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STATEMENT

BY

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**ON BEHALF OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN AND OTHER STATES
GROUP (WEOG)**

**on the Occasion of the General Assembly Commemorative Event „Beijing
+15“,
New York, 2 March 2010**

Mr. President,
distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is my particular honour today to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States as we gather on the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

Mr. President,

fifteen years is a long time. Today's young generation that was born in the nineteen-nineties may wonder why we still assemble to commemorate the document adopted at a diplomatic conference held one and a half decades ago. They may ask why they should still care about an action plan that is 15 years old. So what will we tell them?

We can point out to them that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is still the only universally agreed basis for concrete action for the betterment of the lives of women around the world.

We can recall that it was worked out in a long and arduous negotiation process that included *regional* preparatory conferences which addressed the needs and concerns of women in the different regions of the world in a very specific, - namely in their own - way.

We can tell them that it was done with full participation of NGOs.

And we can assure them that for all these reasons the importance of Beijing remains unsurpassed. The World Conference has put gender issues at the top of the political agenda once and for all. The conference and the implementation process ever since – in our countries, in regional and other organisations and in the work of the CSW - have sparked enormous political interest in these issues. “Beijing” has mobilized international organisations, national governments, local authorities and non-governmental organisations on an unprecedented scale. And the follow-up process to Beijing has sustained that interest until this very day.

But let us also be honest to them. We must admit that many of the goals defined in the Platform as “critical areas of concern “ remain unattained in many places. Many

of the hopes and promises underlying the Platform remain unfulfilled. "Action" as agreed in Beijing is still urgently needed everywhere.

More needs to be done to enable women and men to share responsibilities and to balance work, family and private life during the whole life cycle: Today, many new elements in women's life cycles, such as longer life expectancy, a greater variety of vocational and career stages, as well as changed patterns in raising children and care of the elderly, entail major changes in their living arrangements. Equality policy must strive to create the adequate social, economic and political framework to accommodate these changes.

More needs to be done to create access to health services for women, to give women and girls equal access to education and vocational training. More needs to be done to enable women worldwide to participate fully in political and economic life and to achieve economic independence. And more needs to be done to strengthen men to choose new role models,

Last but not least more needs to be done to combat and prevent the many forms of violence against women and girls, to empower and protect women during and after armed conflict, and to contribute to the prosecution of perpetrators. From today's point of view we could add that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing documents will also be essential if we want to find sustainable answers to global challenges like economic, financial and food crises and climate change.

That is why the WEOG countries see this event today as more than just a festive commemoration. We see this event first of all as an opportunity to underline once again our own full commitment to the outcomes of the Conference. And we find it therefore more than fitting that the General Assembly itself also reconfirms once again the value and importance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Both texts must continue to guide us in our future work, at all levels and in all regions.

One level where much of the action required can be induced and coordinated is, of course, the United Nations. Here the Committee for the Elimination of all Kinds of

Discrimination against Women plays an important role as it deals with many of the issues raised in Beijing from a human rights perspective. And we have seen the Security Council step in and adopt an important text on the empowerment of women a decade ago, namely Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

To implement all these decisions, big challenges remain for the UN membership and the UN system. But there is one issue where real progress seems to be at hand. Proposals to reform the UN's internal gender architecture are on the table, and if we were to agree on them quickly – within the 64th General Assembly - we could give a real boost to the Beijing Agenda and the empowerment of women.

Mr. President,

I hope that in the coming days the Commission will prepare the grounds for the future implementation of the outcomes of the Beijing Conference. Let us continue to take Beijing as what it promised to be – our platform for action.