

**Message from Carolyn Hannan, Director
Division for the Advancement of Women
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

**On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the
National Women's Committee of the UN NGOS in Japan
13 October 2007**

I extend my warmest congratulations to the Chairperson, Madame Mihoko Ejiri, and to all the members of the National Women's Committee of the UN NGOs of Japan on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the organization. I also wish to express my appreciation for the good collaboration the Division for the Advancement of Women has had with the National Women's Committee over the years. I am sorry I am not able to be with you at this Symposium in celebration of this very important anniversary but I am very happy to send you this congratulatory message.

One of the most significant processes over the past decades has been the development of strong and vibrant networks of civil society groups working to promote gender equality at national, regional and global levels. Women's groups and networks have increased in strength and effectiveness and have played a very strategic role in moving the global agenda on gender equality forward. Non-governmental organizations have energized the debates on critical areas and contributed to increasing the visibility and recognition of the importance of gender equality for development. A great deal of the sustained attention and the achievements made over the past decades has been due to their efforts. Their role in advocating for and monitoring implementation of the commitment made by Governments has been particularly significant. The increasing partnerships between Governments and civil society on the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality is an extremely positive development, which is creating new and important synergies.

The work of the National Women's Committee is a good practice example of such strategic partnerships with Government. It is a remarkable achievement that the organization has been sending representatives to the Third Committee of the General Assembly for the past 50 years. I have been honoured to personally meet and collaborate with some of these representatives since I joined the United Nations in 1999.

Many NGOs focus on the work of the Commission on the Status of Women which is the body in the United Nations exclusively focused on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. It is, however, equally important to focus attention on the work of other bodies in the United Nations, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, and the new bodies, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

I commend the National Women's Committee for its efforts in the context of the General Assembly's work on gender equality and empowerment of women, in particular the work of the Third Committee on women's human rights and violence against women,

and the work of the Second Committee on women in development and rural women. The work of the Third Committee is critical since violence against women is a pervasive violation of women's human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality and development. An in-depth study of the Secretary-General and a General Assembly resolution (61/143) gave unprecedented visibility to violence against women and highlighted the urgency for action against it.

It is important that sustained attention is given to the work on peace and security. For this reason I am very encouraged by the fact that the theme of your Symposium is human security. Within the United Nations, there is systematic follow-up to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. The work of the newly created Peacebuilding Commission should be followed carefully to ensure systematic incorporation of the concerns of women from the initial stages of its work.

I would also like to remind you that, at its 52nd session from 25 February to 7 March, the Commission on the Status of Women will review implementation of its agreed conclusions on "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding". This provides an excellent opportunity to address the issues of human security. I hope that you will bring the outcome of your Symposium to the Commission in February.

At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders highlighted that "Progress for women is progress for all". I look forward to continued cooperation with the National Women's Committee of the UN NGOs. Your work on human security is an important contribution since "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" are basic elements of the work of the United Nations on gender equality and empowerment of women.