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Fifty-ninth session
Agenda item 12

**INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN
AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

Note by the secretariat

1. On 3 April 2003, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women addressed a letter to the Chairperson of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights drawing the attention of the Commission to results of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women pertinent to the work of the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session. The letter of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women is reproduced in annex I below.*
2. The Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights, in her response of 22 April 2003, expressed her appreciation for the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women in the work of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights and welcomed the suggestion regarding the holding of a joint meeting between the bureaux of the two Commissions. The letter of the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights is reproduced in annex II below.*

* Reproduced as received in the language of submission.

Annex I

United Nations  Nations Unies

3 April 2003

Dear Ms. Al-Hajjaji,

I have received the invitation of the Commission on Human Rights to participate, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, in the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights. I am honoured to accept this invitation and look forward to addressing the Commission when it takes up its item on integration of the human rights of women and the gender perspective. As I had the pleasure of serving on the Bureau of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, I should like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for your participation in that session of the Commission, especially as it was the first time that a Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights addressed the Commission on the Status of Women. I trust that this will become a common practice in the future.

Today, I have the honour of bringing to your attention those results of the forty-seventh session of the Commission that might be most pertinent to the work of the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session.

Three resolutions were adopted by consensus. These cover the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan (draft resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council); women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS); and mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. A draft resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women was adopted following a vote. I should like to draw special attention to the resolution on gender mainstreaming, as it is indicative of the Commission's continuing effort to act as catalyst for

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Ms. Najat Al-Hajjaji
Chairperson
Commission on Human Rights
Geneva

the use of the gender mainstreaming strategy. The resolution's particular focus is on the activities undertaken by the entities of the United Nations system, and calls for the identification of remaining gaps in policy frameworks and strategies and for an assessment of the impact of such frameworks and strategies so that future programmes, capacity-building and institutional measures can be better designed and targeted. The Commission expects the Secretary-General to give priority attention to progress in these areas in his report to the Commission's forty-eighth session. The Commission specifically requested ECOSOC to consider deciding to devote its coordination segment in 2004 to a review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming.

I would also like to inform you that the Commission adopted agreed conclusions on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women. This was the first time that the Commission dealt with the question of gender equality in relation to information and communications technologies, and at the same time, it continued its long-standing work on women and the media. The agreed conclusions on this thematic issue also constitute the Commission's input to the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, scheduled to take place in December 2003 and in 2005.

The second thematic issue considered by the Commission covered women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Commission held a panel discussion which highlighted that all forms of violence against women are a clear violation of women's human rights. Two forms of violence received particular attention, namely: domestic violence, seen as being a manifestation of unequal distribution of power between women and men; and trafficking in women and girls, considered to be a serious problem for countries of origin, transit and destination. Key trends and issues in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as measures for the promotion of women's human rights in the Africa region also received extensive attention. The panel discussion was a welcome opportunity for participants to provide examples of good practices and to share ideas on effective measures to combat violence against women and girls, and to strengthen the protection and promotion of women's human rights in all regions of the world.

While the Commission traditionally adopts agreed conclusions on the thematic issues under consideration, I should like to inform you that no agreed conclusions on the theme of women's human rights and the elimination of violence against women were adopted. This lack of adoption of an agreed outcome notwithstanding, delegations underlined the

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importance of the issue of violence against women and their commitment to combating it. They also reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in this regard.

The Commission continued to implement its mandate with regard to communications concerning the status of women. Specifically, it took note of the report of its working group on communications, and agreed to include it in its report. The Commission also held a preliminary exchange of views on this issue, and decided to continue to consider the future work of the Working Group at its next session. It requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report that would include the written views of Member States in this respect.

The Commission on the Status of Women had before it the joint work plan of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.4/2003/73-E/CN.6/2003/5). This report will also be before the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights. The Commission took note of the report and remains committed to the ongoing cooperation between the secretariats of both Commissions as a way to better promote and protect women's human rights, which is in the spirit of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

Based on a decision taken last year to enhance its working methods, the Commission held for the first time a high-level round table on national experiences in institutional capacity-building, in particular in relation to the two themes examined by the Commission at its forty-seventh session. The high-level round table greatly benefited from the participation of senior representatives from capitals, and from the interactive dialogue that took place among ministers and other senior officials with responsibility for promotion of gender equality at the national level. The exchange of experience and information was a very valuable innovation, and it is my hope that, at future sessions, the Commission will further enhance the interactive character of the dialogue so as to strengthen the Commission's working methods and its role as a central intergovernmental body for the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

I should also like to inform you that, based on a decision taken last year by the Economic and Social Council upon recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women (decision 2002/234), immediately following the closure of the forty-seventh session, the Commission held the first meeting of its forty-eighth session for the sole purpose of

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electing the Chairperson and other members of the Bureau to serve for two sessions. This change in the timing of the election of the Bureau will allow me, and the members of the Bureau, to oversee the preparations of the sessions of the Commission that I will have the honour to preside.

I look forward to an opportunity to meet with you during my upcoming participation in the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights, also with a view to discussing a next joint meeting of the Bureaux of our two Commissions, at a time that is convenient to both Bureaux. Such a meeting would be an opportunity to continue our efforts at coordination, in accordance with guidance provided by the Economic and Social Council.

Yours sincerely,

Kyung-wha Kang
Chairperson
Commission on the Status of Women

Annex II

OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES À GENÈVE
HAUT COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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22 April 2003

Dear Ms. Kang,

Thank you for your letter of 3 April 2003, and for the useful information about the activities of the Commission on the Status of Women, which has been shared with the Expanded Bureau of the 59th session of the Commission on Human Rights. Your letter will be circulated as an official document of the session.

I would also like to express my appreciation for your participation in the 59th session, in particular your statement to the Commission on 9 April 2003. Following my visit to the Commission on the Status of Women during its forty-seventh session, your participation in our session continued to build on cooperation between our Commissions. To this end I also welcome your suggestion regarding the holding of a fourth joint meeting between the bureaux of our two Commissions, and will contact you soon with regard to practical arrangements.

I would like to reiterate my thanks for your participation in our session, and look forward to the continuing collaboration between our Commissions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Najat Al-Ajjaji', written over a horizontal line.

Najat Al-Ajjaji
Chairperson

Fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights

Ms Kyung-wha Kang
Chairperson
Commission on the Status of Women
New York