

**Commission on the Status of Women
56th session**

27 February to 9 March 2012

Opening – 27 February 2012

**H.E. Ms. Marjon V. Kamara
Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women**

Deputy Secretary-General,
President of the Economic and Social Council,
Under-Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I am honored to welcome you to the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I extend a special welcome to those who have traveled to join us for these exciting two weeks, and in particular Ministers, senior Government officials and expert delegates from capitals, representatives from non-governmental organizations and participants from the entities of the United Nations system. Greetings to all of you!

For good reasons, the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women are a “must-attend” on the calendars of the global gender equality community. It is the time when we gather to take stock, rejoice in progress made, rally around key issues and commit to move forward to bring real change to the lives of women and girls around the globe. Over the years, we have seen our efforts leading to concrete results – at national level, and across the spectrum of the United Nations’ work in the fields of development, peace and security, and human rights.

One of the key roles of the Commission on the Status of Women is to monitor progress and address remaining gaps in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This task is achieved in a number of ways: by examining the priority theme in an in-depth manner to determine the impact of actions taken, identify good practices and lessons learned, and agree on further steps directed at Governments and other stakeholders. The Commission also evaluates progress in the implementation of previous agreed conclusions, and focuses on emerging issues to contribute to a better understanding of gender perspectives.

At this session, the Commission’s priority theme is the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, in development and current challenges. We will examine the many contributions of rural women to the economy and their communities, and the challenges they face in the general discussion, the high-level round table, and interactive panels, and in the results of the session. Those should also feed into other intergovernmental processes, such as the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, to

deliver on our commitments to advance the rights of women and girls in all spheres of human endeavour.

We will consider the crucial question of how we finance efforts to achieve gender equality. What have different stakeholders done since the fifty-second session of the Commission, when we adopted agreed conclusions on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women? What more is needed, and how do we ensure accountability for results? And we will hear about the role of young women and men, girls and boys, as champions of gender equality and how their contribution can be harnessed for a better future.

Many Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations are organizing side events that will further enrich our deliberations. I thank them for their efforts.

Distinguished delegates,

Several key premises continue to drive the work of this Commission.

One is that the normative work on gender equality is not yet done – contexts change and require fresh responses, new challenges emerge and create opportunities for progress.

A second is the Commission's strong emphasis on bridging the gap between commitments made at the global level and their accelerated implementation at the national level. Such accountability is key for ensuring that the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent commitments to gender equality translate into tangible results for women and girls in their daily realities. It also means that the real work starts after the session, when we return to our duty stations and jump start the process of implementation.

A third premise is that the work for gender equality is not the responsibility of women, or of one particular group of stakeholders – realizing gender equality and women's empowerment is a societal responsibility, a responsibility of governments, civil society, grass roots organizations, the private sector, of men and women, girls and boys everywhere. These key premises must guide the work of this session.

I wish us all two constructive weeks of stimulating discussions, joint learning, strategizing and new insights, so that we continue our work re-energized and with renewed determination.

Thank you.