

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-sixth session
H. E. Ms. Marjon V. Kamara
Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women
Closing remarks
15 March 2012

**Distinguished delegates,
Under-Secretary-General,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

We have come to the end of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I would like to thank all the participants for their most valuable contributions to this session: the government delegations, the members of non-governmental organizations, the experts and panellists, and the rural women who inspired us and brought a sense of reality and perspective to our proceedings.

I extend my personal appreciation and that of the Bureau and Member States to UN-Women, and in particular to Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Michelle Bachelet and her staff for the excellent preparations and the invaluable and tireless support during the session. I thank the Commission's Secretary, Mr. Otto Gustafik and his team, the interpreters, conference officers and all other staff that ensured that the session proceeded smoothly.

This session focused on a priority theme that is crucial to one quarter of the global population – rural women and girls. Rural women have a key role in food production and in rural enterprises. They make up a big share of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. They are crucial decision-makers and managers all along the agricultural value chain.

Rural women are economic agents who could unleash major advancements in hunger eradication and development. This requires their empowerment and equal participation in the rural economy – it requires their full and equal access to productive resources, to land, finance and credit, agricultural inputs, rural extension services and technology, and to social services and support.

It requires their leadership and participation in all decision-making processes from the village to the national and global level. Their organizations must be key players in discussions and decisions about national development and they must be consulted and their voices must be heard.

Rural women's empowerment also requires that financing for rural and agricultural development, must prioritize rural women. Infrastructure investments, such roads, access to markets, access to clean water and sanitation, and to sources of energy, must take into account their situation. These investments must reach them where they live to support their contribution towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

I am therefore especially disappointed that divergent views have not been bridged and that the Commission is thus unable to adopt Agreed Conclusions on this year's priority theme for the benefit of rural women who had hoped that this Commission would achieve something concrete for them.

I extend my appreciation to H.E. Mr Carlos Garcia Gonzalez, Vice-Chair of the Commission, who facilitated the negotiations, for the excellent and hard work, and the very long hours trying to achieve an outcome. And while we do not have a set of Agreed Conclusions to propel us forward, there were many points of convergence which should allow all Member States and other stakeholders to take action quickly so that we can achieve tangible results for rural women and girls in their daily realities. I count on UN-Women to lead the United Nations system in providing all necessary support in this process. I propose to prepare a Chair's summary in due course which will be posted on UN-Women's website.

But I do not want to close this session only on this serious note of disappointment.

We successfully evaluated progress made in financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. We noted some important progress and good practice examples by stakeholders at national and global level. Our review session occurred at a mid-point between the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held last November in Busan, and the forthcoming Development Cooperation Forum of the Economic and Social Council. I encourage all delegations to use this opportunity to solidify the inroads we have made in financing for gender equality.

We also looked at the engagement of young women and men in the promotion of gender equality, and were very much inspired by the ideas, dynamism and creativity of those that contributed to this debate. We were asked to create space for young people at the Commission and in particular to include at least one youth representative in governmental delegations to the Commission. We should make every effort to implement this suggestion so that the leaders of tomorrow are indeed fully involved as we set the agenda for the future.

The large number of Ministers and other senior officials from Government who attended this fifty-sixth session confirmed once again the very high political significance that Member States attribute to this Commission. This is clearly an indication of the leadership role which this Commission continues to play for gender equality and the empowerment of women. I am sure that this high-level participation will directly translate into follow-up action at the national level.

I commend the organizers of the many side events, both here at United Nations Headquarters and in other locations, for once again using the occasion of the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women to present your work, exchange ideas, network and plan and strategize for the year ahead. I commend and salute all of you for your commitment.

Distinguished delegates,

Let me end my remarks by expressing my very deep appreciation to the members of the Bureau of the fifty-sixth session – H.E. Mr Carlos Garcia Gonzales, Mr Filippo Cinti, Ms Ana Marie Hernando, and Ms Irina Velichko. Their guidance and experience were essential in the preparation of the session, and I thank them for their consistent cooperation and tireless work during the session.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all Member States for their support, and I look forward to working with all of you towards the fifty-seventh session.

I thank you.