

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

We have many experiences and valuable lessons to build on. As we will hear during this panel discussion, good practices and initiatives that can be scaled-up and replicated in a range of areas. For example, we know that:

investments in infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water and sanitation and time- and labour saving technologies can significantly contribute to rural women's empowerment and yield important benefits for whole communities such as better health and education;

public social security schemes can play a critical role in protecting women against persistent vulnerabilities and in fighting poverty;

providing women with equal access to resources, productive assets and markets – in law and in practice - is key to their economic empowerment and to overall rural development and economic growth;

quality education and training, including vocational and literacy training, as well as access to health care, is essential for women's socio-economic empowerment, participation in decision-making and to improving families' well-being;

targeted support to women and women's organizations in rural areas is critical in strengthening rural women's rights and their participation and voice in development processes.

The 2012 session of CSW provides the opportunity to share and collect the lessons learned from successful initiatives, programmes and strategies applied by Governments, UN entities and civil society organizations in different regions. It should identify the key areas where new and concerted policy measures and interventions are necessary to make measurable and accelerated progress in rural women's empowerment. There is also a need to critically assess whether past efforts have brought the expected results – and if not, how to change course.

We will collaborate closely with a range of partners in preparing for the priority theme in 2012, including key UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP), who are represented at this panel, as well as civil society organizations.

We will also draw attention to opportunities for the economic empowerment of rural women in other UN processes, including preparations for the 4th Conference on Least Developed Countries in May 2011 in Istanbul and Rio+20 in 2012.

UN Women is committed to focusing on the situation of rural women across all areas of our work at the global and the national level. I look forward to and count on your support as we work together to translate commitments to gender equality into real change for women, men, girls and boys in rural areas worldwide.

Thank you very much.