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General discussion (item 3)

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STATEMENT

by

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in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister

Poland

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General discussion (item 3)

Madam Chairperson,

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of the European Union. The existing Polish legislation – the Constitution, the Labor Code and the Act on equal treatment explicitly prohibits discrimination against women. Participation of women in political, social, economic and cultural activities in Poland is steadily increasing. The Congress of Women, established in 2009, which brings together women from different backgrounds, takes care of the problems of women, including those coming from the rural areas.

In comparison to women from the cities, rural women have still less favorable access to education and health services. The Polish Government has undertaken several initiatives to equalize their opportunities. Significant barriers to the full advancement of rural women are: a direct sales of processed products and the inconsistency of insurance systems. This results in difficulties while starting up a business.

These issues have already been taken into account in the current rural development policy and women's access to various support instruments. Nevertheless the recent research on the status of women and men (including in the field of professional activity, salary, pension schemes, access to the decision making) still indicates gender gaps unfavorable for many women. In order to save the intellectual potential and labor resources of rural women and to prevent depopulation of rural areas, there is a need to make those areas an attractive place to live and work for women. The recent research, which is being prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is to provide arguments for the effective support for women living in rural areas within the new financial perspective.

The sustainable rural development policy and demographic changes occurring in Europe as well as decrease of the number of women in some rural areas, are the factors for growing importance of the rural women issue. The discussion at the EU level on the possibility of gender mainstreaming in rural areas to the European Common Agricultural Policy has concluded that women's share in the social and economic life in rural areas is inadequate. At the same time it

was emphasized that wasting of the women's capacity may be an important reason for limiting the further socio-economic development in the EU.

Because of the lack of comprehensive studies on women in agriculture and rural areas and also the increasing need for the information in terms of the future financial perspective, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development commissioned a nationwide research project entitled "The situation of women in agriculture and rural areas. The specifics, standards, quotas and expectations."

The research is to provide knowledge about the standards of living and expectations of rural women in Poland, to identify their needs and major barriers to social and professional life. It is expected to develop proposals for a package of measures targeted at the needs of women in the new financial perspective of the European Common Agricultural Policy. The study has to answer, inter alia, whether the rural area policy takes into account sufficiently the potential of women. It raises question how to increase interest of the business in the labor market of women entrepreneurs in rural areas. This often influences their willingness to stay in the countryside. It must indicate whether the activities the RDP 2007 - 2013 altered the situation of rural women, and if there is a need for the new financial perspective of the CAP preference for women (the so-called forms of positive discrimination) in order to improve access to various activities.

The role of women in rural areas is an interdisciplinary subject. It engages many of the government bodies, including Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, that has made a pioneering project "Diagnosis of the professional situation of rural women in Poland" in 2006-2007 and then carried out Post-Accession Rural Support Program under the loan agreement with the World Bank between 2007 - 2010. The main objective of the Programme was to create local leaders. Nearly 90% of the participants were women. They declared that participation in the social activities is giving the opportunity to fulfill themselves, also professionally. System of support for women provided training tailored to the needs of rural women. Economic independence of rural women is a key factor to achieve gender equality, and it is possible through economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Thank you, Madam Chair.