

**Presentation at the Fulbright New Century Scholars Lunch on
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Distinguished representatives of
New Century Scholars Program,
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Council for International Exchange of Scholars,
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the State Department,
and the National Council for Research on Women,
as well as distinguished New Century Scholars.

I would like to begin by congratulating the Fulbright Scholar Program on focusing the New Century Scholars Program on the global empowerment of women. This was a very timely focus, given the 25 year anniversary of CEDAW in 2004, the ten-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Commission on the Status of Women last month, and the forthcoming review of implementation of the Millennium Declaration in the General Assembly in September this year. You have been able to bring together an impressive group of scholars from around the world who have focused on critical issues for the promotion of women’s empowerment and gender equality. The wide variety of issues covered was well illustrated at the excellent plenary this morning at the Institute of International Education.

While it is certainly important to have a specific focus on women’s empowerment as this programme does – and the excellence of the work of the scholars gathered here illustrates the value of the approach – it is also critical to ensure that gender perspectives are included as an integral part of all similar research programmes, whatever the theme. One important element is to ensure that women scholars participate equitably in all programmes. We need, however, to go beyond promoting women’s participation, to ensuring that all scholars, both women and men, address gender perspectives in all areas of research. I hope that the Fullbright Program will find ways to meet this challenge. It is a challenge which is faced in all areas – in the United Nations, in government organizations, in universities and in other organizations, including non-governmental organizations.

I am appreciative of the opportunity to provide some information on the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The policy-level work of the United Nations is not always well-known. Many stakeholders have a relatively good idea of what entities in the United Nations system, such as UNDP, UNICEF or UNIFEM, are doing to

promote gender equality and empowerment of women, but a much less clear idea of the role of the Secretariat. I will share information on what the Division does concretely; provide some examples of processes we are currently involved in; and open up to a discussion on ways in which scholars could be involved in and contribute to this policy-level work of the United Nations on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Division for the Advancement of Women is part of the United Nations Secretariat, working at policy-level. There are two main areas of work of the Division. Firstly, the Division supports global policy-making on gender equality and empowerment of women, through servicing the Commission on the Status of Women, which is the inter-governmental body in the United Nations focused on gender equality, as well as by covering the agenda items on gender equality in the Economic and Social Council and in the General Assembly. This involves drafting the reports of the Secretary-General which provide the background for the discussion in these intergovernmental bodies, servicing the meetings themselves, and supporting the development of resolutions and other outcomes on different topics, through which global policy decisions are made.

A second important area of the work of the Division is support to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), including through servicing the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, advocating for full ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, and providing support to Member States to ensure implementation at national level.

In addition, the Division undertakes some technical assistance activities at regional, sub-regional and national level, largely focused on developing the capacity of Member States to implement the commitments made in intergovernmental contexts and to adhere to legal obligations under the Convention. This part of the work of the Division aims to link the normative work of the United Nations with implementation on the ground. The Division has carried out considerable capacity-building activities in support of reporting on the Convention, through regional and sub-regional level workshops, as well as judicial colloquia which support use of the Convention at national level by judges and lawyers in all regions. Work in other areas has included a focus on capacity-building for women's leadership roles on peace and security, as well as supporting national machineries for the advancement of women to use ICT more strategically in achieving their goals. This work has mainly been carried out in Africa.

The Division has a role in communicating the outcomes of the intergovernmental bodies and CEDAW through its publication programme and through the websites it manages. The Division also carries out some research in critical areas. The *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* is a five-yearly publication of the Division which is presented to the General Assembly. The *World Survey* focuses on selective emerging development issues that have an impact on the role of women in the economy at the national, regional and international levels. The 1994 *World Survey*, for example, focused specifically on women in a changing global economy, while the 1999 report focused on globalization, gender and work. The 2004 *World Survey on the Role of Women in*

Development addressed a key aspect of globalization from a gender perspective, namely the increased movement of people, particularly women, across national borders.

In addition, the Division prepares a short publication, *Women2000 and beyond*, several times a year which has a broad dissemination around the world. This publication focuses attention on gender equality issues which the Division feels are not given sufficient visibility, for example the recent editions on widows, and on issues of nationality and citizenship. *Women2000 and beyond* are also produced to call attention to gender perspectives in issues which are before the global community. One example is the recent editions on women and natural disasters and on women and water which were prepared to influence discussions in the Commission on Sustainable Development. Another example is the issue on older women which aimed to influence discussions at the World Summit on Ageing. A new edition will be published soon on women and ICT which aims to impact on the preparations for and outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia later this year.

A further important part of the work of the Division is to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations on gender equality and empowerment of women. This work is done in a variety of ways. One very practical way is through the registration of NGOs to attend the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and supporting NGOs who attend the sessions of the CEDAW Committee.

All of the issues raised in the plenary this morning are directly relevant to the work of the Division – including women's political participation, migration, violence against women, trafficking, citizenship, and HIV/AIDS. The work programme of the Division is guided by the multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission focuses on two themes per year, which have included since 2001, poverty, ICT and media, the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality, natural disasters, and peace processes. The Commission will adopt a new multi-year programme of work from 2007.

Similarly, the work programme of the Division is influenced by the priorities and work of the CEDAW Committee. The Committee can request the Division to focus on particular aspects of its working methods to enhance its work, or on particular themes on which the Committee might want to develop a General Recommendation to guide its work and facilitate implementation of the Convention by States Parties.

Mandates for the work of the Division come also from other intergovernmental processes. For example, the division does considerable work on monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system, by preparing reports of the Secretary-General for submission to ECOSOC and the General Assembly. There is a strong focus on human rights of women in the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Division receives its mandate for work in this area from the Committee. For example, in December 2003 the General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary-General to prepare an in-depth study on all forms and

manifestations of violence against women and a report of the Secretary-General to be presented to the General Assembly in October 2005. As a result, considerable time and human resources in the Division are currently devoted to the issue of violence against women during the two-year period of the preparation of the study.

Similarly, the adoption of resolution 1325 by the Security Council in 2000 influenced the work programme of the Division, since we were involved in the preparation of the Secretary-General's study and report requested in that resolution and presented to the General Assembly in 2002 as well as in the reporting process in 2004. Part of the technical cooperation programme of the Division was also focused on promoting women's leadership in peace processes in Africa.

Since the Commission on the Status of Women had the responsibility for carrying out the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action this year, the Division, as the substantive secretariat for the Commission, was also heavily involved in the preparation and implementation of the review and appraisal. The Division prepared the questionnaire sent to all Member States and compiled responses in the Secretary-General's report. In addition, we prepared the programme of work, including the high-level roundtables and the seven interactive panels, and the commemoration of thirty years of UN efforts for gender equality, and supported the adoption of the declaration and resolutions. The review process was focused on national-level implementation, with an emphasis on sharing of lessons learned and good practices.

The Member States adopted a declaration which reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Declaration emphasized that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and stressed the need to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the high-level plenary meeting on the review of the Millennium Declaration in September this year. It also recognized that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and CEDAW are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. The declaration called upon the United Nations system and other actors to fully commit themselves and to intensify their contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. A large part of the work of the Division in the future will be focused on promoting enhanced implementation of the Platform for Action.

A major challenge facing the Division, and all other parts of the United Nations system, is to ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated into the preparations for and outcome of the high-level review of implementation of the Millennium Declaration during the General Assembly later this year. The Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by Heads of State at the United Nations in 2000, includes equality among the fundamental values essential to international relations and specifically states that "The

equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured”¹. States resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable². States also resolved to combat all forms of violence against women; and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women³.

Discussions on the process for and outcome of this important review are currently underway. The Secretary-General’s report, “*In larger freedom: Towards development, security and human rights for all*” - which provides the initial framework for discussions of Member States - does include reference to the seven recommendations that were made by the Millennium Project Taskforce on the MDG focused on gender equality and empowerment of Women. These are:

1. Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education;
2. Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights;
3. Invest in infrastructure to reduce women’s and girls’ time burdens;
4. Guarantee women’s and girls’ property and inheritance rights;
5. Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women’s reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation;
6. Increase women’s share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies;
7. Combat violence against women and girls.

While it is an achievement that these issues are included in the report of the Secretary-General, a lot of work is needed by gender equality advocates in the United Nations, in Member States and in NGOs and other groups, to ensure that the outcome - which is negotiated by the Member States of the United Nations - gives adequate attention to gender equality throughout the areas of peace and security, human rights and development.

The Division works to ensure the engagement of scholars and activists in many different ways – both in order to provide opportunities for participation in the work of the United Nations and to ensure that the work of the Division is based on the latest thinking and experience in the areas being covered. For example, the Division organizes an Expert Group Meeting for each of the themes to be considered by the Commission at its annual session. This allows the Division to bring together a small group of renowned experts from different parts of the world to brainstorm on the issues. The experts prepare an independent report with policy recommendations which is used as guidance in the preparation of the Secretary-General’s report by the Division and is also made available as a document during the Commission. There are opportunities for small numbers of observers to attend these meetings – who usually include representatives of Member States, NGOs and other institutions. In many cases, the Division also organizes an on-line

¹ A/RES/55/2, para 6

² *ibid.*, para 20

³ *ibid.*, para 25

discussion on the two themes before the Commission which provide important opportunities for broader participation.

To give a concrete example, the themes of the 50th session of the Commission in 2006 will be women in decision-making in health, education and employment and women in political decision-making. Two expert group meetings will be organized in the autumn which will provide an opportunity for involvement of scholars as well as activists working in these areas. The on-line discussions to be organized will also provide additional possibilities for engagement. The Division is also currently undertaking initial preparations for two reports to the General Assembly, one on rural women and one on the impact of globalization on women. Any ideas you would like to put forward on key issues to be addressed in these two areas - either arising from your individual work or from this programme - would be highly appreciated.

During the annual sessions of the Commission, a high-level roundtable and two expert interactive panels are organized. Selected representatives of NGOs and scholars are included as experts in the panels and can participate in the high-level roundtable. While these events do not provide potential for involving large numbers of representatives, they do offer critical opportunities for bring the concerns of networks, caucuses and coalitions to the discussions. In addition, scholars and activists organize parallel events during the Commission which attract participation of Member States, NGOs and representatives of United Nations entities. During the most recent Commission, for example, around 85 events were organized within the United Nations and around 200 outside the United Nations This provides an important opportunity to bring attention to issues of concern to scholars and activities.

The Division manages two websites – the DAW website which provides information on all areas of the work of the Division as well as official documents related to the Commission and other intergovernmental bodies and CEDAW, as well as the website of the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality – WomenWatch - which provides information on the gender equality work of entities throughout the United Nations system.

The Division also maintains a mailing list for dissemination of its publications, which provides a link to organizations and individuals interested and involved with gender equality issues from around the world.

I believe there is a need to reinvigorate the interaction of the Division with academia and activists. Following the ten-year review and appraisal we intend to organize consultations with both non-governmental organizations and scholars to brainstorm on priorities and approaches in promoting enhanced implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

We would welcome ideas from you on how we can enhance our interaction with scholars and activists. For example, suggestions on what kinds of information are useful for you; feed back on our websites; innovative ideas on potential interaction and ways on

ways in which scholars and activists could contribute to the work of the Division; and information on critical networks with which the Division could have contact.

One challenge we face is ensuring geographic balance in our contacts with scholars and activities. The Division faces resource constraints which make it difficult to support active participation from all parts of the world at meetings and events. While we benefit from constructive contact and collaboration with NGOs and academics within close proximity of the United Nations, we need to find ways to broaden our network to cover all regions. In keeping with the principles and spirit of the United Nations, we must bring in the voices from all regions. Any suggestions you might have on how we can broaden our network in this respect would be very welcome.

I would now like to have the opportunity to listen to your views.

Thank you.