



Statement

by

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Parliamentary State Secretary

to the

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women

and Youth,

Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and

Integration

on the occasion of the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the

Commission on the Status of Women

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**Check against delivery**

Thank you Madam Chair,

The German delegation fully endorses the statement made by Luxembourg's Minister for Equal Opportunities on behalf of the European Union. Allow me to add a few points from the German perspective.

Despite achievements made - today six out of 14 federal ministries are headed by women - we still face hindrances in realising gender equality in Germany. We are giving policy priority to three areas: gender mainstreaming, gainful employment of women and combating violence against women. We continue to develop new strategies that will secure the genuine equality of women and men.

At present, the German Bundestag is debating a Bill on Protection from Discrimination that also includes bans on discrimination under labour and social law and covers the legal relations between private individuals. The Bill will provide women with instruments that enable them to better defend themselves against unwarranted gender-based discrimination.

About two years ago, we established a Gender Competence Centre at the Humboldt University in Berlin. The Centre is funded by the Federal Government. It supports the introduction of gender mainstreaming into all areas of society, the economy, politics and administration. Its mandate includes advising, researching, initiating and co-ordinating activities, gathering knowledge and training experts.

Of central concern to us is strengthening women's participation in economic life and raising the employment rate of women and reducing income differentials between women and men. The employment rate for women in Germany has risen steadily in recent years and ranks in the upper midfield in the EU. However, we are aware that many of those jobs are part-time.

Child-care services are essential for the successful reconciliation of family life and work for both women and men. We have a shortfall in public childcare services in Germany. So we are very proud that an Act on the Expansion of Day Care Services entered into force at the beginning of this year. The federal states and the municipal

ties must increase the number of day-care spots for under-threes in the upcoming years.

Gender based discrimination and exclusion as well as violence against women and girls are violations of human rights and an obstacle to development anywhere in the world. The German Government strongly underlines the right to bodily integrity and to the full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights and freedom.

In 1997, Germany set up a federal working group on "trafficking in women". And in 1999, the German Government launched an Action Plan on Violence Against Women. In this context, we are supporting Non-Governmental Organisations nationally and around the world in their work to raise awareness of violence against women, including trafficking in women and female genital mutilation.

I want to point out very clearly: Equal rights of women are not to be called into question by religious and cultural differences. It is therefore of utmost importance that this Conference send a signal that we are fully reaffirming the commitments of Beijing and our commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Germany is deeply committed to the vision of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). During its non-permanent membership in the Security Council, Germany put effort into integrating a gender perspective into mandates for peace-keeping operations. We stress the need to include women at all levels of peace negotiations and conflict resolution.

The promotion of the full participation of women in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction processes is a political priority. For instance, the German Government has supported and continues to support, both politically and financially, the democratic processes in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, we are particularly active in the promotion of human rights, especially of women's rights and their empowerment in all areas.

We strongly believe in the need for accountability for gender-based violence as an indispensable part of post-conflict peace-building. In this regard, we welcome the in-

vestigations **by the International Criminal Court in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – a country where gender-based violence has reached an unheard-of dimension of cruelty.**

**Three years ago the Berlin Centre for International Peace Missions was founded. Forty per cent of all participants in further education courses organized by the centre are women. In addition, the German Government puts a focus on gender training of peacekeeping staff.**

Germany pays high tribute to the realisation of women's human rights and gender equality as an important goal in its own right.

Having said this, I want to emphasize that without the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, none of the internationally agreed development goals can be achieved.

As we have tried to document in our joint publication with UNIFEM entitled "Pathway to Gender Equality", the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals have opened a new door for the advancement of gender equality. It is up to us to utilise this window of opportunity to elevate gender to a higher position on the agenda.

**Let me conclude by reaffirming Germany's commitment to gender equality.**

**Thank you very much.**