

**Message from Ms. Carolyn Hannan
Director, Division for the Advancement of Women**

**Expert Group Meeting on the impact of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for
Action on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals**

Organized by
The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)

In collaboration with:
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Hosted by:
The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

Geneva, Switzerland
11-13 November 2009

Distinguished hosts, experts and observers,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this Expert Group Meeting on “The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.” I am sorry I am not able to be with you at this very important meeting.

I would like to thank the experts for accepting the invitation of the United Nations Secretary-General to share your expertise on this critical topic. I would also like to welcome all other participants who are attending as observers from Government, the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations.

I wish to express my gratitude to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) for hosting this Expert Group Meeting, for your warm welcome and all the support received, and to thank UNDP for collaborating with the Division for the Advancement of Women on this meeting.

Prior to each of the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women holds an expert group meeting to ensure access to the latest research and practical experiences. This meeting of experts provides a critical opportunity to inform and impact the Commission’s deliberations and its outcome.

At its 53rd session in March this year, the Commission on the Status of Women decided to review, at its 54th session in 2010, the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

2010 is a significant year in that it marks the 15-year anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women; the United Nations Economic and Social Council will focus on

“Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women” in July; and the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals will be held in the General Assembly in September. Your work in the coming days will be very important as the outcome of this Expert Group Meeting will contribute to all of these intergovernmental processes.

It is now widely recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women is critical to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It is only fitting that we should be discussing at this critical juncture the impact of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

While the MDGs have been instrumental in rallying a broad range of stakeholders to the urgent task of development, the Beijing Platform for Action has been critical as it offers a comprehensive framework for the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In this regard, the Beijing Platform for Action clearly constitutes an essential means towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The task before us is challenging given the range of issues covered in the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDG framework, but there is tremendous urgency to meet the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs.

Reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2000 and 2005 indicated some progress in eliminating gender inequalities across the 12 critical areas of concern but also highlighted the many remaining gaps and challenges. A preliminary review of responses from Member States for the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action shows that progress remains uneven and inadequate in all critical areas of the Platform. Evidence likewise indicates that progress towards the MDGs has been slow and many of the targets are far from being achieved. Recently, concerns about the impact of the global crises on achievements made are being raised.

The task ahead of you is to examine how the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions outlined in the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action contributes to accelerating progress towards achievement of all MDGs. We rely on your expertise and experience to help us identify good practice examples of initiatives taken to integrate gender equality perspectives in efforts to achieve the MDGs and ways to overcome existing gaps and challenges.

A focused approach and much hard work will be needed to develop a limited number of concrete and practical steps and policy recommendations for governments, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders for accelerating achievement of the MDGs through enhanced implementation of the Platform for Action.

At the Commission on the Status of Women in March next year, the results of this expert group meeting will be presented during an interactive expert panel. The report of the meeting will be widely distributed to delegates at the Commission.

The expert group meeting has brought together an impressive group of experts and practitioners. I encourage you to share insights, experiences, good practice examples and lessons learned from your own work. I am confident that your individual knowledge and expertise from

national, regional and global contexts will provide crucial insights, and guarantee the success of this meeting.

I wish you very productive discussions and an excellent outcome. My colleagues attending this meeting stand ready to assist you in your work in any way possible.

Thank you.