

Statement by H.E. Mme. Zhao Shaohua
Vice Chairperson of the National Working Committee on Women
and Children of the State Council of the People's Republic of China
Head of the Chinese Delegation
At the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
(Agenda Item 3)

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Madam Chairperson,

First of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, please allow me to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau for your excellent work. We are convinced that under your leadership this session will achieve success.

This year marks the 60th Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the 10th Anniversary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, the 5th Anniversary of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Women as well as the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. There are plenty of historical records for us to review the past in this session of the Commission, as reviewing the past will help us tackle existing problems and plan for the future.

Madam Chairperson,

The Chinese delegation wishes to concur itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Jamaica on behalf of Group 77 and China. Since the First World Conference on Women, in particular since the Fourth World Conference on Women was held, international community has reached more consensus on women's advancement and gender equality and has strengthened cooperation. A number of international instruments including *the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention)*, *the Vienna*

Declaration and Programme of Action, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Millennium Development Goals have been adopted; which reaffirmed the principle of equality between men and women and mapped out strategies for gender equality. With concerted efforts, the principles of non-discrimination and equality between men and women have been incorporated in government actions and plan and have exerted positive and far-reaching impacts.

However, we are very much concerned that armed conflicts, poverty, violence, discrimination and diseases, among others, have limited women's equal rights and access to development, in particular women in developing countries and hindered their full enjoyment of human rights. As economic globalization accelerates, the gap between developed and developing countries widens. The feminization of poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS become outstanding problems. It remains an arduous task for all of us to achieve the objectives as outlined in *BPFA* and the *Outcome Document*.

This session will review the implementation of *BPFA* and the *Outcome Document* at the national and regional levels, and discuss challenges and forward-looking strategies for the empowerment and advancement of women and girls. We support the adoption of a declaration at this session to reaffirm the political will of governments to implement *BPFA* and to take active measures to turn commitments into actions.

Madam Chairperson,

To achieve gender equality and women's advancement, the international community should commit itself to building world peace, strengthening cooperation and promoting common development. Every country needs to establish a notion of comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development, which put people first, ensure regional and eco-social balance in development and promote harmony between man and nature. Towards this end, the international community, in particular the developed countries, is duty-bound to help developing countries build up their capacity by providing financial and technical assistance and human resources training. Different countries have different political, economic and cultural systems and the choice each country makes in its approach to women's advancement is based on their national situations and should be respected. Only with mutual understanding and close cooperation can we realize common development and build a better future for all.

Madam Chairperson,

As homeland of one fifth of the world's women and the host of the Fourth World Conference on Women, China attaches high importance to

women's rights and advancement. By making equality between men and women a basic national policy, the Chinese government affirms the priority status of gender equality. In implementing *BMA*, the *Outcome Document* and *the Convention*, China formulated two national programs for the development of Chinese women, amended laws such as the Marriage Law, Rural Land Contracting Law, and promulgated laws and regulations on combating domestic violence against women. In the recent amendment to the Constitution, respect for and safeguarding of human rights was further stipulated. Legal and policy framework for the protection of the women's human rights and the empowerment of women have been improved. China established mechanisms such as the collegiate bench for women's rights, and developed research and interventions for combating violence against women. China also strengthened international cooperation for fighting trafficking in women and made unremitted efforts to promote women's enjoyment of all human rights.

Much progress has been achieved in the areas of women's literacy, poverty-reduction, employment, women's rights and building harmonious families in China with the joint efforts of the government and the civil society. The percentage of women leaders at and above ministerial level increased; women account for a higher percentage in the employed population in urban areas; the percentage of girl students has been raised; maternal mortality rate decreased and women's average life expectancy is longer than that of men.

The governments of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Macao Special Administrative Region of China are also devoted to the development and advancement of women and have taken legislative and administrative measures to implement of *BPFA*, the *Outcome Document* and the *Convention*. Women's NGOs in Hong Kong and Macao play an important role in the promotion of women's advancement.

As a developing country, China still faces many difficulties and challenges in realizing gender equality. To meet these challenges, the Chinese government will strengthen its efforts. At the same time, we will conduct regional and international cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.

Madam Chairperson,

If 'women can hold up half of the sky' is a mere wish decades ago, 'women is half of the sky' is becoming a reality and consensus today. The year 2005 is the year of the rooster in the Chinese lunar calendar. We look forward to joined efforts of the international community in the year with the cock croaking dawn. Let the light and dawn shines in the women's half of the sky and let us build a brighter world for all.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.