages between implementation of Convention provisions and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the constructive dialogue with reporting States, and also reflected this important dimension in its concluding comments. This constitutes an important reminder for Governments that implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the MDGs. The Committee's contribution to the ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action likewise marked an important step forward in enhancing attention in intergovernmental processes to the Convention and the obligations of States parties. The Committee's attention to these linkages will further enhance Government accountability for women's enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I would, in this context, like to note that the Division for the Advancement of Women has continued to provide technical assistance to States parties to enhance the capacity of government officials to prepare reports under article 18 of the Convention, increase understanding of the legal obligations under the Convention and enhance implementation at the national level. We are especially gratified that financial support by New Zealand allowed us to develop a focus on countries emerging from conflict, where we have primarily supported Sierra Leone, Timor Leste and Afghanistan. We will continue this work, and thanks to a generous contribution from the Government of Ireland, hope to expand our efforts to other countries emerging from conflict as well.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

I now turn to the Report of the Secretary-General under item 65: Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/60/170), which responds to General Assembly resolution 59/168.

The report reviews attention to gender equality perspectives in the outcomes of major events during the past year as well as steps taken by the Assembly and its main committees during its 59th session to promote achievement of the goal of gender equality through the gender mainstreaming strategy, as reflected in resolutions. It reviews reports of the Secretary-General, including on the extent of gender analysis and specific recommendations on the integration of gender perspectives.

The report also assesses gender perspectives in the preparations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in November 2005.

The report concludes that gender-sensitive presentation of issues in documents before the General Assembly facilitates gender-sensitive policy formulation. The recommendations in the report focus on enhancing the analysis of gender perspectives and the recommendations for concrete action in the reports submitted to the Assembly and in the resolutions adopted by the Committees of the Assembly, as well as on enhancing follow-up on implementation of such recommendations. It also calls for gender mainstreaming in the implementation and follow-up to other major international conferences and summits, in particular the World Summit.

A further recommendation calls for the full integration of gender perspectives in the preparations for, implementation of and follow-up of the World Summit of the Information Society in Tunis. The report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas also recommends that the Summit should address the priorities and needs of rural women, including resources to access and use ICTs effectively, and ensure rural women's participation in developing and implementing ICT activities at the national and local levels.

In this context, I would like to mention a project carried out by the Division for the Advancement of Women to enhance the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women in Africa to systematically and effectively use ICT to achieve their goals. The project aims to enhance dissemination of national data on gender equality issues; improve advocacy and mobilization efforts; increase access to and utilization of relevant research at the national level; facilitate networking at sub-regional and regional levels for sharing experiences and good practices among national machineries; and increase the involvement and influence of national machineries in national processes on ICT, as well as their involvement in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis. A panel on national machineries and ICT will be organized during the Summit which will build on the experience gained in the sub-regional workshops and the regional meeting organized by the Division in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa in 2004 and 2005. The panel will endorse the development of an e-based regional network for national machineries and discuss a framework for future actions to ensure effective use of ICT by national machineries.

The Division has also prepared a publication, "Women 2000 and Beyond: Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women through ICT", which will be released just prior to the Summit.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

[In preparation for the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized an Expert Group Meeting on achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Platform for Action with the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The meeting was held from 7-10 February, 2005, in Baku, Azerbaijan, generously hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan. The experts stressed the need for ensuring the application of a human rights framework to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs; and for ensuring the full participation of women in implementation and monitoring processes. Other recommendations included incorporating gender perspectives more fully into macro-economic frameworks and poverty reduction strategies, and ensuring allocation of sufficient resources for the full achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women.

A second Expert Group Meeting focused on the role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, and was generously hosted by the Government of Italy in Rome, in November 2004. One achievement noted at the meeting was the increased diversity in types of national mechanisms established to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. These include, in addition to ministries of women's affairs, gender equality commissions, parliamentary caucuses, ombudspersons, gender focal points in line ministries, and research institutes. Today many countries have several mechanisms. The meeting concluded that this offered an important opportunity for enhancing implementation of the Platform for Action. An overall challenge identified, however, was establishing constructive collaboration across all mechanisms, and including with NGOs.

The recommendations from both of these Expert Group Meetings can make important contributions to enhancing implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal. The documentations from both of these meetings are available on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.]

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

In conclusion, the Declaration adopted by the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in the context of the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action earlier this year called for accelerated implementation. In 2006, the Commission on the Status of Women will hold its 50th session. It will be important to both celebrate the achievements of this important international institutional mechanism for gender equality and empowerment of women and consider ways to enhance its role to effectively address the challenges ahead. The 50th session of the Commission provides a unique opportunity to identify the key issues for follow-up to the ten year review in the context of the development of its new multi-year programme of work from 2007.

The Secretary-General in his address to the World Summit highlighted that the Summit served as "a trigger for progress on critical issues". The outcome of the Summit reaffirmed that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and that gender equality and empowerment of women is essential for advancing on each of these three pillars of the work of the United Nations. Failure to address gender equality dimensions in any areas of work of the United Nations not only exacerbates inequalities between women and men but also compromises the achievement of all other goals.

The 10-year review of the Platform for Action, near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and increasing adherence to its Optional Protocol as an additional accountability tool, and the important impetus provided for promotion of gender equality in the outcome of the World Summit should visibly enhance progress in the year ahead. In his opening address to the Summit, the Secretary-General emphasized the importance of implementing what has already been agreed. This Committee can play a critical role in this respect in ensuring the political will and accountability that will turn the commitments on gender equality and empowerment of women into action, through further enhancing monitoring of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in the context of the development of implementation strategies for the outcome of the 2005 Summit at national, regional and international levels.

In closing, Mr. Chairperson, may I wish you and the Committee a productive outcome of your deliberations. I pledge my full support, and that of the Division for the Advancement of Women, for the work of the Committee during this session in moving towards achievement of gender equality as an integral part of development, peace and security and human rights. We look forward to your guidance on our work in the critical follow-up to the World Summit.

Thank you.

