

*Statement by:*

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**In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and participants,

Ten years ago, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the world witnessed the international community's strong resolve to promote the status of women to campaign for resolving problems and removing barriers to their advancement and promote full participation in national and global development programs.

In Beijing, we acknowledged that women's rights are human rights and we pledged to intensify our efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who encounter multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement. Now, after ten years, in spite of all efforts made at various levels to achieve strategic objectives mentioned in the Platform for Action, there still remain impediments that we need to overcome.

During the last decade, the international community has acquired new experiences which can help all women's rights activists to make progress. Unrelenting effort of women's human rights defenders within non-governmental organizations and various institutions are among those successful experiences. The functions fulfilled by these organizations and people, along with others actors around the world in overcoming difficulties and obstacles and their innovation of new methods for achieving women's development objectives, are praiseworthy.

Past experience illustrates that the most advanced development plans have been initiated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although there is an enormous variety of NGOs and they each adopt various ideas and methods in the field of their activities, the advancement of women is their primary common objective. This reminds us of the fact that the plurality in thinking and ideas represents the evolution of human society. Therefore, all ideas must be taken into account in order to achieve the very actual objective which is the promotion of women's status.

Madam Chairperson,

In appraising and assessing the progress made for overcoming the obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, I would like to examine the critical areas of concern contained in the Platform for Action in three different groups and categories.

I- Woman's empowerment:

Formulating and implementing policies and programs to elevate the women's economic status, to eradicate poverty, to ensure women's equal access to education and to eradicate illiteracy, to strengthen the programs to promote women's health situation, to provide opportunities for women's equal access to employment and full participation in power and decision-making structures, to allocate adequate resources to implement women's development programs are among strategic objectives of the Platform for Action. Some of these strategic objectives directly but the others indirectly have proven to be effective in women's empowerment. While in the course of the last decade, notable progress has been made on some fronts, their still remains much work to be done for equalizing women's participation in education and decision making.

At present, women's educational situation in some cases encounters serious difficulties. Sadly, after ten years, we still witness violation of women's rights in different parts of the world, where under the pretext of banning the wearing of religious symbols, women from particular religions are excluded from education and participation in the social development process.

A realistic view of women from human perspective and respect for their actual dignity and value:

Although seemingly, respect for women's human value and dignity is considered as merely cultural, in practice, lack of regard for women's value and their human dignity would result in a situation that not only hinders the realization of their human rights but also adversely influences their activities in different social fields.

In Beijing, we acknowledged that violence is the basic bather to women's enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and as a result, we condemned violence against women in all its forms. Moreover, we stressed that we should take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women. We also required that trafficking in women be eliminated and a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media be promoted. We stressed

on taking effective measures against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media. In spite of all these, violence against women in different forms continues to exist. Prevention of violence as the most important obstacle to women's advancement demands campaign from different fronts. Furthermore, trafficking in women demands special consideration and a real willingness of decision-makers at national and international levels.

### III- Elimination of discrimination against women and providing equal opportunities:

Eliminating discrimination against women in economic, social and cultural aspects is of paramount priority and is viewed as the major function of governmental and non-governmental organizations and human rights activists. In addition, one of the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action is to ensure the equality and lack of discrimination both in law and practice. Any movement to improve the women's situation without considering the main obstacle, that is, discrimination, is meaningless and futile.

Madam Chairperson,

Regarding the activities conducted in Iran after Beijing, I wish to stress the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran, with an emphasis on social justice as the basic principle of social development, has taken serious measures to ensure women's development and advancement. To this end, the following are the most crucial measures which have been adopted at the national level:

- 1- Gender mainstreaming in the national development planning has led to a remarkable change in integrating women's programs in the country's budget and resource allocation with the view to promoting women's social and cultural participation. Furthermore, every year at the national and provincial levels, the Government has increased such a budget. The growth rate of 360% of credits for women's affairs results from the above-mentioned policy in our budgeting allocation.
- 2- Encouraging and contributing to the quantitative and qualitative expansion of active NGOs in women's affairs have accounted for the increase of these organizations as many as eight times.
- 3- Promotion of the National Machinery for the Advancement of Women has been undertaken to provide more conducive conditions. To this end, the Director of the Centre for Women's Participation, as an advisor to the President, participates in the Cabinet and Specialized Commissions of High Councils of Decision-making as a full member. This position has made it possible to raise the issues of women at high levels of decision-making.
- 4- Establishing committees on women's affairs in all provinces: In the framework of the policy of decentralization of the government, committees on women's affairs in all provinces, as the main institution for decision-making in women's affairs at provincial level, have been established. At the present time, 540 positions of decision-making at regional and local levels have been assigned to women.

5- Setting up the National Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women and formulating the National Plan of Action for preventing, combating and eliminating violence against women with the participation of the representatives of all pertinent centers and organizations.

6- Economic empowerment of women through increasing the number of women's cooperatives and their activities in the areas of creating jobs, trade, small industries and self-employment as well as access to micro credits.

Madam Chairperson,

Before concluding, I would like to stress that the movement towards the elimination of discrimination against women, their full participation in development, and respect for their real dignity and integrity is an irreversible one. The patriarchal view towards women in the past is and should be dissipating. The attitude of human society towards women has shifted and any obstacle and envy is doomed to fail. The path we are following is so rough that demands the cooperation and solidarity of all national, international and non-governmental organizations.

Thank you.