

**Statement by
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**Opening Session of the 49th Commission on the Status of Women
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**Madame Chairperson
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Representatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is an honour to address the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I extend a warm welcome to the Ministers, First Ladies, Heads of National Machineries and other high-level representatives, as well as all other delegates and participants at this important session. The high level of participation is indicative of the commitment to reaffirmation and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the relevance of the Commission on the Status of Women for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women at national level.

I wish to acknowledge the very large numbers of representatives of non-governmental organizations attending this session whose presence is critical because of their pivotal role in the development of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in promoting and monitoring its implementation at national, regional and global levels.

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Chairperson and members of the Bureau of the Commission for their leadership, dedication and hard work in the preparation of this session.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and participants,

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work, the Commission will consider two thematic issues at its present session. "Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session" and "Current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls." The report of the Secretary-General before the Commission in document E/CN.6/2005/2 is based on 135 responses to a questionnaire and other information provided by Member States. It outlines major trends, achievements, gaps and challenges in relation to the 12 critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action as well as issues identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and priority areas for future action, as identified by Member States.

Since the finalization of the report, an additional five responses to the questionnaire have been submitted.

The Secretary-General's report before the Commission in document E/CN.6/2005/3 is based on the inputs received from United Nations entities. It outlines achievements and good practice in implementation over the past decade, including efforts to support implementation at national level.

The high-level roundtable will provide an opportunity for sharing of national experience among high-level representatives on "Innovation in institutional arrangements for promoting gender equality at national level". A discussion guide on the high-level round table is before the Commission in document E/CN.6/2005/CRP2. Consideration of the two thematic issues will be further enriched by the seven interactive panel discussions to be held over the coming two weeks. Issues papers on each of the interactive panels are available on the Division's website and will also be available in the room during the panels.

The Division for the Advancement of Women organized two Expert Group Meetings prior to the Commission, to provide substantive inputs to the discussions during this session. The first Expert Group Meeting on "The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women: Achievements, gaps and challenges" was generously hosted by the Government of Italy in November 2004. The second Expert Group Meeting organized earlier this month focused on "Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals". The Division is grateful to the Government of Azerbaijan for hosting this meeting. The reports of these meetings are available on the website and copies will be made available in the room.

Under agenda item 3 on Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", the Commission has before it a number of other reports and conference room papers. 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 before the Commission in document E/CN.6/2005/6. The Commission also has before it reports on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (document E/CN.6/2005/4) and on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan (document E/CN.6/2005/5), in accordance with the respective resolutions adopted at the 48th session of the Commission.

The Report of the Thirty-second session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination is before the Commission for its information (E/CN.6/2004/CRP1). The Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Rosario Manalo, will brief you on the Committee's work.

Under item 4, the Commission will be called upon to consider a list of confidential communications, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Economic

and Social Council. No list of non-confidential communications has been prepared as no such communications were received.

I will revert to introduction of the reports before the Commission under agenda items 4 and 5 later in the session when the Commission will consider these items.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and participants,

I would like to conclude with brief information on some key activities of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Division is tasked with preparing the in-depth study mandated in General Assembly resolution 58/185 on all forms and