



COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

FORTY-NINTH SESSION

28 February-11 March 2005

Statement by

Mrs. Rashida Al-Hamdani

Delegate of the Republic of Yemen

Chairperson of the Women National Committee of the Republic of Yemen

New York, March 7, 2005

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Dear Madame Chairperson, first of all, please allow me to congratulate you on your leadership of the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women towards achieving the goals that we all aspire. I would also like to commend your Bureau and colleagues from the United Nations system for their valuable contributions.

It is encouraging that we are able to benefit from an international agreement which provides women with their rightful role, not only in terms of human rights, but also with the increasing acknowledgement of their role in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and peace. Moreover, we were privileged to listen to the statements of participating delegations over course of last week who presented the achievements of their respective countries in the framework of the Beijing Platform of Action. While we should all be proud of the accomplishment achieved to date, we would also like to reaffirm our commitment to the important goals set out by the Beijing Platform of Action given that the Platform sets out an important framework for assessing achievements towards equality for women.

Madame Chairperson, the concept of promoting the role of women is well accepted in our society. As emphasized by UNDP's Arab Human Development Report, the absence of women's participation in the public sphere poses one of the main obstacles to human development. The political leadership in our country is eager to advance women's role from within our society, because we understand that there will be no sustainable development without women who represent half of the population - and who are the mothers of the other half. To this end, we were privileged to witness women's increased participation in the last Yemeni elections - a first in the region. Women have also become partners in other aspect of political life, having reached ministerial, ambassadorial, and director positions - in addition to having gained membership in the Shoura Council, the Parliament and local council.

At the same time, the political leadership in our country is making every effort to encourage the collaboration among women's organization, the Yemeni Women Union having become one of the most important NGOs in addition to 200 NGOs of other civil societies working with Women's Rights and women development, who receive such support. We could elaborate on the numerous achievements of Yemeni women since Beijing took place ten years ago, with regards to accomplishments in education, health, the environment, the police force, and amendments of various laws (which include those related to violence against women). We have also approved a national Women Development Strategy, the process of which was led by the Women National Committee in coordination with women departments of each ministry, representatives from civil society and the private sector. Moreover, we have embarked on various pilot programs such as the Children Parliament which has gender balanced representation.

Madame Chairperson, women in our country have become real partners in combating poverty, our country being among the first ones to embrace this fight and directly linking it to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the respective organizations within our country have set-up specific targets to be achieved in the near future, including the following:

- Decrease high rates of population growth which are undermining the potential progress of development programs.
- Combat illiteracy and early marriage.
- Enhance women health, economic and social status, and provide potable water for rural women.
- Promote effective partnerships in the PRSP process and in the implementation of the national gender strategy.
- Coordinate national, regional, and international efforts towards supporting women's issues, linking them with the Beijing Platform of Action.

We in Yemen aspire to the same high standards and values as others and want to affirm that our Islamic religion has preserved human rights, but it has be understood that we are facing significant development challenges.

Madame Chairperson, I would like to thank you for having provided me with the opportunity to briefly present the status of women in our country. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for the mutual efforts that aim at enhancing national, regional, and international mechanisms towards achieving the overall goals of the Beijing Platform of Action and the Millennium Development Goals.