



Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

**Mr. Nicolas Burniat
Permanent Representation of Belgium to the United Nations**

**at the Third Committee of the 65th Session of the General Assembly
Agenda item 28 a,b Advancement of Women**

2010

United Nations

New York

11 October 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

3C UNGA65:
EU STATEMENT
AGENDA ITEM 28 a-b – ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

2010 is an important year for the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women as we are commemorating this year the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Conference and the ECOSOC has devoted its ministerial segment last July to review progress in achieving the internationally agreed goals and commitments for gender equality and empowerment of women. It is therefore with great satisfaction that the EU welcomed last July the General Assembly decision to strengthen the UN gender architecture with the creation of UN Women. The EU has been supporting the reform of the gender architecture for many years and it is very pleased that all Member States could eventually come together to establish UN Women. UN Women is expected to play a leading role in closing the gap between the normative and operational work of the UN in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women, to foster effective system-wide mainstreaming and to strengthen the accountability of the UN system in its work in these areas. Through this new body the UN will be in a stronger position to meet the urgent and ever-increasing requests by governments in support for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The EU would like to warmly congratulate Ms Bachelet, former president of Chile, for her recent appointment as the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. Her strong leadership will be essential in order to meet the objectives of UN Women. The EU would like to assure her of its support in the years to come and looks forward to working with her.

According to the UNGA resolution 64/289 UN Women should be operational by the 1st of January 2011. There is not much time left until that date. The EU urges the relevant organisations to work hard and diligently under the leadership of the Executive Director, Mrs Bachelet, in order to have the new entity in place in time.

In the European Union, equality between women and men constitutes a fundamental value and principle. Since 1957, gender equality has been enshrined in the European Treaties. Since that time, European legislation, as interpreted in the case law of the

* *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

European Court of Justice, has created a legal arsenal, which is applied in the EU 27 Member States, giving rise to many success stories all over the continent.

The EU reaffirms its strong support for, and commitment to, the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Populations and Development in 1994, as well as the key actions for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action agreed at ICPD+5 and the Copenhagen Declaration and Action Programme; and also emphasises that gender equality cannot be achieved without guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and reaffirms that expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and health services are essential for achieving the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and the MDG's.

The EU also supports UN programs and actions against female genital mutilation, which constitutes a violation of human rights of women and girls.

Furthermore, the EU would like to confirm its commitment to urgent eradication of all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Therefore the EU warmly welcomes the recent establishment of a new mandate, a Working Group of the Human Rights Council, to deal specifically with the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice which will assist member states in the implementation of their commitments in this area.

The European Commission adopted a Women's Charter on 5 March of this year. The five areas of the Charter (namely equal economic independence, equal pay for equal work and work of equal value; equality in decision-making, dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and the promotion of gender equality beyond Europe) have been translated into a new strategy for equality between women and men that was adopted on 21 September.

The fight to put an end to all forms of violence against women and girls is another priority for the European Union which in 2008 adopted guidelines to promote actions in that direction. Unfortunately, too often these crimes go unpunished. The EU supports the UN Secretary General campaign "Unite to End Violence Against Women". We want to reiterate our support to the work of Ms Margot Wallström, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in conflict situations, an office created by Security Council Resolution 1888, and to Ms Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences. The use of sexual violence in conflict situations is an expanding scourge which requires all our attention. Although men are also victim of sexual violence, women are by far the main target as the headlines of the media too often remind us. No efforts should be spared to prevent this crime, to protect the victims and prosecute the perpetrators as well as to search for opportunities to involve men in the process of prevention. The EU urges all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court which clearly classifies this violation of women's human rights in war time as a crime against humanity.

The EU is currently also looking into establishing a comprehensive strategy to increase the scale and effectiveness of commitments to combat violence against women within the Union, in accordance with the Council Conclusions on the Eradication of Violence against Women in the EU, adopted in March 2010. The strategy will aim at establishing a general framework of common principles in this area and will be supported by a Europe-wide awareness-raising campaign on violence against women. In the framework of the preparation for the Strategy the Commission has launched two studies: one on Standardisation of national legislation on gender violence and violence against children, and one on harmful traditional practices in the EU, including honour crimes and female genital mutilation. Both studies will be completed within the coming months and their results will be presented at the Conference on Violence against Women, which will be organised in the framework of the Daphne Programme in November 2010.

Regarding external action, the EU has just recently adopted a Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development for the period 2010-2015, as part of its strategy to achieve the MDGs. The overarching objective of the Action Plan is to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs, especially MDG 3 and MDG 5, as well as to attain the goals set out by CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action, and the Cairo Program of Action. This Action Plan calls for EU Member States to translate more efforts into actions that can work better and more efficiently. Collective EU actions will certainly enhance our achievements and strengthen progress towards gender equality. This Action Plan consists of an operational framework with specific actions, indicators and timetables for each of its objectives. It foresees systematically including gender equality in our political and policy dialogues with partner countries to raise awareness and encourage action. Furthermore, it will involve civil society, particularly women's organisations, in partner countries and in the EU as a whole. This Gender Action Plan also contains actions to increase technical capacity for gender mainstreaming. Moreover, it aims at making aid more effective and transparent through ensuring that gender equality issues are part of the annual and multi-annual planning process with partner countries and by applying systematically internationally accepted standards in order to track the aid that we devote to this end.

Through this Plan of Action on Gender Equality, the EU intends, in addition to the EU comprehensive approach to implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, to support partner countries in fully implementing the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. These are all factors that directly contribute to a nation's sustainable stability. Indeed, fostering gender Equality and Women's empowerment is crucial for achieving peace and security. It is necessary to provide sustained support for the protection of women in armed conflict as well as for women's participation in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and in the political arena. This has a direct link to wider development considerations, such as women's economic security and access to economic opportunities and resources as well as to health services and education. The EU continues to support its partners in combating gender-based violence in all its manifestations, including both sexual and domestic violence, in conflict, post-conflict and peace-time, focusing on protection as well as prevention.

We are commemorating this year the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and on the 26th of October the Security Council will hold a ministerial open debate. In July 2010, the EU adopted a comprehensive set of indicators on the implementation of Resolution 1325. These indicators are designed to complement the indicators proposed by the Secretary General which, we hope, the Security Council will adopt in October. The EU also applauds the initiative by the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security to request all governments to present concrete commitments at the Open Debate in the UN Security Council. This provides the EU and all of us with a unique opportunity to express concrete commitments to furthering the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security.

During the last ten years, progress has been made but the gaps in the implementation of the resolution remain too wide. The participation of women in peace building remains marginal, the protection of women in conflict is insufficient, and, as the instances of savage violence mentioned above remind us, prevention is inadequate. The EU believes that increased women political participation in peace making and post-conflict situation is crucial to sustainable peace, as their increased economic participation in the recovery phase is essential to the development of those countries seeking to rebuild their economy. In order to stress our commitment we organised high level conferences in Brussels and Geneva, as well as a ministerial lunch during the ministerial week of the General Assembly. Each of these events is focusing on one aspect of Resolution 1325, that is to say: Participation, protection and prevention. We hope the conclusions of this exercise will contribute to the Security Council debate and the real implementation of Resolution 1325 in conflict-affected areas.

Mr Chairman,

15 years after Beijing the challenges remain enormous. Everywhere laws have to be changed, improved, updated and decisions have to be implemented to reach effective gender equality. The Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women offers us the goals that should be met by all States. Now, UN Women is expected to bring more coherence and effectiveness, leadership and accountability to implement those norms. The EU believes that we do have now better instruments to move forward and the responsibility to use those instruments is upon us all.