

**United Nations**  **Nations Unies**

**Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Fifty-fourth session**

Madame President,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Partners in Civil Society,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always a pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women. This is one of the most dynamic bodies in the UN system, thanks to the strong voices and participation of leaders from both government and civil society. It is especially thrilling to be here with you to commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to discuss how we can make greater progress for girls and women.

Today, as we look forward to the MDG+10 Summit in September, the Millennium Development Goals provide a unifying framework for international development. But we know that the MDGs do not exist in a vacuum. The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs are built on the foundations of the international agreements that came before them, and these agreements must be fully utilized as we unite to achieve the MDGs.

In particular, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provide a solid blueprint, and constituency, not only for advancing the status of women and girls, but also for engendering and accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

As many of you know, last year we completed the 15-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development and I am pleased to report that commitment to the Programme of Action was reaffirmed. The Cairo consensus placed the empowerment of women, gender equality and the right to sexual and reproductive health as cornerstones for action in the vast field of population and development.

And let us make no mistake about it. The right to sexual and reproductive health is fundamental to women's empowerment, gender equality and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. If women cannot make the most critical decision in their lives—to determine the number and spacing of their pregnancies, to determine their fertility—then they cannot make decisions about other matters that directly affect them.

Women's health and rights are the foundation of healthy societies and growing economies. As we strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, MDG 5 to improve maternal health is lagging behind and urgently requires increased investment. During the last decade, funding for global health soared while funding for women's health remained stagnant.

To make greater progress for women, now is the time to prioritize sexual and reproductive health in health system strengthening and global health financing. A health system that can deliver integrated services to women—for family planning; maternal, newborn and child health; HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—is a health system that can deliver to all. Investing in women and adolescent girls is not only the right thing

to do, it is smart economics. We must ensure that women enjoy equal rights and opportunities for employment as we strive to achieve decent work for all.

We also know that education is one of the most important means of empowering women and girls. In addition to universal primary education, we must give priority attention to quality secondary education so that women and girls can reach their full potential. This is extremely important because girls' secondary enrolment rates are falling in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, and we must reverse this troubling trend.

I am pleased to announce that, in the spirit of Delivering as One, six UN system partners will release a joint statement during this session of the CSW to accelerate action to promote the rights of adolescent girls.

To create more just, prosperous and peaceful societies, we must end violence against women and girls, partner with men and boys for gender equality, and promote relationships based on equal opportunity, shared responsibilities and mutual trust and respect. The United Nations is proud of the Secretary-General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women and the launch last year of the network of men leaders.