

57th session of the General Assembly

Introductory Statement

by

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen.

I have the honour of introducing several reports of the Secretary-General prepared under items 102 and 103, on the advancement of women, and the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the 21st century”. I am also speaking on behalf of Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women who is currently absent from the Office.

I extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairperson, and to the other members of the Bureau, on your election. As this is the first time that I address the Third Committee as the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, I pledge my full support, and that of the Division, for the work of the Committee during this session.

Reports of the Secretary-General and other reports under item 102 referred to:

- *Report of the Secretary-General on working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour (document A/57/169)*
- *Report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in women and girls (document A/57/170)*
- *Report of the Secretary-General on the elimination of all forms of violence against women, including crimes identified in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (document A/57/171)*
- *Report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/57/406)*
- *Note by the Secretary-General on the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (A/57/129-E-2002/77)*
- *Report of the Working Group on the future operation of INSTRAW (A/57/330)*

- *Report of the Secretary-General on the status of women in the United Nations system (A/57/447)*
- *Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Part I (A/57/38, Part I)*

Report of the Secretary-General under item 103:

- *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”. (A/57/286)*

This year, the Committee is again called upon to consider a range of reports under these two items. Three reports cover specific aspects of violence against women, including honour crimes, and trafficking in women (documents A/57/169, 170 and 171). One report discusses follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (document A/57/286); while another reviews the status of women in the UN system (A/57/447). The status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is reflected in document A/57/406. Part I of the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is also available to the Committee (A/57/38, Part I). Ms. Charlotte Abaka, the Chairperson of the Committee, will brief you on the Committee’s remarkable output over this last year. While I will make some comments concerning INSTRAW, the Committee will also hear a statement by Ms. Savitry Butchey, the Interim Manager/Director of INSTRAW.

Mr. Chairperson,

With your permission, I would like to start by referring to item 103, the follow-up to Fourth World Conference on Women, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (document A/57/286).

Over the past year, a number of international conferences, special sessions and summits provided the opportunity for significant attention to the concerns of women and to the promotion of gender equality, building on the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. Governments, representatives of the United Nations system and of non-governmental organizations mobilized during the preparatory processes to highlight relevant gender perspectives, and to link the achievement of the goal of gender equality with the achievement of the goals that were the focus of these events, such as poverty eradication, sustainable development, the well-being of children and of older persons. As a result, these events dealt with gender aspects in relation to specific areas, such as in regard to social protection and social security systems to prevent poverty among older women; the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005; gender equality in access to economic resources, including land and credit; and the importance of attention to gender perspectives in national budget processes. Progress was also made in enhancing the commitment to gender equality in the outcomes of these events, albeit more strongly so in the social than in the economic field.

These advances are important in relation to the achievement of the Millennium Development goals. The Millennium Declaration reiterated gender equality as a goal in itself. It also clearly identified gender equality as a means for achieving the goals of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including those of the Millennium Declaration, and is particularly essential for poverty eradication. Promotion of gender equality should therefore be undertaken not only as a targeted activity, but also as an integral part of all efforts to achieve the Millennium Declaration Goals. Gender perspectives need to be taken into account in the pursuit of all goals of the Millennium Declaration, and also assessed in relation to each of these goals.

In his report on progress towards the MDGs, the Secretary-General pointed out that the first big test of the Millennium commitment will come in 2005, when Member States had aimed to achieve parity of girls and boys in primary and secondary schools, a goal that is “unlikely to be met”. He went on to say that “without greater success in placing more girls in school, I fear it will prove even more difficult to reach the other goals”, thus underlining the instrumentality of gender equality to the achievement of the MDGs. In other words, insufficient progress in equality in education reduces the potential to achieve not only the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women, but also the goals of eradication of poverty and sustainable development.

Intergovernmental commitments to gender mainstreaming, as contained in the outcomes of the major events of the past year, are a critical basis, an essential entry point, for enhanced attention to the gender perspectives in sectoral areas. These commitments should now facilitate effective integration of gender perspectives in all follow-up, at national, regional and global level. I trust that this Committee will send a strong message on the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in these processes, including in monitoring and reporting.

In parallel to increased and more explicit commitments, a much greater understanding of the gender perspectives for many sectoral areas has also rapidly evolved in recent years. There are many examples from the entities of the UN system on the use of gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for promoting gender equality. An information kit highlighting examples of such actions has been prepared. An update of the activities of the UN system will be provided to the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2003.

I now turn to the three reports before this Committee that deal with various aspects of violence against women, crimes committed in the name of honour, and trafficking in women and girls. As part of its multi-year programme of work, one of the two thematic topics the Commission on the Status of Women will consider next year is women’s human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

The reports before you (documents A/57/169, 170 and 171) provide information about important steps taken by Governments, the United Nations system, and other intergovernmental or regional bodies, to prevent these forms of violence, and to provide effective remedies. From the information provided it becomes clear that a whole range of institutions, mechanisms and organizations must be involved in combating violence against women, not only those constituted specifically to promote gender equality. The criminal justice system, human rights institutions and mechanisms, social service providers, the legislature, and others are called upon to work

towards that goal. A focus on violence against women as a particular concern of women can provide an important entry point and key learning experience for such institutions to expand attention to gender perspectives more systematically into all areas of their work. We look forward to the Committee's guidance on this question.

Mr. Chairperson,

This Committee, together with the Fifth Committee, has for many years taken a particular interest in the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, now extending to the UN system as a whole.

I am pleased to report that progress, albeit slow, continues in the representation of women in the restricted category of staff on geographical appointments. Women now account for 41 per cent of these posts. In the larger population of professional staff with appointments of one year or more, women now account for 35 per cent, an increase of 0.4 per cent. The goal of 50 per cent gender balance overall has been achieved and exceeded in four departments and offices, *while 12 departments and offices have reached between 30 and 40 per cent women at the D-1 level and above. Progress has, however, been uneven. For example, in spite of efforts undertaken by DPKO to attract qualified women candidates, the representation of women with appointments of one year or more serving with peace operations has not increased.*

In the United Nations system as a whole, an overall increase of 0.2 per cent has been registered bringing the overall percentage of professional women staff to 33.7 (December 2000). *Three of 26 organizations with 20 staff or more have 40 per cent professional women overall; ten have between 30 and 40 per cent and twelve have less than 30 per cent professional women overall. The United Nations Population Fund maintains the lead with slightly over 50 per cent professional women.*

The report (document A/57/447) highlights the need for more attention to be given to appointing and promoting women at the higher levels, to monitoring the impact of the new staffing system on the representation of women and to addressing career development concerns, including those of General Service staff, the majority of whom are women. Hence, further determined efforts are needed to achieve the goal of gender balance and a gender-sensitive work environment. We count on the Committee to provide a strong mandate in this area.

Mr. Chairperson,

The critical situation of INSTRAW has been a matter of concern to this Committee for some time. Based on a decision by the Assembly last year, a working group on the future operation of the Institute was constituted and met in July and August. The report of the working group is before this Committee in document A/57/330. I wish to express appreciation to the members of the working group for their thorough consideration of all aspects and possible options for the future operation of the Institute, and the recommendation presented to the Assembly in accordance with the mandate provided in resolution 56/125.

This Committee is well aware of the persistence of the Institute's resource shortage, notwithstanding the support provided by a number of Member States, relevant intergovernmental decisions, and the efforts of the UN system. For 2002, voluntary contributions as of 31 August amounted to \$23,496. The Committee is also aware of the steps taken by the Secretariat to support the Institute in the implementation of its programme of work. The note by the Secretary-General which is before the Committee in document A/57/129-E/2002/77 covers both financial and programmatic aspects. Ms. Butchey will update the Committee on the substantive and managerial matters.

An effectively revitalized Institute, provided with the financial and human resources commensurate with its mandate, could potentially make a valuable and substantive contribution to the advancement of women. Regardless of the institutional arrangements, the work of the Institute will be constrained without adequate voluntary contributions. The essential challenge that Member States thus have to address, and resolve, is the question of ensuring such secure and predictable funding for the Institute that would allow it to continue its operations. The amount of US \$ 500,000 from the regular budget recommended by the working group will provide financing only for one Director and three professional posts, but not for research and training activities. I trust that the Committee will give this question the full attention it deserves, and look forward to your decision on this matter.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me, as a final point, provide an update on the work undertaken on women, peace and security. The second anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is imminent. In that resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. Preparation of the study was overseen by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security. The study has now been completed, and will be made available to all Member States shortly. The Secretary-General's report, based on the results of that study, will be submitted to the Security Council, as requested, and the Council's President has scheduled an open meeting for 25 October to continue the Council's important discussion on women, peace and security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.
