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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

50th Session

Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Anastassjs Mitsialis
Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations

NEW YORK
Friday, March 2, 2012

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Madam Chair / Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates

I am honoured to address the Commission on the State of Women at the 11th annual forum which tackles the most important issues on gender equality and focuses on promoting women empowerment at a global level. My Delegation associates itself with the statement adopted by the Commission on the State of Women at the 10th annual forum of the European Union.

Madame Chair / Mr. Chairman,

This year's priority theme, the economic empowerment of women and their role in poverty reduction, is a central focus of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Already in 1995 the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stressed the need for policies aiming at the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas.

However, today's situation reveals that in virtually all countries, rural women and girls in rural areas remain disadvantaged and are worse off than men and urban women. They face significant constraints and suffer discrimination, conditions which put into question the realization, by 2015, of Millennium Development Goals 2, 3 and 5. To meet the sustained efforts of Governments and relevant stakeholders are needed in order to ensure that rural women can have better access to productive resources and infrastructure, financial services and facilities, training and extension services. In the context of change and development, it is of paramount importance that they receive quality education at a young age and that women's participation in farmer organisations and support for rural business, including micro and small enterprises, be encouraged.

Greece remains committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPBA), as well as to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is particularly committed to the full implementation of Article 14 of this Convention which provides for the necessary measures to be taken for the advancement of women in rural areas.

In this respect, the Greek Constitution (in Art. 116, par. 2) promotes substantive gender equality, by stipulating that the State adopts "any measure to remove existing inequalities to the detriment of women". In fact, gender mainstreaming in public policies and systematic gender impact assessment of new laws constitute key aspects of the Greek national program for gender equality.

Regarding rural women, the government has developed entrepreneurship initiatives and steps have been taken to decrease the percentage of unemployed women and to guarantee their unhindered access to women to the labour market. All relevant efforts are currently challenged by the current financial and economic crisis. In this context, the economic empowerment of women are more likely to be adversely affected. In fact, men's economic empowerment has become an imperative element in achieving sustainable economic growth.

The emerging theme of this session, namely engaging young women and men, girls and boys to advance gender equality, is of critical importance for the empowerment of women and girls. It is unfortunately common that de jure gender equality doesn't go hand in hand with de facto equal treatment of women. Gender stereotypes are regularly reproduced through the mass media and combating them should start at the youngest possible age as eliminating gender stereotypes.

It is important to have a favorable climate we need to support increased political participation of women in the political and economic decision-making process. Despite the fact that women are half of the world population, they remain largely underrepresented in national parliaments and within the public administration and only 1/5 of them are in governmental positions. Gender responsive policies should be adopted and implemented and this can be done more easily when women occupy positions of responsibility both in the public and private sectors.

Moreover, women's political participation can be a determining factor in addressing the challenges that women are facing today, among which is combating the violence against women. In this respect, I would like to reiterate my country's support to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Ms. Rashida Manjoo, as well as to the Secretary General on sexual violence in armed conflict, Ms. Rosemary DiCaro. Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls is an objective in that all Governments should uniformly strive to achieve.

Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman,

Our Government constantly and steadily strove to maintain the above issues at the forefront of the international agenda and efforts. These issues, among others, will be on my country's agenda within the framework of the Human Rights Council in the period 2007-2011. We, my Government, in cooperation with the other member-states of the Council in international relations, are supporting our candidature to the Human Rights Council.

Thank you.