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## SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STATEMENT AT PRESENTATION

### OF GIFT BY ARAB WOMEN

Following is the text of the statement delivered, on behalf of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, by Under-Secretary-General Ismat Kittani, on the occasion of the presentation by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid, of a gift from Arab women to the United Nations on Thursday, 3 October:

I feel both pleasure and pride today upon receiving, on behalf of the United Nations, this gift from Arab women to the women of the world, to which you have given the title "Solidarity among sisters".

The pleasure comes of receiving this gift from you, Sir, in your capacity as a representative of the members of the League of Arab States, since the women of every one of the members of the League, of which there are 22, have decided to express the solidarity of Arab women with the women of the world through this artistic gift conveying the content and dimensions of that solidarity.

The talented artist Silvio Russo has shaped this gift in the form of an abstract image of a number of women, each of whom is holding out her hand to the next. This image then becomes transformed, with great artistic perception, into a radiant sun with its rays and warmth extending in all directions.

In fact, when we reflect on this gift more deeply, we find that it is also a representation of one of the most important principles of the Charter of the United Nations, namely the principle of solidarity among peoples. Women account for half, sometimes more than half, of the world community, and as such they inevitably play an essential role in bringing about true solidarity among peoples, that is, solidarity based on mutual support, effective partnership and willingness to confront challenges in our common endeavour to turn our goals of peace, development and equality into concrete reality.

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In this connection, I should like to express my esteem for Raja Al-Muqaddam, whose idea this was. My thanks to her for this sincere effort.

As regards the pride I feel, it springs from the fact that I, the first Arab Secretary-General of the United Nations, have been the person to receive this gift from Arab women to the women of the world, an initiative that, in terms of the thought it expresses, is the first of its kind in the history of the United Nations. This is the first time that the world organization has received a gift from the women of a particular region to the women of the world, and it is gratifying to reflect that this is an initiative by Arab women in the Arab world, to which I have the honour to belong.

While offering Arab women my sincerest thanks and appreciation for this expressive gift, I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate, both to them and to the women of the entire world, that the effort to promote the status of women in all areas of life is one of the priorities of the United Nations. As Secretary-General of the world organization, it is part of my job to follow up the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held last year in Beijing, and was the largest and most inclusive conference ever organized by the United Nations. Forty thousand women from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures participated in it, as did nearly every State in the world. Here, at the Secretariat, I have designated Rosario Green Special Adviser to the Secretary-General with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and providing advice on gender issues. This is another unprecedented action in the history of the Secretariat. My purpose in taking it is to coordinate policies and actions in the framework of the United Nations as a whole, as an additional measure supplementing the concrete steps that have already been taken to strengthen and support the departments and units concerned with the advancement of women.

The story of the activities undertaken by the United Nations with a view to achieving advancement and equality for women, beginning in Mexico City, continuing in Copenhagen and Nairobi and culminating in Beijing, is actually an account of a long struggle that began as a dream and became a clearly defined vision in Beijing. Now it is for all of us, working in solidarity, to turn that vision into concrete reality by the dawn of the twenty-first century.

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