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Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati (Iraq)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 61: Advancement of Women (A/61/283 and A/61/303)

(a) **Advancement of women** (A/61/38, A/61/122 and Add.1, A/61/292 and A/61/318)

(b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly** (A/61/174)

1. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), presenting the rationale, scope, key findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), said that violence against women was not confined to a specific culture, region or country, or to a particular group of women within society. Quite the reverse, it was truly a global phenomenon. On average, at least one in three women was subject to violence at some point in her lifetime. Any and all violence against women was unacceptable, whether perpetrated by the State, family members, strangers, in the public or private sphere, in peacetime or in conflict. Violence undercut the enormous potential of women to contribute to peace and development by restricting their choices and limiting their ability to act, and indeed, could undermine the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The study sought to strengthen political commitment and enhance joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate such violence and to identify ways to ensure more sustained and effective implementation of State obligations to address violence against women and to strengthen accountability.

2. Turning to the scope and content of the report, he said that the study set out the broad context within which violence against women occurred and reviewed the causes and consequences, including its costs. It discussed the gaps in availability of data, highlighted the responsibilities of States to address and prevent violence against women and put forward a blueprint for action by all stakeholders.

3. Among the study's main findings and recommendations, he underscored that violence against women was both a cause and a consequence of

discrimination against women. Discriminatory attitudes that viewed domestic violence in particular as an acceptable private matter remained common. Local communities and families had an important role in awareness-raising and education, and the role of men in prevention must be further explored and strengthened. The most common form of violence against women was intimate partner violence, and certain harmful traditional practices, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation, were widespread. The high incidence of violence against women in armed conflict had been clearly documented. Grassroots women's organizations had succeeded in bringing gender violence out of the private domain and into the public arena of State accountability, and those advocates continued to push for more visibility of the effects of socio-economic practices on women.

4. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, there had been notable progress in research and data collection on violence against women, but the available evidence remained uneven and in many cases, was non-existent. There were serious gaps in research and data, which should be a major cause for concern. Information was also needed on new or emerging forms of violence, including economic violence and abuse, stalking and violence through the use of the Internet or cell phones. The study made a number of recommendations for action on data collection, including development of a set of international indicators for assessing the prevalence of violence against women and the impact of different interventions. Support would be needed from the international community to strengthen national statistical systems in developing countries.

5. The global attention to violence against women had resulted in a comprehensive international legal and policy framework, yet only about half of Member States had some legislative provision that specifically addressed domestic violence, and fewer than half had legislation on sexual harassment or trafficking. Human rights treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, had regularly voiced concern about gaps in legislation and its implementation. The study placed a high priority on full implementation of the international legal and policy framework. It identified an array of promising practices in such critical sectors as the law, provision of services and prevention. Advocacy and awareness-

raising campaigns had become a regular feature in many countries.

6. Decisive progress in ending impunity for violence against women and strengthening prevention would require political will and commitment at the highest levels to make it a local, national, regional and international priority. And while much could be achieved with political will, there was also a need for considerable investment of resources. Systematic and sustained support from the international community should enhance national and local efforts. Leadership was critical at all levels, from the local to the global, in the public and in the private arena. As a policy document, the study should significantly enhance the capacity of all States and societies, individually and collectively, to move forward on that critical human front.

7. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that the study was the product of a collaborative effort between Member States, United Nations entities and civil society. In addition to contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations had been critical players throughout the process. The process of producing the study had also led to better inter-agency coherence and coordination of a broad range of efforts by the United Nations system, resulting in the establishment of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. Human rights treaty bodies, regional organizations and individual researchers had also been involved.

8. As a result of those efforts, political momentum to carry out the study's recommendations in a comprehensive, systematic and coordinated manner had been generated. Through preparation of the study, stronger networks and partnerships were created, and women at the grassroots level had acquired knowledge and experience in working with the United Nations. A comprehensive approach was needed to address systematically the linkages between violence, discrimination, development, human rights and peace and security. Many concrete plans were already in place to carry forward the work, for example, a regional report to be presented by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and a companion report by a coalition of non-governmental organizations on violence against indigenous women.

9. Accountability measures must be introduced which emphasized individual, community and national responsibility for eliminating violence against women, and sufficient resources must be allocated for prevention and intervention. She called on Member States, the United Nations system and civil society to provide the necessary leadership to sustain the momentum generated by the preparatory process and to carry it forward into an effective, sustained and systematic follow-up.

10. **Mr. Huimasalo** (Finland) asked how the United Nations system could provide support for unified standards of data collection.

11. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) stressed that data collected must be precise and from reliable sources. Studies should also highlight positive measures and progress. Measures to eliminate violence against women in a State experiencing armed conflict should focus on elimination of the root cause of the conflict, as well.

12. His delegation was concerned at the decline in representation of women in high-level and decision-making posts within the United Nations Secretariat, and asked what steps were planned to implement the Beijing Programme for Action in that regard.

13. **Mr. Cumberbach Miguén** (Cuba) said that he would be interested to hear more about the role of the media in combating violence against women, as in many cases advertising and television programmes tended to repeat and reinforce gender stereotypes both in the home and in society, and often conveyed a message that if those roles were not maintained society would be endangered. He would like to know how it would be possible to work with the media to change that approach.

14. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the study should have placed more emphasis on the destructive impact of colonialism on the rights of women. The international community also bore a great deal of responsibility for the situation of Arab women under occupation and for resolving their situation. She would like to know why the report had not dealt with the situation of women under foreign occupation.

15. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that it was difficult in conservative African societies like hers to make men recognize that women had equal rights. In fact, when a woman had been elected President of a neighbouring country, local media had not been

accepting of that turn of events. The traditional mindset was not ready to accept women in decision-making roles, and women themselves were often all too ready to accept their traditional position in society as well; meanwhile, violence against women continued. She would welcome further discussion of the challenge to Governments who took social and political decisions in that area which were nevertheless difficult to implement.

16. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that her delegation also regretted that the situation of women under occupation was absent from the study. Palestinian women had borne the brunt of the Israeli occupation; as just one example, many women had given birth at Israeli checkpoints because they had been barred from going to hospitals to deliver.

17. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that data collection was essentially the responsibility of Governments. Household surveys were among the best methods for gathering information on domestic violence, but also in such areas as poverty and employment. A methodology based on clear, common indicators was needed. National authorities on gender equality, the judiciary, the police and armed forces should also collect information on the extent of the problem of violence against women and conduct their own evaluations of progress. The international community could help by providing support to countries where institutions in the area of statistics were less well developed.

18. In response to the delegations of the Syrian Arab Republic and Palestine, he said the study had looked at particular forms of violence by State actors; he also drew attention to paragraph 71 of the report.

19. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that it had been realized that national census surveys were not the most effective means of collecting reliable data. Specific services and methodologies needed to be developed that ensured confidentiality. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality would be exploring the most suitable means of addressing the issue. She agreed with the point made by the representative of Cuba regarding the role played by the media in the perpetuation of stereotypes but pointed out that they could also, and sometimes did, make a positive contribution to

advocacy efforts by exposing cases of violence against women.

20. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the continuing occupation in the Middle East offered little hope for the establishment of a stable situation. The brief reference to colonialism in paragraph 71 of the Secretary-General's in-depth report was not enough; concrete recommendations were needed.

21. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/61/318), said that recent major events in the system had confirmed that women were disproportionately affected by global problems. Common issues facing women across the globe included poverty, the persisting education gap, under-representation in decision-making and an unacceptably high mortality rate. It had been demonstrated time and again that the Beijing process had to be linked to other international processes such as the internationally agreed goals, including the implementation of a global partnership. She emphasized that the problems facing women were so diverse and complex that no single nation, let alone a United Nations body, could solve them in isolation. There was no better illustration of that fact than the 2006 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, at which three out of four segments had taken gender-equality issues into account.

22. She also referred to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women which, at its fiftieth session, had decided to increase its focus on national follow-up to implementation of the Beijing Platform, enhance its catalytic role in gender mainstreaming and further develop its function as a global forum for the exchange of national experience. Its proposed themes for 2007-2009 concerned the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls, equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, and financing for gender equality and women's empowerment. She stressed that the last-mentioned theme was a key to the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform and called on Member States to earmark at least 15 per cent of official development assistance for gender equality. She also called on them to support the initiative to fight HIV/AIDS through the taxation of air tickets. It would also be desirable for donors to align aid more closely with women's needs.

23. In the past year she had submitted proposals to link the work of the Human Rights Council to that of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The object was to ensure that women's rights were placed at the centre of an integrated human rights machinery. It was also important to ensure the visibility of women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations. The Peacekeeping Commission could play a significant role in that regard.

24. She referred to a report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/2006/771) which contained a review of implementation of the System-wide Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security; it put forward a number of recommendations to make the Action Plan a more effective tool for strengthened inter-agency coordination, enhanced accountability and gender mainstreaming. Despite significant results over the previous 10 years, the practical application of gender mainstreaming by United Nations entities remained a challenge. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, which she chaired, was making every effort to ensure that policy and strategy in that regard were consistent with intergovernmental mandates; they were not meant, however, to be a substitute for essential entity-specific action. The Chief Executives Board's high-level committees had endorsed the policy and strategy, which represented an important step towards that end. Many shortcomings were still to be noted, but it was hoped that the findings of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence would point to better ways of achieving gender equality in the system.

25. The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/61/174) contained recommendations whose focus was on ways of enhancing the analysis of gender perspectives and concrete intergovernmental and inter-agency action, including in the follow-up to the 2005 World Summit. The Secretary-General was deeply concerned about the continued under-representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the United Nations system and had taken steps to redress the situation. Her Office had completed a study on the subject which had identified a number of key areas that needed to be addressed. She expressed the hope that the incoming Secretary-General would demonstrate his commitment to equal representation of

women and men by appointing a gender-balanced cabinet.

26. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (A/61/292), said that the vision of a world in which all people could live free of want and free of fear lay at the heart of UNIFEM's work. It pursued a holistic approach to that end, linking normative and legal frameworks with institutional reform to bring concrete change to women on the ground. In order to reduce poverty among women and strengthen their economic security, it sought to link economic decision-making more closely to women's lives, incorporating gender into poverty-reduction strategies and campaigning for gender-responsive budget initiatives. It was developing partnerships with the private sector to increase women's access to new employment opportunities in the global economy. It was also active in efforts to combat violence against women through coordinated cross-sectoral strategies aimed at addressing its social and economic causes and the links between violence, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

27. The United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women, established in UNIFEM, was concerned with on-the-ground implementation of laws and policies on the subject at country-level and with raising awareness of existing laws and bringing them into line with human-rights principles. In a new partnership with the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, it was also specifically addressing the links between gender violence and HIV/AIDS, for which it had received a substantial allocation.

28. UNIFEM was at a crossroads in its work on gender equality. It could continue its efforts to secure commitments and mechanisms or it could take the more challenging road of investing in what had proved its worth for women and changing what was known to be not working. In the current context of United Nations reform, renewed commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and the new concern with aid effectiveness, there was an unprecedented opportunity to deliver on that agenda.

29. A lack of strengthened institutional structures, increased resources or effective accountability and monitoring mechanisms to assist countries in achieving gender equality had, however, already resulted in lost

opportunities. To turn the tide, three priorities had to be addressed, namely: strengthening gender equality in national development strategies; strengthening a coherent and integrated approach across the United Nations system; and strengthening monitoring and accountability by women on the ground. UNIFEM was accordingly providing technical support to national partners for the adoption of gender-equality indicators and strengthening their capacity to incorporate harmonized indicators and sex-disaggregated data into national development plans; promoting rights-based, change-oriented programming in support of action by Governments and civil society to move forward on gender equality and women's empowerment; and supporting an increase in resources and the expansion of community participation in defining targets and tracking progress to that end. She concluded by calling for the development within the United Nations of the necessary capacity to inspire and mobilize partnerships and agents for change.

30. **Ms. Robineault** (Canada) noted the lack of comprehensive data on violence against women and girls; she therefore welcomed the Special Adviser's efforts in support of the development of the necessary indicators, as they would provide a concrete tool for combating such violence. She would appreciate some information about how the United Nations system would respond to the recommendations contained in the report on the status of women in the system and what steps would be taken to coordinate follow-up.

31. **Mr. Aksen** (Turkey) asked the Special Adviser for fuller details about the proposals to link together the Human Rights Council, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

32. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), replying to the comments made by the representative of Canada, said that the Secretary-General's study described the process followed in setting up an inter-agency task force. The task force was working closely with all special mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The Special Rapporteur had been very much involved in the study and all the groups were collaborating. The question of violence against women was a very broad one, cutting across all sectors. A number of entities had already conducted studies and proposed action. The studies had to be linked together

so that the system could respond in a coordinated way and maximize use of resources.

33. Replying to the question raised by the representative of Turkey, she said that the proposals she had put before the Human Rights Council were that gender equality must be integrated into the processes and the terms of reference of the special mechanisms, as well as in the peer reviews of country reports. She had also recommended to the Human Rights Council that it should take advantage of the expertise and experience of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women. She had pointed out to the Council that the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women had worked together closely. The same good practices should be incorporated into the work of the Human Rights Council.

34. Replying to the question raised by the delegation of the Sudan, she said that the report on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/61/318) pointed out some of the problems that still needed to be addressed. Unfortunately, there were some firmly established networks within the system that perpetuated a bias against women. Those problems were addressed in the proposals that her Office had developed and on which the support of the incoming Secretary-General would be sought.

35. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women) said that UNIFEM offices had been working in partnership with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, providing her support wherever she visited. Many of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations had been funded out of the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women.

36. Replying to the question raised by the Sudan, she said that work in the Sudan was being carried out in the framework of the larger effort on gender equality in democratic governments and post-conflict areas, drawing on experience acquired in over 20 countries. Support was provided by the United Kingdom. In the Sudan, UNIFEM had partnered with Norway to create opportunities for women from the north and the south to come together to identify priorities and develop a common agenda for women's rights. That effort had been presented to the donor conference in Oslo and had

helped to position the women to take part in shaping the peace process and also in the shaping of the constitution. UNIFEM was also partnering with other institutions to support national organizations in both the north and the south in order to undertake a comprehensive gender analysis of legal frameworks. UNIFEM was working to put in place a justice agenda that would address implementation of the rights of women.

37. **Mr. Cumberbach Miguén** (Cuba) said that his delegation was concerned that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had set up a new unit to deal with gender issues. That could conflict with the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women and of the Commission on the Status of Women. It was important to avoid duplication between the different entities of the Organization. He asked the Special Adviser to explain what steps would be taken to avoid duplication.

38. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), replying to the question raised by the Cuban delegation, said that there had always been close cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The human rights of women must be at the centre of the High Commissioner's work. The establishment of the unit would reinforce, not replace, the work of the Division and of the Commission. Her suggestion to the Human Rights Council was intended to ensure that the human rights of women were at the centre of the work of intergovernmental bodies.

39. **The Chairman** announced that the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, who had been invited to address the Committee, had not been able to travel to New York. Her statement would therefore be delivered by the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

40. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women), speaking on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, said that the Committee was very grateful to the General Assembly for granting the requested extension of its meeting time for 2006 and 2007 as a temporary measure (General Assembly resolution 60/230). As a result in 2006, the Committee had considered the reports of 31 States

parties. She was pleased to report that the use of parallel chambers had been highly successful. She would welcome the comments of States parties so that the Committee could reflect on them as it continued to enhance its working methods.

41. She drew attention to the Committee's decision 36/I, in which it assessed its first experience of working in parallel chambers. She wished to emphasize that the extended meeting time in the biennium would allow for a significant reduction in the backlog of reports awaiting consideration. At the same time, the Committee anticipated that extended meeting time would be required in 2008 and beyond, and it intended to submit another proposal to that effect to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

42. In addition to its three annual sessions, the Committee had held an informal meeting in Berlin in May 2006. The meeting had afforded the Committee an opportunity to consider its working methods, particularly in connection with the consideration of periodic reports in parallel chambers.

43. The Committee had made significant progress in discharging its responsibilities under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. It had adopted views on admissibility and merits on two communications under article 2 of the Optional Protocol and had declared one communication inadmissible. The Committee had adopted two statements, one entitled "Towards a harmonized and integrated human rights treaty bodies system", which it had brought to the attention of the fifth Inter-Committee Meeting, held in June 2006 in Geneva. In that statement, the Committee had put forward a series of steps that should be taken to enhance the overall functioning of the treaty bodies as a system. The Committee looked forward to the continuing discussion of its proposal within the framework of treaty-body reform. The Committee had also adopted a statement on the situation of women in the Middle East, in which it had reflected on the impact of the hostilities on women and emphasized the obligations of all parties concerned under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In addition, the Committee had made significant progress in drawing up a draft recommendation on migrant women, work on which would, it hoped, be completed in 2007.

44. At its thirty-fifth session the Committee had approved a series of measures to enhance its working

methods; adopted new guidelines for submission of reports by specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system; noted the important role of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention; and encouraged the Inter-Parliamentary Union to submit country-specific information on implementation. She recalled the active role the Committee had always played, and continued to play, at the annual Meeting of Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies and the Inter-Committee Meeting. It had also taken part in work to reform the human-rights treaty-body system, and at its thirty-fourth session had held a dialogue with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on that subject. Lastly, it had made suggestions on its possible contribution to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly relating to the priority themes for 2007-2009.

45. The Committee looked forward to the continuing support of all States parties and States Members of the United Nations to the implementation of the Convention and use of the Optional Protocol.

46. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group was pleased to note that a gender perspective had been reflected in the deliberations and outcomes of several meetings held during the past year. It was concerned, however, that the world faced unprecedented feminization of poverty and pandemics, such as HIV and AIDS, and the marginalization of women in every human activity.

47. All the components of gender mainstreaming should be taken into account within the United Nations system, including the principle of 50/50 gender balance with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution of women. The Group was disappointed by the statistics presented in the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/61/318). A concerted effort should be made by senior management to implement policies and strategies that would accelerate progress towards achieving gender balance and support the efforts of developing countries to establish and promote mechanisms to encourage women to apply for positions, including in areas where women were underrepresented, such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as other non-traditional areas.

48. The Group would like to caution on recent developments regarding the formative stages of the gender branches in other entities of the United Nations system, such as the one established by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was essential that the operation of such branches should not conflict with the existing partnership between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Commission on the Status of Women.

49. Central to the eradication of poverty among women was the need to increase their education and training opportunities, especially in the area of science and technology, including information and communication technologies. Women's advancement could only be achieved if women's basic health needs were addressed. In particular, women were disproportionately affected by the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. It was also important to be sensitive to the circumstances and experiences of female migrants; measures must be adopted to reduce their vulnerability, exploitation and abuse. The persistence of conflicts and foreign occupation was another major impediment to the advancement of women.

50. The Group concurred with the statement made by the Secretary-General in his in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1), to the effect that no real progress could be made towards equality, development and peace as long as violence against women and girls continued. The Group hoped that the study would help determine how to address that issue. The Group wished to acknowledge the invaluable work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women in the preparation of the study.

51. It also appreciated the work of other United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in providing assistance to developing countries in the fight against violence against women and in fostering women's empowerment and gender equality. The Group strongly supported the work of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which had forged collaborative partnerships with United Nations entities to work towards the elimination of violence against women.

52. As developing countries took action to address the challenges they faced at the national level, there was also a need to enhance international cooperation and global partnership. For the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the international community should honour its commitments regarding official development assistance. It should remove the obstacles to exports from least developed countries. It must commit to debt relief and the opening up of markets to give opportunities, particularly to women entrepreneurs. Increased development assistance in such areas as education, health and job creation was vital towards eliminating gender disparities. International cooperation was not only about fulfilling obligations regarding official development assistance; it was also about transfer of technology, information and data-sharing, as well as technical assistance through South-South cooperation, to which the Group was fully committed.

53. **Mr. Huimasalo** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, recalled that the 2005 World Summit had reaffirmed the importance of full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly. The European Union had welcomed the opportunity to participate in the debates at the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 2006, and had welcomed the conclusions on the two themes considered — the enhanced participation of women in development, and equal participation of women and men in decision-making. Full and effective implementation of those commitments, and women's empowerment more generally, was a prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and international peace and security.

54. At the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the European Union had stressed the importance of creating an enabling environment for achieving gender equality, as discriminatory practices and stereotyped attitudes did not necessarily change in line with enabling legal and regulatory frameworks, important as they were. Special attention should be

paid to eliminating violence against women and girls, to education, to awareness-raising and to the need to involve men and boys in the implementation of commitments.

55. Greater involvement of women in the labour market and in business and politics was associated with less corruption and better governance. Consequently, the promotion of women's participation in all levels of decision-making, especially in the economic sector, was a key factor in improving global democracy and ensuring that economic policies were better tailored to women's realities.

56. While the social and economic status of women and gender equality had improved in many parts of the world, gender discrimination persisted in the areas of rights, resources and representation. In many countries, those gender inequalities were undermining the effectiveness of development policies: societies with gender discrimination had higher poverty, a reduced quality of life and slower economic growth and development. The costs of gender inequality were particularly significant in low-income countries, mostly affecting the poorest. Nevertheless, a gender perspective was often absent from strategic-policy dialogue and policymaking, including in the areas of economic liberalization, and trade and investment policies, which had major implications for women.

57. The European Union's recent development-policy statement, the "European Consensus on Development", provided a common vision for European action in the field of development cooperation, both at national and Union level, and was the first European Union policy on development cooperation to recognize the specific goal of gender equality. He stressed the importance of integrating a gender perspective into the new aid modalities and discussions relating to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

58. A major international challenge was integrating the social dimension into economic policies and globalization, as women's economic situation had deteriorated in many countries. Globalization, when well managed, could generate unprecedented benefits for all, but only if women's and girls' human rights were respected, and if social and economic policies actively promoted gender equality. Transforming the redistribution of resources and responsibilities was an important part of that process, and called for investment in gender-inclusive, pro-poor growth.

Gender issues must be integrated into national development plans, including poverty-reduction strategies, which required investment in the related new skills and capacities.

59. The European Union had welcomed the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the discussions of the Commission on the Status of Women on that theme. While migrant women played an important role in the economic development of both country of origin and country of destination, he stressed that lack of migrants' access to rights could determine the extent to which they were able to benefit from the development potential of migration. Migrant women, for example, could face discrimination and limited access to formal employment, social security and health programmes, which therefore called for integration of a gender perspective into migration policies. Legal channels for women's migration must be ensured, and women's rights protected at national level, with greater focus on ending violence against women and human trafficking.

60. He expressed the European Union's support for the establishment of a global forum for international migration and development as a follow-up to the High-Level Dialogue, which would be of value provided it were informal, voluntary, non-binding and driven by interested Member States and participants. Promoting women's rights and gender equality would be crucial to the forum's work.

61. In order to strengthen the implementation at the national and regional level of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which established important guidelines for women's human rights in conflict situations, the European Union had taken steps to ensure the integration of a gender perspective into the European Security and Defence Policy. In January 2006 it had also launched a worldwide campaign to strengthen women's human rights. He highlighted the important role of women in relation to the establishment of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, where adequate representation of women, and sufficient gender expertise, was necessary. Gender equality could not be achieved without ensuring women's sexual and reproductive rights and reproductive health in accordance with the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

62. He drew attention to the issue of sexual violence in conflict situations, which was a fundamental human-rights violation. Since women and girls were disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS infection during conflict and post-conflict periods, he stressed the need for accelerated measures to fight that pandemic and develop effective strategies for prevention and for provision of care, support and treatment. The use of rape as a systematic weapon of war must be addressed more vigorously by the international community, and the European Union therefore welcomed Security Council resolution 1674 (2006), which strongly condemned all acts of violence or abuses committed against civilians, particularly gender-based and sexual violence, and violence against children.

63. He also welcomed the work of United Nations agencies and peacekeeping operations to implement a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual abuse and exploitation, human trafficking and similar acts, and urged the Organization to step up those efforts. The European Union had taken similar measures.

64. The European Commission had issued a communication entitled "A roadmap for equality between women and men", which outlined six priority areas for action on gender equality for the period 2006-2010, and examples of the types of action to be taken. In 2005 the European Commission had adopted a proposal for a European Institute for Gender Equality.

65. **Ms. Makhumula** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that SADC remained committed to the Beijing Declaration and to full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly. She reaffirmed the critical role of women in social, economic and political development and stressed the need for full participation of men and women and all social groups in social, economic and political activities, in order to achieve economic growth and, consequently, sustainable development. She welcomed the global efforts being made to combat violence against women, which was key to ensuring gender equality and reproductive rights and reproductive health, and to poverty eradication and development in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

66. Following the 1995 Beijing Conference, SADC had adopted a Declaration on Gender and

Development, the objectives of which included equal representation of women and men in decision-making structures and reduction of poverty levels among women. In addition, its Member States were reviewing legislation and social practices to ensure that women were no longer subjected to discrimination, in an effort to achieve gender equality and equity. To supplement the Declaration, SADC had adopted an Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children, whereby Member States undertook to formulate, implement and monitor mechanisms to enhance the security and empowerment of women and children at the national and regional level.

67. Progress had been made since the adoption of the addendum, including specific legislation to combat gender-based violence; law and criminal-justice reforms; police training in the area of domestic violence; and increased access by victims of rape, sexual abuse or domestic violence to effective remedies. However, domestic and other forms of violence continued to threaten the rights of many women and children in SADC Member States, and efforts needed to be stepped up to address cultural practices that were partly responsible.

68. She welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), and commended UNFPA and UNIFEM for their work in southern Africa to help eliminate violence against women using a rights-based and culturally sensitive approach. Notable progress had been made in SADC countries concerning the participation of women in politics and decision-making, including some cases of women being elected to high-ranking positions traditionally reserved for men. With a SADC average of 20 per cent, however, some countries had fallen short of the target of 30 per cent representation of women in all political and decision-making structures by 2005. Nevertheless, further efforts would continue to be made in order to increase that proportion, in line with the position of the African Union.

69. A number of glaring discrepancies and challenges remained, however, preventing real equality and development. In virtually every SADC country, contradictions existed between customary law and codified law in the area of women's rights. She expressed concern at the increasing poverty levels — particularly of women — in sub-Saharan Africa, which

could only be reduced through more concerted efforts, including through support and resources to implement the strategies of SADC countries' poverty-reduction-strategy papers. SADC countries were seriously affected by HIV/AIDS, which was particularly prevalent among young women, and efforts were being made to provide relevant care, information and counselling services, particularly to pregnant women. In line with the SADC Maseru Declaration on HIV and AIDS of 2003, which outlined priority areas such as the strengthening of health-care and legislative measures to ensure the affordability of related technology and drugs, SADC countries were committed to combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS and had drawn up a programme of action for the period 2003-2007. She stressed the need for international cooperation to give meaning to the renewed political commitment made by world leaders at the 2006 General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS, at which the implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS had been reviewed.

70. Despite the notable achievements of her subregion in the advancement of women and achievement of gender equality, much remained to be done, as most SADC countries were currently not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It was hoped that a recent initiative in compiling and enhancing all regional and international instruments for advancing gender equality, in the form of a "Gender Protocol", would accelerate progress in achieving those goals.

71. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action remained far from satisfactory. Whether as a result of foreign occupation, poverty, armed conflict, epidemic disease or disaster, the suffering of women was fundamentally linked with their environment, which should be such as to promote the realization of their rights. Women would otherwise remain primarily focused on daily subsistence needs, thereby limiting opportunities for the achievement of their political, economic and social objectives.

72. In the context of Egypt's efforts to modernize, the role of women as effective members of society and key players in development had been strengthened, in particular through the National Council for Women. Six years in operation, the Council had successfully worked to create an enabling environment for women, improve their living standards and promote their social integration. It had also efficiently coordinated

government and civil-society action aimed at eliminating discrimination against women. Her Government's commitment to the advancement of women was also evident: Egypt's first woman judge had been appointed, various laws had been amended or introduced in order to improve the situation of women, and women's issues were a core concern within the current five-year development plan.

73. Egyptian women also held high office in the political and corporate worlds. As a result, traditional attitudes were gradually being eroded, as evidenced by the assumption of local administrative positions by women, who were consequently able to serve as valuable development partners countrywide. Efforts to advance the status of women further extended to the regional level through such solidarity initiatives as the creation of the Arab Women Organization, which had been instigated by Egypt's First Lady to promote women's rights and interests, with positive results expected. As for violence against women, it was most sharply manifested in the poverty, disease and foreign occupation which they endured. International cooperation and strong political will were needed to eliminate those causes, and she called for concerted action to that end.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.