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STATEMENT BY

H.E. Ms. Jet Bussemaker

**Minister of Education, Culture and Science
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

Fifty-seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

NEW YORK, 6 March 2013

Mister / Madam Chair, thank you,

Violence against women and girls is an urgent problem with a global reach. Worldwide, one in three women has been battered or sexually abused. In the Netherlands, eighty-four percent of young adult women become the victims of sexual harassment at some point. And lesbian, bisexual and transgender women everywhere, also in the Netherlands, run an increased risk of discrimination and violence.

Violence against women may occur wherever economic, political and social inequalities between women and men prevail. Thus we see violence not only in homes and in relationships, but we also see it being used as a tool in political conflicts and civil wars as a manifestation of power and powerlessness.

Violence affects women, but not only them. Their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, spouses and children suffer, too. Both being a perpetrator and being a victim are often passed from one generation to the next. Violence against women poisons, and can ultimately disrupt an entire society.

Governments should therefore endeavor to address and prevent violence constructively and responsibly, in tandem with community-based organizations and social workers. International treaties, such as the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which the Netherlands intends to ratify in 2013, can

provide useful encouragement. We in the Netherlands are also pleased with the resolution on violence against women, as recently adopted by the General Assembly. With the programme Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW), the Netherlands supports worldwide efforts to eliminate violence against women.

At the same time, we cannot combat violence against women with treaties and legislation alone. Our societies must also be willing to look at the underlying causes of violence, at the systems that facilitate violence and at the factors that contribute to vulnerability among women - particularly migrants, refugees and women in conflict situations. Factors such as financial and social dependence, a lack of access to education, and forced marriage.

I am therefore pleased that the international community is focusing more and more on the underlying causes of violence.

Mister / Madam Chair,

We cannot tolerate a world in which victims of violence do not dare to talk about what has happened to them for fear of stigmatization, a world in which women cannot hold their heads up high and claim their rights, and in which perpetrators of violence go unpunished. No country may ignore this problem on cultural, economic or religious grounds.

Equality between men and women – politically, socially, economically and sexually – is vital to combating violence. We must therefore not only work on prevention, but also on increasing the resilience of girls and women and on enhancing the expertise of professionals.

In addition, we must also combat violence at the level of perception. Stereotype images prevent both men and women from taking up equal and autonomous positions, also in the Western world. The Netherlands will therefore be organizing the international conference on Women and the Media this year in the framework of the Council of Europe. Our country also joined the WE CAN campaign against gender related violence, that started in 2004 in Bangladesh. And we forge alliances to promote the social acceptance of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

I trust that this session of the Commission on the Status of Women will result in joint conclusions to eliminate violence against girls and women, so that universal human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, will finally apply to everyone. International consensus will provide much needed encouragement to politicians and citizens who wish to combat violence and discrimination against women in their home countries.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.