

Madam Chair,
Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to thank the Commission Bureau and the United Nations General Secretariat for successfully organising this event.

• I would like to emphasise that celebrating "Beijing + 10" is not an end in itself. **This meeting is a major step** to focus the energy required to accelerate the implementation of our commitments. The stakes are considerable; we must clearly assert that equality between men and women is a priority for our planet, for its sustainable development and for the progress of humanity. **It is urgent:** ten years have gone by, with progress made, no doubt, but how much more violence whether been exposed or stifled, how many still suffer from discrimination! The time has come to act for a fairer world, a more humane and caring world. The era of new worldwide governance is an absolute necessity, as desired by the President of the French Republic, Mr Jacques CHIRAC.

• **I wish to stress how much France is committed to equality between women and men.** France is committed with the European Union. We fully espouse the Declaration recently made by the Presidency of the European Union. France is committed with the Commonwealth of French-speaking nations, the Francophonie, whose inter-cultural diversity and dialogue have demonstrated the successful alliance of the ambition to achieve progress and respect for others. It is committed with the United Nations, which enshrines our ideal of dialogue and progress for humanity. Our many partnerships which associate NGOs and international organisations, States and civil society must now be universal and contribute to the sustainable development. Ours is a momentous responsibility.

Madam Chair,

• **France is committed to respecting the universal rights of the human person.**

- We reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and platform for action; as well as the statements of the 23^d Extraordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly.
- We also support the Cairo action plan which contains key provisions on rights pertaining to sexual and reproductive health.
We reassert that the CEDAW Convention and its protocol can leverage the progress of women's rights worldwide. Making them universal is necessary.
- For, in France, we are relentlessly fighting violence against women with the 'Ten measures for women's autonomy', a program that I recently presented.
We condemn sexual violence used as weapons of war and the economic violence of human trafficking.

In all these fields, we pay tribute to the personal commitment of the Secretary General of the United Nations and his Advisor.

• **Secondly, France is committed because it desires a strengthened and renewed international solidarity.** We are convinced that the Millennium Development Goals cannot be met without accelerating the implementation of commitments made at Beijing and Beijing + 5.

How can we overlook the fact that gender **inequality is one of the structural factors of under-development?** Fighting for gender equality means pushing back poverty, overcoming discrimination

and violence and working for social, human and economic sustainable development that is fair and a factor contributing to progress, peace and democracy.

This statement must be asserted just as the need to establish new instruments to finance international solidarity. **France is fully committed.** You are aware of the proposals made by the President of the French Republic concerning the necessity to find new sources for financing development, including international solidarity levies. However, nothing will be possible unless we combine all these new mechanisms for solidarity with the reaffirmation of universal rights: equality moves the world forwards!

Today, the majority of people in poverty are women. I hail the initiative of the United Nations to make 2005 the year of **micro-credit**. We will have an international meeting on this subject in Paris on June 20th; it's a vital source of financing for the poorest for which women are the main beneficiaries. This is a powerful instrument. What can be said about the fight against **AIDS**, a major national cause in France in 2005! Victims are still all too often deprived of the treatment they need. In **environmental protection** and sustainable development, women have a major role to play and are the vector for genuine 'ethics for the future'. It is significant that the member nations of the Commonwealth of French-speaking countries, The Francophonie, reasserted the fundamental role of women in sustainable development at the Ouagadougou Summit of the Francophonie in November 2004.

France is therefore pleading to have the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the core of the review of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals to honour our promise made for equality. This issue is not only a problem for southern nations. If in France we have included the gender mainstreaming to such an extent in public policy for the last two years through the Equality Charter, if in France we do so much for professional equality and equal pay with the issue of the first Equality Labels awarded for large French companies in January 2005, it is because the dynamics of equality act in every sector of society as factors for sustainable performance and development and thus as factors for wealth and employment.

Madam Chair,

• **At the start of the 21st century, the Beijing platform is more than ever pertinent!** At a time of extraordinary changes to our world, a new worldwide partnership must be expressed in effective and stronger collective actions. Beyond the tenth anniversary of Beijing initiatives, I call **on all the world's leaders and NGOs to strive to make personal rights central to all discussions at the September Summit of the Millennium Declaration follow-up and to make the drive for equality – which brings us all together today – the 'organising gene' for a new world, a fairer world and a more human world.**

Thank you./.