

**Opening Remarks by Carolyn Hannan, Director
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**At the parliamentary event organized by the
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Division for the Advancement of Women
On the occasion of the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women
United Nations, New York, 1 March, 2007**

Madame Chairperson, Senator Monica Xavier
Madame Vice-President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Ms Margaret Mensah
Speakers and Members of Parliament
Excellencies and distinguished delegates

I am delighted to welcome you to the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women and to have the opportunity to make some brief opening remarks at this parliamentary event. I would like to begin by acknowledging the very important work of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

This is the third parliamentary event organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, in the context of the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. It is one element in the very constructive collaboration the Division has had with the IPU for a number of years.

I wish to welcome the distinguished participants from all regions of the world to this session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I am particularly delighted that the IPU made the decision to focus these annual meetings on the priority themes under consideration by the Commission. This provides a unique opportunity for parliamentarians to contribute to and influence the work of the Commission.

The importance of these parliamentary events during the annual sessions of the Commission was recognized by the Commission on the Status of Women at its last session. In the resolution adopted on the future organization and methods of work, the Commission noted "with appreciation the continuation of the annual parliamentary meetings organized by the Inter-parliamentary Union".

I thank all participants for your commitment to the extremely important topic of "eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" which is the priority theme for this session of the Commission. The Commission's decision to focus on the girl child was an important and timely one. The preparations for the Commission have shown clearly that girls continue to face discrimination, violence and neglect, often in hidden forms. National statistics in many situations mask serious discrimination and violence against groups of girls in high-risk situations at sub-national levels. The excellent global policy and legal frameworks which protect the

rights and girls are not effectively implemented and the priorities and needs of the girl child are not adequately identified and addressed.

To contribute to the consideration of the priority theme by the Commission, the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with UNICEF, organized an expert group meeting from 25 to 28 September 2006, generously hosted by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy. The Expert Group Meeting's report has been disseminated through the DAW website and copies are available in the room for reference. UNICEF has prepared a child-friendly version of this report, "Listen to us", for outreach to girls around the world.

With its new working methods, the Commission continues its efforts to ensure a strong focus on national level implementation. This is achieved, in part, through the large number of opportunities provided to participants from capitals for interactive dialogue and exchange of national experiences and lessons learned on achievements and remaining gaps and challenges, as well as for sharing of examples of good practices. Since the Commission will, from this session on, focus on and adopt agreed conclusions on one priority theme, rather than two as in the past, there is increased potential for a thorough consideration of the priority theme. In addition, the Commission also decided in its new working methods, to review the implementation of the outcomes on priority themes after 2-3 years. This means that in 2-3 years time the Commission will come back to the theme of the girl child to review progress and identify continuing gaps and challenges. This provides a tremendous opportunity for promoting, monitoring and reporting on implementation at national level, an opportunity we should fully utilize.

Implementation of the policy outcomes of the Commission can, of course, only be accelerated at national level if these outcomes are well known and systematically and effectively used. The Division for the Advancement of Women encourages relevant UN entities and NGOs to engage their constituencies around the world in follow-up activities. Innovative approaches are needed to ensure that the outcome of the Commission on the priority theme is broadly disseminated and utilized at national level. Parliamentarians could play a critical role in this work, by bringing the outcome of the Commission to the attention of parliaments and promoting active follow-up on the recommendations of the Commission on the girl child. Because the theme has engaged a broad range of stakeholders at different levels in the preparatory process, there is great potential for developing good practice examples on using the outcome of the Commission to make a real difference in the lives of girls.

I hope there will be further opportunities during the Commission for parliamentarians to discuss with a broader group of stakeholders, including Member States and UN entities, how the outcomes can be used at different levels, and how progress can be most effectively assessed and documented when the Commission will review the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the girl child in 2-3 years time.

In conclusion, it is my hope that our work together can make a significant difference in the lives of girls around the world. It is our responsibility to the girls of today and to future generations to take bold steps to forcefully address discrimination and violence.

I wish you a very successful meeting.