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Statement by Mrs. Bindra Hada Bhattarai, Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare of Nepal on agenda item 3: Follow-up to the (the Fourth World Conference on Women, and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century at the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

(New York, 6 March, 2009)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your election to the chairman of the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We assure you and the bureau of our fullest cooperation for the productive deliberation of the session.

We would also like to thank Secretary-General and his staff for the preparation of excellent reports on the cluster of agenda items, which would be the basis of our discussion.

Mr. Chairman,

The priority theme chosen for this session – “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS” is the most significant one as attainment of gender equality demands the promotion of equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women. The sharing of responsibilities between men and women would make society headway if and only when men and women act as both agents and beneficiaries of change. In the context of the HIV/AIDS, care has become a major source of inequalities and imbalances. It has been estimated that globally women and girls provide up to 90 per cent of the care need generated by HIV/AIDS. This phenomenon of unequal sharing of responsibilities and care giving has implications for a range of policy areas, including political participation, health, social welfare, family education and labour market.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of gender equality and women’s empowerment should remain the utmost priority of the United Nations. The United Nations should strive to making even greater strides in shaping the global policies and programs by setting different norms and standards in the quest for the advancement of women, on gender equality and for the empowerment of women.

The Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development 2005, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly, Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are some of landmarks that provide us unyielding foundation for more investment to the Gender equality and empowerment of women. Considerable progress has been made in translating the internationally agreed commitments into action. But many more remains to be done in moving towards the achievement of all the internationally agreed development goals, including MDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal has adopted the right-based approach for social, economic and political empowerment of women. The Interim Constitution of Nepal guarantees the civil liberties and fundamental freedoms of the people, including the rights of women, depressed communities and marginalized groups. The historical political and social transformation, including the declaration of Nepal as a federal democratic republic, has created new opportunities for the advancement of women in Nepal. Our Constituent Assembly is one of the most-inclusive assemblies in the world; with a greater representation of people from various ethnic and geographic regions. About one third of its members are women.

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming is an important priority in Nepal. We have made provisions for equal property and citizenship rights to women and for representation of women on at least one third of the elected bodies and for ensuring proportional and inclusive representation of women in all organs of the state, including the government bureaucracy, army and police.

The recent policies and programs of the government attaches full adherence to the promotion of women's rights, gender equality and economic, social, cultural and political empowerment of women at all levels. The government has been implementing gender-responsive budget Initiative, which takes into account the advancement of women in the programmes launched by the government in all sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

While abolishing the patriarchal social structure and ending all forms of discrimination against women, the Government of Nepal is committed to put in place an arrangement to take strong action against criminal offences such as physical exploitation, domestic violence and trafficking against women.

Several legal, administrative and other policy measures for an end to all forms of discrimination and violence against women are being implemented in Nepal. Sexual harassment is subject to strong punishment in Nepal. Women and

children Cells have been established under the Nepal Police to curb domestic violence against women and children. Human Trafficking Control Act has been enacted to stop trafficking of women and children.

Nepal supports the concept of shared responsibility between men and women in the context of care giving, especially in combating the HIV/AIDS. We need stronger cooperation and technical support from the relevant United Nations agencies to make this concept work nationally.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal believes that the United Nations can and should play significant role for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, especially leading by example. We support the proposals for effective gender architecture, including the composite option that takes into account operational needs of the programs aimed at women empowerment and gender mainstreaming. We emphasize strong gender architecture of the United Nations at regional and country levels.

Collective commitment and efforts at the international arena including at the United Nations are mandatory if we are to work effectively towards gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. The International community should make more investment to empower women and girls to the least developing countries specially countries just emerging from conflicts. Nepal remains committed to do its part in this regard.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.