

**2010 ECOSOC Substantive Session
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
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**Statement by H.E. Ms. Florence Chenoweth
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Report on the ECOSOC Global Preparatory Meeting**

Mr. President, Distinguished Representatives, Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to join you today to report on the Global Preparatory Meeting (GPM) for the 2010 Annual Ministerial Review that took place 22 April, with the theme **Who Feeds the World in 2010 and Beyond? Rural Women as Agents of Change and Champions of Global Food Security.**

The purpose of the GPM was to focus on the role of rural women in achieving the MDGs, in particular MDG 1. It was convened, taking into account, the growing shift in global attitudes regarding women's role in economic and social development. This role is not new, but it is one to which insufficient attention has been paid in recent times. In the past few years we all have drifted towards the tendency of perceiving women as a "vulnerable group", rather than more correctly seeing them as key contributors to development. A recent discussion where this was made very clear was in the margins of the World Food Summit last year, where female Ministers of Agriculture and grassroots women farmers gathered to discuss the food crisis and the role of women in alleviating poverty. The findings of a study commissioned by FAO, WOCAN and Haurou Commission were presented, which documented the impacts of the food crisis and climate change on women farmers throughout the South, showing convincingly the important role of women small holder farmers. I participated in this discussion and left hopeful that the world would take the findings seriously.

With the comprehension of this more correct perception of women comes the understanding for commensurate efforts to translate this new perspective into more robust action to support rural women's role as agents of change and drivers of economic and social development.

The dialogue held during the GPM was very encouraging, showing a willingness amongst Member States, UN system organizations and others to identify concrete actions needed to support rural women's contribution to reducing poverty, improving food security and the right to food, and promoting economic and social development.

The meeting provided an opportunity for ECOSOC to call attention to the need for priority action in support of rural women's rights and empowerment and to facilitate coalition and partnership building toward this end. In this regard I am pleased to see that there is language in the draft Ministerial Declaration that recognizes the need to keep the focus on the empowerment of rural women and small holder farmers. The panel was composed of a mixture of policy persons and practitioners, which in the end permitted us to firstly answer the question of who

feeds the world in 2010 and beyond – women for sure and secondly, to arrive at practical recommendations to move towards concrete action.

Eleven key recommendations emerged from the discussion:

1. There must be increased investment in agriculture with support for rural women being prioritized: - If we are serious about winning the fight against hunger, our country-led investment plans and the legal and policy frameworks must address rural women's specific needs. Only by doing this, will we bring out the Productive Potential of 50 percent -or more-of the population.

2. Recognize women for what they are: stakeholders and not beneficiaries. In all national development and food security policies and programmes women must be recognized as agriculture producers, entrepreneur, and managers of natural resources. We can not expect to achieve accelerated growth without first ensuring that the policies that drive the agriculture sector and the investments earmarked for it prioritizes gender equality and women's empowerment.

3. Women's contribution in the agricultural sector must be made visible: - In the 21st Century it is possible to make the necessary improvement in national data collection and analysis so as to account for rural women's work in the agricultural sector, including on and off-farm production, and in the informal economy .

4. Women must be given their share. Investments in agriculture and rural development need to be country-led, and care must be taken to ensure that all levels correspond to the different contributions men and women make to agriculture and rural development. This well ensure that a larger share of programming resources reach women farmers and agricultural producers and support their economic empowerment.

5. We must move away from the one size notion: - For rural women one size fits all, it means being left marginized. Policies and programmes need to be holistic and address both women's productive and reproductive roles, including social safety nets, nutrition, health, and action against gender-based violence, and take into account rural women's occupational diversity as farmers, fishers, herders, and entrepreneurs, their ethnic identity and the value of traditional knowledge and practices.

6. We must be accountable. To achieve this we must monitor implementation of existing commitments in support of agriculture and rural development and we must evaluate and report on their impact on rural women's economic empowerment.

7. We must recognize that women's empowerment is not only about women. Empowerment is an important tool for enabling both poor men and women to overcome poverty while recognizing their different roles in society. Men need to be part of the dialogue and can be powerful champions for women's rights and gender equality.

8. Women must have what it takes to make their contribution more effective. They must have a piece of land, equipment, and credit of their own. We must strengthen legal frameworks to ensure gender equality and adopt measures to ensure women's equal access to productive resources, including land, credit, technologies, training, markets and information.

9. It is time for new and more appropriate tools. We need urgently to support an agricultural research agenda that focuses on rural women's needs for agricultural technologies, labour-saving agricultural equipment and modern means of communication.

10. Women have voices and they should be heard. We must enable rural women to make their voices heard not interpreted, and we must make room for them to participate in decision-making by taking concrete measures to facilitate women's organizations women participation in local, national, regional and global fora related to food security, agriculture, rural development, environment and climate change.

11. Strength in number. United, rural women can be strong. Their organizations must be supported and concerted efforts must be made to promote women's leadership in farmer organizations as important means for rural women's empowerment and for increasing the capacity of those organizations to address gender issues.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, I commend you for taking the initiative to have this important discussion in ECOSOC. I urge you to take the messages from the GPM forward to the upcoming Millennium review in September and to have reflected in its outcome the agreement of world leaders to keep the spotlight on the empowerment of rural women and small holder farmers. You should also continue these discussions in other fora such as the CSW 2012 session that will focus on rural women, always having in mind the end result of concrete action for the millions of small-holder farmers, who are both women and men. We have talked about the need to empower women and to strive for gender equality for far too long. It is not possible any more to say new things in our speeches. It is, however still possible for us to act. Hopefully the time is now.

Thank you.