

**Statement
Lebanon
Majdi Ramadan
Item 56: Advancement of Women
3rd Comm., 63rd Session, Tuesday, 14 October 2006**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by thanking the Secretariat for the reports under item 56 on the advancement of women.

Lebanon aligns itself with the statement made by Antigua & Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Lebanon is fully committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly as the guiding policy frameworks for gender equality and empowerment of women.

Lebanon believes that empowerment of women is central in achieving the internationally agreed goals including the Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality and elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls are both important goals and essential precursors to political stability, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Despite achievements women continue to face major challenges of poverty, conflict and exclusion from decision-making. Women also still suffer limited access to credit. Lebanon believes that policies addressing poverty must be guided by the fact that the majority of the poor are women and that without reducing women's poverty, overall poverty eradication goals would remain elusive.

Lebanon reaffirms that gender equality should be a central goal for the United Nations system. Lebanon supports the efforts of United Nations system to incorporate gender perspectives into its substantive work; however Lebanon recognizes a slow progress in improving the representation of women specifically women from the developing world in the Secretariat.

Lebanon believes that the advancement of women is both a national and an international responsibility. International cooperation and support from the donor countries in terms of official development assistance, debt relief and the opening of markets are essential for the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Lebanon supports fully UNIFEM and its management of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Lebanon also supports increased contributions to the said Trust Fund.

The Beijing Platform for Action referred to the elimination of conflict and the attainment of peace as a pre-requisite for the advancement of women. Creating an enabling environment conducive of the advancement of women requires special attention to women in conflict situations and under foreign occupation. In this regard, Israel the occupying power of Arab lands should be held accountable for its obligations under humanitarian law, human rights law and international law.

Gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women are goals that Lebanon is integrating in its national development policies.

The Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon established programmes to end domestic violence throughout the country. The Ministry lately proposed legislation on domestic violence. In parallel, several civil society initiatives including the Beirut Bar Association encouraged women to speak openly about their experiences.

The Lebanese Government has created a national steering committee to study the situation of immigrant domestic workers including women. The said committee is currently working on a standard labor contract format for workers and preparing legislation governing their activities in Lebanon.

The Government, in cooperation with local grassroots organizations, is training women to participate in the economic life and to enter decision-making positions. Funds are allocated for women to establish small income-generating enterprises, especially women living in remote areas.

Lebanese rural women account for 40% of the labor agricultural force in the country. Lebanon strives to incorporate rural women in gender equality policies and rural development policies. Lebanon is also addressing the reproductive needs of rural women.

Following the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, in cooperation with UNFPA, launched project “Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security and Stability” in response to Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. A network of local women’s committees was set up. The project has been providing training that enables women to combat violence, encourages their participation in public life and spreads awareness of human rights.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women is working on increasing awareness of the gender perspective, with the support UNIFEM, through a project to establish a comprehensive database on women’s issues and a network for communication between State and civil society institutions. The National Commission is also disseminating information about international law related to women’s issues throughout the country.

The Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children has lately proposed amendments to the Penal Code with respect to crimes of honor.

Lebanon had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols in August 2005. Later on, the Ministry of Justice drew up an action plan for their implementation and established the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The network of health-care services has been extended to include 38 new health centers in remote areas and 10 new hospitals. Primary health-care centers offer reproductive health services and efforts are under way to build capacity in the areas of family planning, childbirth assistance and neonatal care.

The Government adopted a National Action Plan for Education for All (2005–2015) that affirms the need for interim affirmative action in favor of women to fill the gender gap in education and study. In the same context, a decision has been taken to exempt the pupils of public schools in public education and pre-university vocational education from academic fees.

Thank you.