



**General Assembly
65th Session**

12 October 2010

**Third Committee. Agenda item 28
Advancement of Women**

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Madame Chair,

2010 should go down in history as a groundbreaking year for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls around the world.

We welcome and celebrate the establishment of UN Women. And let me join others in congratulating Under-Secretary-General Michelle Bachelet on her appointment to this historic post. We greatly appreciate the Executive Director's frank and ambitious start, as expressed in her speech to the Committee yesterday morning.

But this year also sees a number of other important occasions: The 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the tenth anniversary of CEDAW and not least – the tenth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. In addition, we have just completed a successful Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, where world leaders had gender equality and the empowerment of women at the top of their agenda.

Now, we look forward to UN Women taking the lead in making sure all these declarations and resolutions are finally put to use: Challenge member states and the UN system at large, to deliver in accordance with their commitments and obligations. Besides higher visibility and greater political clout, perhaps the most important expectation to UN Women will be to improve the connection between the normative framework; the declarations, resolutions, laws and regulations – and their implementation and application on the ground, at country level.

We therefore look forward to seeing UN Women take a leading role in being an active advocate and provider of capacity building across the UN Country Teams, assisting the Resident Coordinators, and supporting national gender equality machineries and civil society – to bring

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about change! Norway, as always, will stand ready to lend our support, both in political, technical and financial terms. Because very much remains to be done.

First, we must address the root causes of injustice and inequality. Among these are cultural and patriarchal stereotypes, often with religious connotations. We need a transformation of gender relations, and to achieve this it is crucial to actively engage men and boys, as allies and agents for change.

Madame Chair,

Gender equality is about securing fundamental human rights including women's equal rights. We therefore encourage UN Women to help strengthen the links between the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as the Special Procedures and all relevant forums and mechanisms.

We welcome the recent decision by the Human Rights Council to establish a working group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice. It is paramount that all nations scrutinize their laws, regulations and practices, as to identify and to eradicate any discriminatory effects towards women, children and persons with disabilities.

Madame Chair,

Gender equality is a moral issue and a rights issue, but it is also a question of economic growth and social development. It is well documented that gender equality contributes to high economic performance – and underpins any nation's economic, social and environmental sustainability.

There is a clear and well documented positive connection between women's and girls' health, education level and women's participation in the work force - and a nation's economic performance. Women's contribution to a nation's economy is fundamental for growth and development. Poor nations will remain poor as long as they see and treat women and girls as second rate citizens. Countries that choose not to mobilise half of their nation's intellect and half their nation's work force will lose in global competition and the fight against poverty.

The experience of Norway and other countries have proven that a country does not have to be rich to have policies which promote social justice and equal opportunities.

The most crucial factor for success is an active political will – to provide women and girls with the same rights, opportunities and capabilities as men and boys.

Madame Chair,

The Millennium Development Goals Report and a number of other UN reports show that the disadvantaged in most parts of the world are women, children, in particular girls and persons with disabilities. Although progress has been made, it is uneven. That fact that women's access to health care services varies depending on region is an example of it. It's time now to include

mainstreaming of gender equality and disability on all agendas concerning social development. It is however difficult to talk about women's rights, if women continue to be exposed to violence. We are therefore strong supporters of the Secretary-General's global campaign to end violence against women and have taken several measures to fight this menace – both at home and abroad. We note with great expectation that also Michelle Bachelet has made this one of her top priorities.

Madame Chair,

In two weeks we will mark the tenth anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The Norwegian Government has been a staunch proponent of this resolution since the beginning. We pay special attention to women's empowerment and participation in peace processes and post conflict rehabilitation, as well as protection against sexual violence in armed conflict. Ending impunity should now be a priority, in addition and as a *contribution* to prevention measures and assistance to survivors.

Madame Chair,

As Norway's Prime Minister, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, stated at the opening of the UN Summit, Norway is a strong supporter of all the Millennium Development Goals. We have taken on a special responsibility for the goals of reducing child mortality and improving women's health, MDG 4 and 5 – and fully support the Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health to mobilise the necessary resources and to develop effective policies for women's and children's health. Gender equality and women's empowerment are crucial in this regard. The Millennium Development Goal Report and the reports from the Secretary-General show that gender equality is the single and most important catalyst for change.

Madame Chair,

Achieving full gender equality is at the top of Norway's political agenda. We urge all nations to follow suit. Take steps, both in national and international policies and approaches, to implement all commitments in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security.

It is a question of political will!

