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Statement by
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Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Third Committee

Item 28: Advancement of women
General Segment

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Chile on behalf of the Rio Group. We thank the Secretary-General for the report on the implementation of Resolution 63/155 concerning the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, which reflects the actions undertaken by States, including Colombia.

Mr. Chairman,

The Human Development Report stated 15 years ago that it is possible to talk about true development only when all human beings, men and women, are able to enjoy the same rights and opportunities. While time has passed since then and, although undoubtedly we have made progress in this regard, there is still much to be done.

Colombia is convinced that gender equality, the empowerment of women, the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and poverty eradication, are essential for sustainable economic and social development in the world.

For this reason, I would like to highlight some significant contributions in the multilateral context. First, the results of the evaluation on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action, and the adoption of the resolution on Economic Empowerment of Women presented by Colombia and other countries in the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Secondly, the recent adoption in the Human Rights Council of the resolution on Preventable Maternal Mortality and Morbidity and Human Rights, sponsored by Colombia jointly with New Zealand and Burkina Faso, as well as the resolution on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, that we presented together with Mexico. It is important to emphasize that, as it was evident at the recent High Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, the issue of maternal health is one of the biggest challenges in achieving these Goals.

Undoubtedly, these new instruments will contribute to deepen the commitments of States to the advancement of women, and they reaffirm the impact that gender perspectives have in reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

In Colombia, gender equity and equal opportunities and rights between men and women are principles enshrined in our Constitution and they govern the national development model.

Aware of the role of women in society and the impact of their participation in the development of the country, the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, continues to support the National Mechanism for Women called Office of the High Counsellor for Women's Equity, in its advocacy and coordination mandates.

Colombia has developed a social policy with gender perspective, and a series of affirmative actions for women, which comprise several key components. The actions in the area of Employment and Enterprise Development have sought to improve conditions for women micro-entrepreneurs, through various programs, including credit and training. Also, it has promoted access to banking services for women in the Bank of Opportunities Policy; as well as the realization of national and regional fairs for women entrepreneurs, being the most important the Businesswomen's Summit held on June 2010 with participants from 8 countries and exhibitors from 26 out of the 32 departments of our country.

Likewise, we have worked in the development of an Agenda for Labor Equality, in coordination with business associations and private firms, in order to strengthen women's role and to establish actions to ensure their effective inclusion in the workforce.

For our country, women's economic empowerment is a key factor to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that an economically empowered woman, who has the opportunity to contribute to her own development, as well as to the development of her family and of the society as a whole, will be able to contribute in creating a less vulnerable environment.

In the area of Prevention of Violence against Women we have strategies being developed in partnership with international cooperation entities, to prevent and eradicate gender based violence. These, include initiatives such as human rights literacy for women to improve their knowledge about their rights, and the establishment of an Interagency Committee for Eradication of Violence against Women, whose purpose is to unite efforts for the articulation, coordination and cooperation among government agencies in order to achieve comprehensive, differentiated and quality accessible care for women victims of violence.

There have also been significant legal developments. I would like to mention, among others: Law 1146 of 2007 on sexual violence prevention and comprehensive care of children victims of such violence; Law 1329 of 2009 amending provisions in our criminal law, to counter the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents; Law 1257 of 2008 "For a life free of violence against women", which has been defined based on international standards; and Decree 164 of 2010 which establishes the Interagency Committee abovementioned.

Mr. Chairman,

International cooperation is also important in promoting the advancement of women. In this regard, my country would like to thank and acknowledge the work of the United Nations system, including UNIFEM, UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA and UNICEF, as well as the IOM, in favor of women and girls.

Likewise, Colombia welcomes the establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, known as UN-Women. We convey our congratulations to Mrs. Michelle Bachelet, Chile's former president, on her election to lead this body and we wish her every success in fulfilling the purposes explained yesterday before this Committee.

My delegation would like to express the support of Colombia to all future efforts to strengthen this new entity. We are confident that UN-Women will be able to incorporate the cross-cutting agenda of gender equality and empowerment of women within the UN system and to promote a coherent and effective agenda for the advancement of women in all regions of the world.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.