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Statement

by

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**On the occasion of the
55th Session of the
Commission on the Status of Women**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Hungary on behalf of the European Union. It is a privilege and honour for me to address the high level plenary of the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Let me give you a brief description of Austria's situation concerning the access of women and girls to education and measures taken to empower them to achieve economic independence.

The educational background and qualifications structure of the Austrian population demonstrates that the objective of equal educational opportunities for women and men has been achieved to a large extent. Austria's women have now reached a higher educational level than men. Women outweigh men as university students and graduates, however, with respect to academic personnel women account for only 40 per cent of the positions held. The situation is particularly unsatisfactory for the highest academic ranks, since only 18.7 per cent of university chairs are held by women. In order to overcome this situation Austria has developed a targeted personnel policy and introduced development measures as well as a quota of 40 per cent women in all university bodies in 2009.

The percentage of women in leading positions in the realm of business and industry is regrettably also small. In 2010, only 9.7 per cent of the positions on the boards of directors of the TOP 200 list of top-selling Austrian companies were held by women. The share of women who feature in executive boards and managerial positions is just 5.3 per cent.

Access to equal opportunities in the labour market is determined not only by the level of education achieved, but also by the choice of studies and area of specialization. Throughout all levels of training and education there is a persistent trend of young women to focus on just a few fields: retailing, office clerical work or, regarding university studies, on the humanities. On the other hand training and education in industrial and technical subjects has remained a male majority domain. In order to attract more women to the better paid technical professions, Austria has conducted special information and promotion programmes for many years. A comprehensive programme called fFORTE, which is in operation since 2002, aims to promote women in the fields of research, the natural sciences and technology. Within

the programme Femtech a database of female experts has been established. wfforte is a special programme for women in science and technology, in management positions and entrepreneurship. A special programme of the Austrian Labour Market Service encourages unemployed women to broaden their career choices by showing the differences in income of so-called traditionally female jobs compared to those in technical fields.

Our way of thinking and acting is still strongly governed by prevailing stereotypes and prejudices. Gender-sensitive education must start in kindergarten. Education for equality is a principle at school; reflexive co-education is now being initiated at the teacher training institutions. We must ensure that both girls and boys can develop their skills, competencies and interests as broadly as possible and free from gender-related roles and stereotypes.

Despite the considerable progress made in terms of access to education, the employment opportunities in the different professions, economic sectors and in positions for women and men remain unequal. The gender-specific disparities in terms of wage rates are also highly unsatisfactory. It is an important fact to note that women suffer an income disadvantage right from the start – when they first enter working life.

The Austrian government has therefore adopted a "National Action Plan for the Equality of Women and Men in the Labour Market", which was presented in June 2010 by the Federal Minister for Women and Public Administration and is to be implemented by 2013.

Its four strategic goals are

- to diversify education and the choice of professions, and to ensure gender-sensitive vocational orientation
- to increase the participation of women in the labour market and to increase full-time employment including equal sharing of responsibilities
- to increase the number of women in managerial positions, and
- to reduce the income disparities between women and men.

We plan to reach these goals with 55 concrete measures, which were compiled by experts.

One of the most important projects of the Action Plan is the introduction of measures geared to strengthening income transparency. On 1 March 2011, an amendment to the Equal Treatment Act will come into effect, which will oblige companies to compile sex-disaggregated income reports.

Economic independence is a key element in determining one's own future. We must therefore ensure that women and girls have access to all the opportunities and possibilities available in society. Neither our economies nor our societies can afford to do without the realisation of the full potential and knowledge of women and girls.

Let me now briefly turn to recent efforts and developments at the international level. The enhanced implementation of landmark resolution 1325 on women, peace and security was one of Austria's priorities during its membership in the Security Council in the last two years. As the 10th anniversary of the adoption of this resolution has shown last year, we continue to face numerous challenges to attain the objectives outlined in resolution 1325: access to education and training is a pre-condition for the participation of women in peace negotiations, post-conflict planning and as a consequence for the representation of women in state structures and decision-making positions; women's full employment and decent work is vital for economic recovery. The indicators that have been endorsed by the Security Council last year to measure progress in the implementation of resolution 1325 constitute an important step in our view and will help to target our efforts. We welcome and support the efforts by UN Women to ensure that the indicators become fully operational within the time frames set out by the Secretary-General last September.

Austria furthermore fully supported all efforts to enhance the means to combat sexual violence in conflict, including the appointment of a Special Representative. We welcome the establishment of monitoring, reporting and analysis arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, as foreseen in resolution 1960. These arrangements will complement the framework already in place to protect children in armed conflict, inter alia from sexual violence. However, it is clear that these mechanisms need to go hand in hand with education, as education is a key tool to combat and reduce gender-based violence. Austria is committed to continue its efforts in the area of

women, peace and security and fully supports the work of UN Women and its Executive Director Michelle Bachelet in this field.

Thank you.