



# ITALY

## 54<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

STATEMENT BY

H.E. MARA CARFAGNA  
MINISTER OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

(New York, Tuesday, 2 March 2010)

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# MARYLAND

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
20<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE

STATEMENT BY

REBECCA C. CARROLL  
DIRECTOR OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

(New York, Tuesday, 1 March 2010)

Mr. Chair,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to start by endorsing the statement made by Spain on behalf of the European Union.

The 54<sup>th</sup> session of the CSW marks an important step for women throughout the world: the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, whose Declaration and Platform of Action announced to the world the strategic goals and actions that should be undertaken to overcome obstacles to the promotion of women's rights. The Conference was unquestionably a crucial turning point in the recognition of the role of women in the political, social, and cultural development of each society and of the planet as a whole. For Italy, Beijing also marked an extremely important institutional step: in fact, in the years that followed, our Country used the Beijing Platform and the principles of mainstreaming, gender equality, and women's empowerment as the basis for its own policies and, for the first time, it has appointed a Minister for Equal Opportunities in charge of overseeing the implementation, and coordination of such policies that ensure the proper enactment and monitoring of laws and governmental orientations.

Since we are now celebrating the adoption of the Declaration, we wish to forcefully reaffirm our desire to promote our prime objectives: equality, development, and peace for all women, everywhere and for all humanity.

The anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and its related Platform has also become an important moment of reflection as we begin 2010: a critical time for the future of gender policies since this year should mark the recovery from an economic crisis that has had a very harsh effect on women.

As the Beijing Platform states, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes that everyone has the right to participate in the management of his or her Country's public affairs.

It is thus on the active participation of women in the decision-making processes and in the labor market that I wish to focus on today: the increase in the power and autonomy of women and the improvement of their social, economic, and political conditions are fundamental for the existence of transparent, accountable governments and public administrations, and essential for lasting development in every field of life.

We know that 60% of the world's poor are women and that one of the main causes of female poverty is unemployment.

It is thus crucial that we increase the presence of women in the formative training processes by improving their skills and promoting excellence, while addressing the issue of training segregation. Another great obstacle to the entrance of women into the work force is the lack of social infrastructures that can reconcile work and family life.

In this context, last December the Italian Government drafted a Plan for the inclusiveness of women in the workplace, which sees the joint collaboration of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Labor. The Plan contains new measures aimed at increasing female employment, such as tax benefits and new projects and programs co-financed by the European Union's structural funds.

In particular, a Plan for a series of reconciliation initiatives was created, funded entirely by the Equal Opportunities Ministry, for a total of 40 million euros. The Plan provides for the issuing of vouchers for training and employment, as well as the financing of domestic day-care centers for working mothers. Part of the resources will fund measures aimed at supporting reconciliation policies for free-lancers and independent workers.

All these initiatives belong to a larger, consolidated line of action that dates back to the years of the Beijing Platform – aimed at ensuring a more effective application of gender mainstreaming in every field, from public administration to development cooperation activities. Enhancing gender issues in development cooperation activities has been one of the first testing grounds for mainstreaming in Italy. Since the years of the Beijing Platform, following actions to benefit women victims of conflicts, mainly in the southern hemisphere and in Eastern Europe, the Italian cooperation system has been particularly attentive to gender policies, and has thus been able to constantly build on its experience, thanks to the support of decentralized cooperation and the variety of public and private partners, mainly NGOs and women's associations.

We must not forget how important it is to safeguard women against sexual harassment and violence. Violence against women, in addition to representing a violation of their human rights, is also an impediment to their economic and professional fulfillment, since a woman who has been subjected to sexual violence or abuse will face greater difficulties, especially of a psychological nature, when entering the work force, starting up a career, and enhancing her talents.

This is why during its G8 Presidency Italy hosted a conference denouncing all forms of violence against women. The conclusions of this meeting – which for the first time brought the issue of violence against women to the attention of the G8– are summarized in the appeal from all the ministers and personalities that attended calling for a new era of international cooperation and a great alliance between all the governments to address the common challenge of eradicating every form of violence against women. This process will not be quick or easy, but it is important that the fight against every form of gender and sexual violence be recognized as a prerequisite for the development of the planet.

Allow me also to briefly recall Italy's long commitment to the fight against female genital mutilation: as testimony to this commitment, on March the 3<sup>rd</sup>, on the margins of

the session of the CSW, I will be hosting together with my colleagues from Egypt and Senegal an event dedicated to ending the practice of female genital mutilation, an initiative which I hope can contribute to ensure progress towards our common goal.

Dear Friends,

The situation of Italy that emerges from the picture I have drawn shows that we share with other nations not only the same problems and critical issues, which are more or less accentuated depending on the individual case, but also the same will to create a strong women's empowerment policy at both the national and international levels.

This is why the United Nations reform process, particularly the creation of a new gender entity is of the utmost importance for Italy. The creation of the new Composite Entity is a unique occasion to strengthen the U.N. capacity and effectiveness in the area of the advancement of women and gender equality. We therefore hope that it will be created as quickly as possible and we encourage the Secretary General to accelerate the process of appointing an Under Secretary General to supervise its establishment.

In conclusion, the evidence is clear: it's nothing more than bad economics if both men and women are not able to participate in the economic activity and in the productive system of every nation. This is why I allow myself to remind all of us present that when the winds of crisis blow strong, some will seek shelter while others must have the courage to build windmills to mill the flour for next generations.

Thank you for your attention.