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**STATEMENT BY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL,
H.E. MR. HAMIDON ALI (MALAYSIA) AT THE INTERACTIVE EXPERT
PANEL OF THE 54TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF
WOMEN IN PREPARATION FOR THE ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL'S ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW:
"IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOALS AND
COMMITMENTS IN REGARD TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN"
9 MARCH 2010**

Chair,
Deputy Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to make opening remarks at this expert panel.

The subject of the Economic and Social Council's Annual Ministerial Review this year is "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women". As I had stated in my opening address at the opening of the CSW last week, this year of 2010 holds significant importance for the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The work of the CSW will be an essential contribution to the outcomes of the Annual Ministerial Review, and the discussions this afternoon in particular will assist in bridging the gap between the totality of the Beijing Platform for Action and the specific focus of the AMR on the internationally agreed goals.

The Economic and Social Council is the principal United Nations body for the coordination, policy review, dialogue and recommendations on all economic and social development issues. The Annual Ministerial Review is a key instrument in the work of ECOSOC. It is the only United Nations intergovernmental event that includes a multi-stakeholder process and reviews national level implementation of the goals and commitments that make up the United Nations Development Agenda.

Each year, the Annual Ministerial Review explores the key challenges in achieving the international goals and commitments in one specific area. With the focus this year on gender equality and empowerment of women, the AMR will take a broader approach. The Council will base its deliberations on the recognition that gender equality is both a goal in itself as well as a means towards the achievement of all the MDGs and other development goals. This year's topic provides the critical opportunity to reorient and focus global, national and local strategies towards sustainable development and equitable economic growth for all and base them firmly on global commitments and norms for gender equality and empowerment of women. In essence, we have the opportunity to reinforce the cross-cutting conceptualisation of issues related to women and girls to issues on the development agenda. And this conceptualization is crucial to ensure that women's issues are not isolated from the rest of government policy and programmes, but is recognised as an essential and integral part.

Recent crises such as the global financial crisis have already had serious adverse consequences for developing countries. These effects are exacerbated by the many existing structural vulnerabilities such as gender inequality, which can be seen in the unequal participation of men and women in paid and unpaid work, the lack of economic empowerment for women, the gender segregation in the labour market or the absence of women from decision-making positions. Actions to eliminate these inequalities lead to more robust socio-economic development. They lead to higher growth and fewer negative impacts from external economic or structural shocks.

Chair,
Deputy Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The preparations for the Annual Ministerial Review revolve around stimulating dialogue and engagement for actions. They include regional meetings such as the recent meeting for Africa held in Senegal in January, which focused on women and health. The Council also seeks to provide innovative opportunities for other stakeholders to contribute to the review, including the recent ECOSOC Special Event on Engaging Philanthropy to Promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and through other venues such as the e-discussion forum on women and poverty held last month. In addition, a record number of 13 countries have chosen to make National Voluntary Presentations during the Annual Ministerial Review and will report on progress in implementing their commitments toward the internationally agreed goals, including the MDGs, for gender equality and women's empowerment.

In the Ministerial Declaration that the Council aims to adopt, we should have a focused, direct and substantive text that reflects the issues that are most pertinent to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. We would not do justice to the issue should we follow past practise of declarations with detailed, micro actions that reflect the concerns of a small numbers of countries, or that which are not applicable to all countries.

Your views and comments will provide valuable input to the Annual Ministerial Review and help shape the Declaration. We should make best use of the strategies and good practices that are currently employed in various countries and regions and benefit from examples of demonstrated results and impact. We should be committed to focus on concrete and practical steps that will make a measurable impact on women's lives.

The ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review should be seized to move from rhetoric to action. Let us commit to redouble our efforts to accelerate progress towards realizing gender equality and women's empowerment.

I thank you.