



**UN Commission on  
the Status of Women  
55th Session**

**24 February 2011**

**H.E. Ms. Ingrid Fiskaa,  
State Secretary of  
International Development**

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Chairperson, fellow delegates,

I am here today as a stand-in. Norway's Minister for Gender Equality, Mr. Audun Lysbakken, is home with his new-born daughter – on a 16 week paternity leave.

The Minister lives up to the message he delivered to this Commission last year; that men and boys must take a greater share of family care. This is good for the men themselves and their children, and it's good for society as a whole, by promoting women's access to education, technology and decent work.

Chairperson,

Education, technology and decent work are sources of dignity, wealth – and power. Fair and equal access for all – regardless of race or class, disabilities or gender – will promote human rights, development and sustainable peace. These observations have for decades been a guide for Norway's political priorities – at home and abroad:

At home, we introduced universal and free primary education for all more than one hundred years ago. Now, three out of five university students in Norway are women. Female applicants are given additional points when competing for admission to polytechnic universities. Close to 80 percent of women have a job, while we maintain a birth rate at almost 2, one of the highest in Europe.

Abroad, Norway contributes more than 80 million US dollars per year to UNICEF's program to educate girls in developing countries. We also support poor women's access to information and communication technologies, in particular mobile phones, to enable their entrepreneurship.

**(Check against delivery)**

And we have made the International Labour Organization, with its Global Jobs Pact for Decent Work, a strategic partner in Norway's foreign economic policy.

Chairperson,

Many seem to believe that a country must develop and become rich before it can afford to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. That is wrong!

The main-frame of our policies was put in place many decades ago, while Norway was still a poor country. What it took was the vision and political struggle by the poor and the progressive – not least women – to make not only growth, but also social justice and equity, central criteria for good governance.

As a result of that struggle came legislation and regulation, quotas and taxation: We introduced paid parental leave and subsidized child-care. We required by law a minimum of 40 percent of the underrepresented gender in the boards of Public Limited Companies.

And even more fundamentally, we promoted and protected sexual and reproductive health and rights – including the right to safe abortion, and equal treatment regardless of sexual orientation. These measures have not only empowered people and protected their human rights, but also made our economy more dynamic, productive and competitive, by addressing stereotypes and helping men and women combine work and family life. We have greatly increased the number of people at work, and therefore both private and public revenues.

While we still have important challenges, such as a gender segregated labour market and lower average pay for women, we have achieved the following; 80 percent of women in the work force, only 3,6 percent unemployment – and a GDP per capita close to 90.000 US dollars.

You may now think that this is because of our oil. The fact is that oil only counts for seven percent of our GDP, while human resources, including of course the women, represent close to 80 percent of our national wealth.

Chairperson,

Inspired by our own experience, Norway has always been a strong supporter of the United Nations' work for gender equality and empowerment of women. After more than six decades we can finally celebrate the establishment of UN Women.

With former president Bachelet at its helm, we are confident that UN Women will be the leading global advocate for gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights – also where these are sensitive and controversial.

In particular, we expect UN Women to bridge the gap between the UN's normative work, including in this Commission, and the situation for women and girls on the ground, by helping to

make the UN system's operational activities better in assisting member states to meet their obligations and development objectives.

Chairperson, before I close, let me underscore the following:

We all know what it takes to make a prosperous, stable and peaceful society: It takes freedom, justice and equal opportunities for all. And as we've seen so clearly over the past few weeks; Leaders ignore these facts at their own peril!

When reconciling differences and rebuilding peace, we call on member states and the United Nations system to fully implement the Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

Only by protecting all women's human rights and ensuring women's full and equal participation in economic, social and political life – can sustainable peace and development be achieved.

Thank you.

