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Statement by

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**Chairperson of the Syrian Commission
for Family Affairs**

Forty-Ninth Session of the Commission
on the Status of Women

2 March 2005

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Madame Chairperson
Distinguished Delegates:

It is an honor and a pleasure for me to take the floor on behalf of the Syrian Government at such a high level plenary that marks the Anniversary of the adoption of Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. I consider this as a great chance for me to carry the voice of the Syrian women to the International Community.

Even before 2000 B.C, Syrian women have had their distinguished role and great impact in building civilizations and contributing to the glorious history of that part of the world. In the contemporary history, Syrian women played a pivotal role, hand-in-hand with Syrian men, in the development and modernization of Syria. The issue of gender equity, equality and empowerment of women is grounded in our constitution and polices. The civil, commercial and labor codes grant women equal rights with men.

Women empowerment and advancement in Syria is only part of the international women movement. It goes parallel with the international spirit that is aiming to gender equality and ensuring full rights under international human rights standards. Our efforts focus on women's political and economical empowerment, promoting reproductive rights, meeting the need of young people and networking.

The Syrian Government is fully committed to the Millennium Development Goals. As a matter of fact, the MDGs are not new to Syrian development planning agenda, especially those related to narrowing the gender gap in basic education, enhancing working women's share in workforce, and increasing the percentage of seats occupied by women in national legislative assemblies.

As a matter of fact, women joined the Syrian Parliament in 1973 with a percentage of 2.3 and increased to be 12% in 2003, which is considered as one of the highest among developing countries. And since 1976, we see women representing Syria as ministers, judges, ambassadors and prosecutors. Recently, women were given more opportunities to take senior positions in the Government regardless of their age or political background.

Madame Chairperson

Since 2000, Syria has witnessed an accelerating tone of development, which was positively reflected on women status in the Syrian society. The Beijing Platform of Action's twelve critical areas of concern have received the utmost attention of the government.

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs (SCFA) has been established as the national women machinery in 2003. This commission, affiliated with the prime Minister office, is acting as a catalyst for promoting gender equality, gender mainstreaming and monitoring of the implementing of the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all Form of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The Syrian Government is committed to women's human rights. From that prospective, The Syrian Government had signed and ratified the CEDAW. Subsequently, a comprehensive advocacy campaign was conducted with parliamentarians as a first step to consider withdrawal of most reservations. Women's non-governmental organizations have contributed to raising awareness on laws that constitute any discriminatory provisions especially the nationality law which is due modification very soon. Several legislations related to family law and specifically to women's rights, were reformed as part of the legal modernization process by virtue of CEDAW provisions.

Syria has made significant progress concerning the spread of basic education. Recently, the government has taken concrete steps to reform and update the educational system, taking into account the issues of citizenship, human rights and the recommendations of Beijing conference, Educational for All conference and the Second conference for Education Development in 1999.

Syria is also committed to ICPD POA recommendations. The first national conference on population was conducted in 2001 under the auspices of the President of the Republic. The National Health Strategy is an clear manifestation of its commitment to ensuing RH Quality of Care, and reducing the unmet need for contraceptives.

Equal to Syria's commitment to fulfilling its role as a primary responsible to develop and implement policies on gender equity and equality, its commitment to establish a strong partnership with different

actors especially with the civil society. It is worth mentioning that the Shadow report was prepared for the first time on the occasion of the tenth Anniversary of the adoption of Beijing PfA.

Gender based-violence is no longer a taboo issue in Syria. The national plan for eliminating violence against women and children is currently under preparation by national experts from governmental and non-governmental organizations.

**Madame Chairperson
Distinguished Delegates:**

Peace has always been a great concern of all nations, of every society, of every human being especially women, who experience the devastating effects of wars and suffer in silence their consequences. However, peace is not mere words and wishes. Peace is about life of real people and respect of their human rights and aspirations. Hence, it is not a coincidence that peace has been a central theme of the global movements for women empowerment and gender equality for the last 30 years.

More than half a million Syrian women and men are displaced from their villages and towns due to the ongoing occupation of the Syrian Golan. Furthermore, eighteen thousand Syrians still suffer from their living conditions under the foreign occupation. It is only through just and comprehensive peace, women in the Middle East would be able to fulfill their aspirations and enjoy their human rights.

Madame Chairperson

We, Syrian women, have committed ourselves to support all initiatives that make women voices and demands heard, and to work hard-governmental and non-governmental organization- for a better world in which our daughters would enjoy a peaceful and just life.

Thank you