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Statement

by H.E. Ambassador Gerhard Pfanzelter
Permanent Representative of Austria
To the United Nations

at the 52nd Session of the United Nations
Commission on the Status of Women

New York
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Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege for me to address the 52nd Commission on the Status of Women.

In the area of Gender Equality, Austria pursues a dual strategy, namely the interplay of gender mainstreaming on the one hand and of the promotion of women on the other.

Concerning the anchoring of women's affairs and of equal rights issues at an institutional level, in Austria we once again set up a separate Ministry for Women's Affairs, which is directly located in the Federal Chancellery. The Minister for Women's Affairs is therefore responsible for coordinating women's matters right across Federal Government. The Austrian Equality of Treatment Act and the Federal Equality of Treatment Act for Employment in the Public Sector are the most important legal instruments for ensuring equality of rights and opportunities for women and men and for eliminating discriminatory practices in the world of employment. In addition, a department in the administrative field is engaged in implementing these rights.

A further central concern is supporting non-governmental organizations.

In the area of sponsoring women's projects, it has been possible – owing to a 35 percent increase in the Austrian women's budget – to provide increased support for measures to improve the situation of women in life, for women-specific initiatives and projects, and for advisory services for female migrants. In this context, particular emphasis has again been given to expanding women's advisory facilities in previously undersupplied regions, which have seen an increase in funds.

It has also been possible to massively increase the budget in the key area of combating violence against women.

Women who have been victims of an act of violence can draw on a variety of legal and other types of effective assistance. They can dial a women's helpline against male violence, which is free of charge and staffed around the clock, or, if they have been raped, they can call women's emergency numbers. Women's refuges also provide women and their children who have been threatened with or affected by violence with protected housing. Austria currently has a total of 30 women's refuges and temporary apartments for battered women and their children.

Women who have been victims of domestic violence or of trafficking are given social, psychological and legal support by female counsellors in the so called intervention centres – especially during the period when the perpetrator of the violence has been evicted from the family home by the police or has been banned from entering it by the courts.

A 60-percent increase in the budget for these intervention centres means that support for all women affected by domestic violence is available throughout Austria.

In Austria, therefore, we have been able to improve the promotion of women from a financial point of view. However, when it comes to financing for gender equality gender budgeting is also an important area of work. This includes also gender-based allocation of the budgetary resources of the public-sector budgets of Federal Government, the federal provinces and local authorities. As policy crystallized into figures, these resources have a considerable impact on society and the economy.

As far as the legal parameters are concerned, Austria is playing a trailblazing role in the field of gender budgeting. On 1 January 2009, gender budgeting is set to be incorporated into the Constitution as a state objective. And by 2013, gender budgeting must have been fully implemented in Austria for reasons of budget law.

In 2007, the Austrian Federal Minister for Women's Affairs published two guides on implementing the strategy of gender mainstreaming.

The guide to gender budgeting in administration is a working aid intended to support the drawing up of a gender-based budget in a targeted and efficient manner.

The guide to gender mainstreaming in legislative drafting aims to support the monitoring of equality-related issues at an early stage, when legal provisions are being drawn up, thus helping to ensure that legal norms eliminate rather than give rise to gender-specific discrimination.

Austria has undertaken politically and legally to implement the strategy of gender mainstreaming in its national policies. In 2000, the interministerial Working Group for Gender Mainstreaming was set up, which is chaired by the Minister for Women's Affairs.

The goal of the interministerial Gender Mainstreaming Working Group is to implement gender mainstreaming in all departments and at all political levels. A crucial element in this is exchanging information and exemplary initiatives in the departments as well as supporting and evaluating ongoing projects, measures and laws.

As an important part of gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting also plays a vital role in the area of development cooperation. In the interests of coherence between national and international politics, we support the implementation of gender budgeting initiatives in Southeast Europe in cooperation with UNIFEM, and plan to put this topic high on this year's agenda at the Monterrey follow-up conference on "Financing for Development" in Doha.

Finally, I would like to emphasize here again that Austria is also in favor of consolidating the women's rights area in the United Nations system. We are of the opinion that all women's rights matters should be brought together in one financially strengthened unit which should be headed by a female Undersecretary-General.

Thank you.