

7 March 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at International Women's Day "Empower Rural Women – End
Hunger and Poverty"**

Remarks delivered by H.E. Ambassador Dr. Mutlaq M. Al-Qahtani, Chef de Cabinet of the President of the General Assembly

Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your Excellency Madam Marjon Kamara, Ambassador of the Republic of Liberia to the United Nations, and Chairperson of the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women,
Your Excellency Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General,
Assistant-Secretary-General Mrs. Lakshmi Puri,
Ms. Femi Oke,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, regrets that he could not join you today. As his Chef de Cabinet, I have the honour to make the following remarks on his behalf.

Today we mark International Women's Day.

A day where we each recognize and appreciate the fundamental role of women.

Yet we are all aware that women do not enjoy the equality they deserve.

Advancing the status of women worldwide is, therefore, a responsibility we all share.

This responsibility, and our determination to fulfilling it, has been present since the UN's founding days.

The UN Charter affirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of every human person, and in the equal rights of men and women.

This International Women's Day, we pay particular attention to empowering rural women, to end hunger and poverty.

Women are agents of development.

Rural women, in particular, play a critical role in advancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security, and eradicating poverty.

They are integral to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development as a whole.

With Rio+20 on the horizon, the time is upon us to truly recognize rural women's role in achieving sustainable development.

We also need to do more to empower rural women, so they can reach their full potential as key contributors to the global economy.

They need better access to land rights, modern technologies and financing.

They need greater business opportunities.

And they need to be protected from all forms of discrimination, inequality, violence and social exclusion. Special focus in this context needs to be given to girls as well.

We need also to carry out extensive education and awareness-raising campaigns on the rights of women.

To empower rural women, more action is needed to improve the active participation of women in all political and economic decision-making processes at the local level.

I call upon Member States, the UN system and our partners to strengthen their efforts to empower rural women, recognizing their major contribution – both real and potential – to ending hunger and poverty worldwide.

I wish a happy International Women's Day to all of you, and to all women around the world!

Thank you very much.