

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Sixty-first Session**

**Introductory Statement
by**

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends,

It is an honour and privilege to address the Third Committee as it discusses the advancement of women. I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairperson, on your well-deserved election. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

This year's major events, including the World Summit on Information Society, High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, Mid-Term Comprehensive Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the High-Level Meeting on AIDS confirmed that women are disproportionately affected by global problems.

The 2006 Millennium Development Goals Report shows that poverty, persisting educational gap, under-representation of women and girls in decision-making; occupational segregation, disproportionate representation in informal sectors, valuing women's unpaid work; gender-wage gap; unacceptably high maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS are common issues facing women across the globe. Other challenges include armed conflict, continuing discrimination, gender information divide, cultural and social issues that hamper States' efforts to combat violence against women and the trafficking of women and children.

As the President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Racheed Al Khalifa stressed "Now the challenge before us is to ensure that our decisions make a more lasting difference to the lives of millions of people around the world."

Our experience at Beijing and Beijing+10 proves, time and again, the critical need to link the Beijing process with other international processes such as the internationally-agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the 2005 Summit Outcome, including in particular the implementation of global partnership, the theme of

this year's general debate in the General Assembly. The problems facing women today are so diverse and complex that no single nation, leave alone a UN entity, no matter how well-resourced, can solve them in isolation. It is a task to which we must all contribute, including the private sector and NGOs.

The past twelve months saw many strategic entry points for an implementation and partnership focus on gender issues moving onto centre stage in the global arenas.

Nowhere was this better illustrated than at the 2006 substantive session of ECOSOC where three out of four segments took gender equality issues into account. The High-level Roundtable on "Innovation at work: national strategies to achieve gender equality in employment" provided a solid preparation for the high-level segment, and the Ministerial Declaration emanating from it reaffirmed Member States' determination to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, recognizing that these are critical for achieving sustainable development and for efforts to combat hunger, poverty and disease (E/2006/L.8). The humanitarian segment discussed various dimensions of gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies and the "general segment" took up gender mainstreaming and advancement of women.

At its 50th session, the Commission on the Status of Women reviewed its working methods and prepared a new multi-year programme of work for the period from 2007. In line with its commitment to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform, the Commission decided to increase its focus on follow-up on implementation at the national level, to enhance its catalytic role in gender mainstreaming and to foster the important role of the Commission in providing a global forum for exchange and sharing of national-level experience. The multi-year programme of work also focuses on reviewing implementation of previously adopted commitments. The themes proposed for 2007 to 2009 are: "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child"; "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS"; and "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women."

The latter theme of financing for gender equality is a key issue for the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform. We must seize the opportunities offered by the Summit and the exceptional global economic growth. According to the 2006 Global Monitoring Report "*Millennium Development Goals: Strengthening Mutual Accountability, Aid, Trade, and Governance*", about \$130 billion per annum would be available as Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2006 to 2010.

I challenge Member States to increase ODA and earmark at least 15 per cent of ODA for gender equality. I call on all Member States to support the initiative by Brazil, Chile, France and Norway set out in their Joint Declaration on the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID) on resource mobilization to fight against HIV/AIDS through taxation of air tickets. I also call on all donors to enhance aid effectiveness, and make aid transfers more predictable and less fragmented, and I urge developing countries

to align the aid more closely with women's needs and target it to where the aid can be productively used to reach gender equality.

In other areas, solid progress achieved in the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, including the creation of the Human Rights Council, Peacebuilding Commission, Central Emergency Revolving Fund, UN Democracy Fund as well as the ongoing reform of ECOSOC offer new opportunities to mainstream a gender perspective in various sectors.

The Human Rights Council established an intersessional open-ended intergovernmental working group to develop the modalities of the Council's universal periodic review mechanism. This year, on two occasions, I addressed the Council with concrete proposals to link its work to activities of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, including for its universal periodic reviews. We are working with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the CEDAW Committee to take advantage of the new human rights environment to raise the status, visibility and authority of the Convention and the Committee, thereby ensuring that women's rights are situated at the centre of an integrated human rights machinery.

The report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its 34th to 36th sessions is before this Committee. A summary of the report will be presented to you on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

To ensure visibility of women's rights is particularly important in conflict and post conflict societies. While women and girls bear the brunt of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, they have limited access to decision-making and to resources, and their human rights and contributions are often ignored. Thus, the Peacebuilding Commission would play a significant part in enhancing the role of women in post-conflict development. We will work closely with the Peacebuilding Support Office to engender the work of the Commission.

The theme "The roles of women in the consolidation of peace" will be discussed on 26 October by the Security Council, under the Presidency of Japan, at its open debate on women, peace and security. The Council will have before it a report of the Secretary-General, containing a review of implementation of the system-wide action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The report contains a comprehensive and candid assessment of achievements and shortcomings in implementing the action plan, carried out by my Office based on information provided by participating UN entities. It shows that the UN system made commendable efforts and there has been significant progress in many areas of the action plan, particularly in peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding. It also confirms the benefit of having the system-wide action plan. The report contains a series of actionable recommendations to make the action plan a more effective tool for strengthened inter-agency coordination, enhanced accountability and gender mainstreaming.

A decade of action since Beijing has produced significant results in gender mainstreaming policies, methodologies, tools and activities within the UN system but the systematic practical application of gender mainstreaming by UN entities remains a challenge. Insufficient accountability, low capacity for gender mainstreaming, including a significant knowledge gap, measuring progress in gender mainstreaming as well as in monitoring and reporting remain important challenges. At the country-level, enhancement of attention to gender perspectives in operational processes remains a challenge.

To respond to these challenges, the UN system-wide policy on gender equality and strategy on gender mainstreaming were established through inter-agency consultations within the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality which I chair. The Network held its meeting on 22 to 25 February 2006. Consultations have also taken place with the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies, the High-Level Committee on Management and the High-Level Committee on Programmes. Special care was taken to ensure that the policy and strategy be consistent with intergovernmental mandates, including ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 and its resolution 2005/31. They are not meant to be a substitute for entity-specific policies and strategies which are critically essential and should be accompanied by time-bound action plans.

I am glad to report that the policy and strategy were endorsed by a joint meeting of the High-Level Committees of CEB on 30 September 2006 and transmitted to the CEB for action at its meeting to be held at the end of October 2006. This is an important step towards innovative and more efficient ways of strengthening gender mainstreaming in the UN system.

They, however, are not a panacea from challenges in inter-agency cooperation and coherence mentioned in the Secretary-General's report "In Larger Freedom: Towards development, security and human rights for all". A critical analysis of the system-wide capacities for gender equality and gender mainstreaming shows that gender-focused UN entities are ill-adapted to a systematic work on gender mainstreaming and woefully under-resourced. Coherence and discipline of the architecture are lacking. The findings of the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence are expected to provide much needed insight into how the UN system can work better to achieve gender equality.

However, regardless of the specific institutional format a new architecture may take, its value-added would be in strengthening efficiency of the UN system to make a difference in the field and to enhance the Secretary-General's leadership to implement the UN global commitments to gender equality in an effective, sustainable and systematic manner. These efforts will benefit from guidance of intergovernmental bodies such as this Committee, the Security Council, ECOSOC and CSW.

Report of the Secretary-General "Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly" (A/61/174),

which was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 60/140 reviews progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the outcomes of major events held in 2005 to 2006, as well as steps taken by the Assembly and its main committees during its 60th session to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The recommendations contained in the report focus on enhancing the analysis of gender perspectives and concrete action taken at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels, including in the follow-up to the World Summit.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

The Committee will consider the status of women in the United Nations system. The system-wide representation of women in the Professional and higher categories as of 31 December 2004 stood at 37 per cent and at 24 per cent at the D-1 level and above. The representation of women Resident Coordinators increased from 21 per cent in 2004 to 33 per cent in July 2006. In the United Nations Secretariat, over the last two years, the proportion of women in the Professional and higher categories on appointments of a year or more remained unchanged at 37 per cent. At the D-1 and higher levels, women now make up 25 per cent of staff, a decrease of 4 per cent. At the D-1 level, the proportion of women decreased by 7 per cent to 25 per cent, whereas at the D-2 level, women's proportion increased by 3 per cent. At the P-1 to P-5 levels, women's proportion increased insignificantly by 0.4 per cent to 39 per cent.

These trends are of deep concern to the Secretary-General, and efforts are underway to redress the situation. As requested by the General Assembly, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women completed a study on the probable causes of the slow advancement in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system. The study concluded that if the goal of gender balance is to be attained the following key areas must be addressed: development of clear pro-gender balance policies accompanied by strong implementation; commitment at the highest level to institute positive and mandatory special measures; changing working climate and culture on career progression and productivity; and establishment of clear mechanisms of accountability for gender balance at the managerial level.

The incoming Secretary-General has a great opportunity to demonstrate commitment to the goal of the 50/50 distribution by appointing a gender balanced cabinet.

Distinguished delegates,

The challenges facing women are not problems without solutions.

The 2005 World Summit has generated a new momentum and strong quest for concrete action on gender equality. The full and effective implementation of the Summit Outcome, including the internationally-agreed goals, should be our goal. A fully implemented and engendered Summit Outcome will usher us into a new era for the empowerment of women – one built on concrete action and with increased cooperation

from Member States in many critical areas of vital interest to women, including development, peace, human rights, enhanced accountability and responsibility for gender mainstreaming, and with more coherent and coordinated inter-agency cooperation.

This Committee has the occasion to accelerate the implementation of policies aimed at achieving the practical realization of the principle of equality of women and men. On behalf of my Office, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, I pledge our full cooperation in support of these efforts.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.
