

**Statement by
Carolyn Hannan
Director, Division for the Advancement of Women
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Opening session of the 51st Commission on the Status of Women
26 February – 9 March 2007**

Madame Chairperson,
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

It is an honour to address the Commission on the Status of Women. I extend a warm welcome to the Ministers, Heads of National Machineries and other high-level representatives to the session, as well as to all other delegates and participants, including the large number of representatives of NGOs. I particularly welcome the girls who are attending the Commission from all around the world and look forward to your contribution to the discussions on the priority theme of eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child.

The large number of high-level participants from capitals, as well as the significant presence of United Nations entities and civil society, are a visible sign of the importance that various stakeholders accord to the themes under consideration and of the continued relevance of the Commission's work at national level.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Chairperson, and the members of the Bureau of the Commission for their leadership in the preparation of this session.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

At its 50th session last year, the Commission adopted new working methods which place strong emphasis on the implementation at national level of commitments made at the Fourth World Conference in Beijing and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. Central to the Commission's work is the consideration of thematic issues which allows the Commission to refine the global policy framework for gender equality and contributes to accelerating practical implementation of recommendations at all levels. Starting at this session, the Commission is considering one priority theme which allows more time for an in-depth discussion, facilitated by interactive dialogues on national-level experience, and for the development of action-oriented recommendations to accelerate implementation.

Under agenda item 3 (a) the report of the Secretary-General on this year's priority theme, "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child", is before the Commission in document E/CN.6/2007/2. The report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2007/3) focuses on gender mainstreaming in relation to the priority theme.

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.

The Division also held a four-week online discussion on the priority theme, with more than 500 registered participants. The report on the online discussion is available on the Division's website.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

Under agenda item 3(b) on Emerging issues, the Commission will convene an expert panel on "Elimination of all forms of violence against women: Follow-up to the Secretary-General's in-depth study at national and international levels." Through the expert panel, the Commission on the Status of Women has the opportunity to build on the momentum generated by the recently launched study and highlight emerging issues and trends Member States and the international community face in addressing violence against women. The panel will also respond to the resolution recently adopted by the General Assembly on Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/61/438). The resolution invited the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and other relevant United Nations bodies to discuss the issue within their mandates, by 2008. An issues paper to guide discussions at the panel is available on the DAW website.

Under its new working methods, the Commission will review progress in implementation of its agreed conclusions on a priority theme from its 48th session, on "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality". It will also hold a panel on Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" in preparation for its priority theme at its 52nd session in 2008. Issues papers for these two events are available on the DAW website.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

Under agenda item 3 (c) the Commission has before it a number of reports and conference room papers.

The Secretary-General's report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme on elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, is contained in document E/CN.6/2007/2.

The joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is contained in document E/CN.6/2007/5. The Commission also has before it a note by the Secretariat on its draft programme of work in the field of gender issues and advancement of women for the biennium 2008-2009 (E/CN.6/2007CRP2).

The report of the Secretary-General on the situation of, and assistance to, Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2007/4) is before the Commission. A Note of the Secretary-General transmitting the Report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security and the situation of women and girls (E/CN.6/2007/9) has been transmitted to the Commission, as requested in resolution 2006/7. In that resolution, the Secretary-General was invited to take due account of a gender perspective when preparing reports on Afghanistan for the General Assembly, to include in those reports a specific substantive section that focuses on the situation of women and girls - and to transmit those reports to the Commission at its fifty-first session.

A report on the thirty-seventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is before the Commission for information (E/CN.6/2007/CRP1). The Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, will brief you in more detail on the Committee's work.

The Secretary-General's report on the advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women (E/CN.6/2007/8) has been prepared pursuant to Commission on the Status of Women resolution 50/3 of 10 March 2006. The report complements the Secretary-General's report of 2006 on the same topic that was submitted to the fiftieth session of the Commission (E/CN.6/2006/8).

Under agenda items 4, the Commission has before it the Letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2007/7). The Note by the Secretariat as input to the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2007/CRP.2) has not yet been prepared as the final decision by the Council on the theme has not yet been taken.

Under agenda item 5, the Commission has before it the Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the list of confidential communications concerning the Status of Women (Communications List No 41) (E/CN.6/2007/SW/41 and Add).

Madame Chairperson, Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

Before concluding, I would like to brief the Commission on some key activities of the Division for the Advancement of Women since the Commission's last session. Following an extensive consultative process with multiple stakeholders, on 9 October 2006 the Secretary-General's In-depth study on violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1) was submitted to the Third Committee of the General Assembly. The study highlights the persistence and unacceptability of all forms of violence against

women, in all parts of the world. It seeks to encourage strengthened political commitment and increased joint efforts to prevent and eliminate such violence, and identifies ways to ensure sustained and effective implementation of State obligations and to strengthen accountability.

Over the past year, the Division continued its technical assistance to Member States, on request, to enhance the capacity at national level to implement the commitments made in the intergovernmental processes and obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Allow me to highlight activities in two areas.

An e-network of national machineries for the advancement of women in Africa was launched at a regional workshop organized by the Division, in collaboration with the African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in December 2006. The e-network was the outcome of a project which aimed to enhance the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women in Africa to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to strengthen the achievement of the goals through enhanced networking. A web-based information portal (www.uneca.org/ngmafrica) is the central hub of the e-network and will be used by national machineries to share and access information and resources. Discussion lists will facilitate the sharing of information, experiences, lessons learned and good practices among national machineries in Africa. The discussion list provides an effective means for sharing information on the work of this Commission.

In 2006, the Division continued its programme of support, in collaboration with other relevant United Nations entities, to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in post-conflict countries, including in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Afghanistan. We were pleased to note that, also as a result of several workshops the Division has held since 2003, Sierra Leone submitted its combined initial to fifth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention in December 2006. The Division also continued its series of capacity-building regional and sub-regional workshops on reporting and implementation under the Convention. In 2006, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Division held workshops in Cambodia and Thailand, which included Government officials, members of Parliament, non-governmental organizations and United Nations country teams.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The Division for the Advancement of Women stands ready to support the Chairperson, the Bureau and the Commission, in the work of this session. We look forward to a productive two weeks and an outcome which moves us forward in the important work of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Thank you.