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**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE FOR WOMEN OF CHILE,
MRS. CARMEN ANDRADE,
ON BEHALF OF THE RIO GROUP
54TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
New York, 1st March 2010**

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the countries in the Rio Group - Argentina, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Jamaica representing CARICOM, and my own country, Chile - on the Follow-Up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "*Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century*".

On behalf of the Rio Group, I congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and wish you success in the performance of your duties at this and the next session.

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Chile avails of this opportunity to express its deepest gratitude for the numerous expressions of solidarity and condolences received after the tragic earthquake that devastated Chile last 27 February, all of which we will carry in our hearts and will convey to the Chilean people and, in particular, to the affected women.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Rio Group expresses solidarity with the people of Haiti who have suffered so much in the January earthquake and endorses the efforts and numerous acts of support to help our sister nation.

We also emphasize how important it is for such support to consider the special needs of women and girls and for Haitian women to be involved in the phases of emergency humanitarian assistance, early recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction work, and transition to development.

We therefore appeal to the various stakeholders that will participate in the Conference on Haiti's reconstruction and development needs, to be held next 31st March here at Headquarters, to mainstream a gender perspective in said event.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Rio Group reaffirms the importance of a full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly. Moreover, we reaffirm the importance that States Parties fully comply with their international obligations under the International Convention against All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol.

Multilateral stocktaking

2010 will be a year of stocktaking to assess progress on gender equality and empowerment of women. This year we commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, and its Platform for Action, as the main theme of this meeting; and ten years have elapsed since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration.

During the 54th session we will also have a meeting of the CSW on the 30th anniversary of the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979.

The time has therefore come to take stock of what has been achieved and also to decisively tackle pending issues. There is consensus at the multilateral level regarding the priority to be given to gender equality and the empowerment of women as a prerequisite for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and regarding the fact that the challenge is to move the gender agenda forward in a coherent manner and in the same direction.

Global Challenges

The situation of women is an issue of increasing importance for our societies, specially the eradication of violence against women, the trafficking on women and girls, the feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS, the situation of migrant, rural and indigenous women, the recognition of reproductive rights, access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health, the elimination of barriers between women and men related to employment and the importance of sharing family chores between men and women.

We recognize the need to expand efforts and coordinate all necessary actions to address these important issues at the national and international level, and we call upon international organizations and developed countries to support national programs for women.

Thus, the Rio Group draws attention to the need to strengthen international dialogue, consensus and cooperation, including regional, North-South and South-South cooperation, in order to define and implement further actions that allow us to address the needs of women and girls in all policies and measures aimed at overcoming the challenges posed by the economic and financial crises, food insecurity, climate change, international trade barriers and distortions, energy crises and other common problems.

Violence against Women

In our hemisphere, violence against women constitutes one of the main discrimination issues. Every ten minutes a woman dies a violent death somewhere in the world and, according to UNIFEM data, these amounts to 53,000 deaths a year. In Latin America and the Caribbean, violence affects between one third and one half of all women.

The Rio Group is firmly committed to the efforts to eradicate violence against women in all its forms and manifestations. It is necessary to implement concrete actions at all levels to prevent and eradicate this scourge. I would like to emphasize the leadership of our region in this area. Latin-American and Caribbean countries have been pioneers at the regional and international level in the development of instruments and mechanisms to prevent and eradicate violence against women, as well as to promote the full enjoyment of their human rights.

We also recognize the various efforts towards the elimination of violence against women, including through the implementation of the obligations of States Parties to the Convention of Belém do Pará as well as the implementation of our commitments reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The Rio Group welcomes the success of the campaign "Unite to End Violence Against Women" (2008-2015), lead by the Secretary General that will allow the UN System to intensify its support to initiatives, programs and national campaigns on this issue. The campaign could become an axis of the actions adopted by governments, civil society, base community organizations, the private sector and public, private and alternative media for combating violence against women.

Thus, we welcome the launch by the Secretary-General on 25 November, 2009 in Guatemala City of the Regional Chapter of the campaign "*UNiTE to end violence against women*".

Women and development

The Group reaffirms the importance of the promotion of women's economic independence, including employment, and the eradication of the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services.

Rural women

In many states of the Rio Group rural women, including indigenous women form a significant part of our population and have been making meaningful contributions to development. Notwithstanding, rural women globally continue to face many challenges. Thus, we urge the international community to intensify efforts to remove the existing barriers to their empowerment.

Migrant Women

We attach particular importance to the protection of migrant women and girls from migrant families. The contribution of migrant women workers to the development of the countries of destination and to their countries of origin must be fully recognized. We need to put an end to all forms of violence and discrimination, affecting migrant women and girls in many contexts. Human rights of migrants deserve full protection, in accordance with international obligations of States.

United Nations Gender Architecture

The Rio Group takes note of the resolution 63/311 on "System-wide Coherence" and hopes that in the context of intergovernmental negotiations of this session, Member States may agree in the definition of all the details regarding the creation of a new Entity in the United Nations for gender equality and empowerment of women, in order to promote equality gender and the empowerment of women worldwide, strengthen international cooperation for the implementation of national programs in this field, and to ensure gender mainstreaming in the work of other agencies and entities of the United Nations system.

Regarding the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW), the Rio Group reiterates its concern that, since last December, its Director has not been designated, seriously affecting the Institute's capacity of carrying out its training and research program in a critical moment when it needs to be revitalized to allow for an adequate and efficient preparation towards its future consolidation into the new Entity. In this regard, it is fundamental for the Group to maintain the added advantage of keeping the geographical balance and preserving the existing link between research and training carried out globally from the present facilities in the Dominican Republic. We are confident that the issue of appointing a new Director will be resolved by the Secretary General without any further delay.

ECLAC gender observatory

The tenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean built on the efforts made by the Ministers and high authorities dealing with women's issues to repoliticize gender discussions and the human rights of women, approving the Quito Consensus as the gender agenda for the region. The gender observatory administered by ECLAC has made a major contribution to this endeavour. The observatory data has made it easier to organize the information and to convey the situation of women using statistical data.

Now, looking ahead to the *eleventh Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean*, to be held in Brasilia in June 2010, we advocate joint efforts to enhance the observatory so that it can provide more information on the important issues which affect women and men differently.

Strengthening of gender forums in sub regional groupings

We attach considerable importance to the progress recently made by subregional organizations focusing on gender equality at the highest level. We should mention, for example, the role played by the Council of Central American Ministers for Women's Affairs (COMMCA) in promoting inclusion of the women's agenda in the region and adopting a stand on trade liberalization and women's political involvement.

Also during the I Ministerial Meeting of Women and Equality of Opportunities of the States Parties to the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (ALBA), held in February 2010, an ALBA's Women Ministerial Committee was created.

In addition, the Advisory Council of Andean Community High Authorities for Women was created in 2009.

Further, the Women Expert Group Meeting of the national authorities on gender of MERCOSUR (REM) has been in functions for more than ten years.

Concluding remarks

A general overview of the situation in our region reveals major achievements, described in the ECLAC review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (LC/L.3175). These include:

- Major progress in gender policies reflecting the political will of our Governments to tackle discrimination and inequality. This progress is illustrated, for example, by the attainment of parity in education and the adoption of equal legal frameworks.
- Progress in the design and implementation of public policies focused on more complex issues, covering not only the gender variable but also social, disability, ethnic and age discrimination.
- Institutionalization of gender, encouraging mainstreaming of gender policies in the various government agencies.

Mr. Chairperson,

In view of the progress made, four years after the 2005 World Summit at which the Heads of State reiterated that "*progress for women is progress for all*", 15 years after Beijing and 30 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Rio Group:

1. Reiterates the need in our region for consolidated national gender mechanisms to promote policies of equality and expresses concern about the difficulties facing some of these mechanisms. It therefore will continue to strengthen them politically and give them in accordance with national possibilities their own budget to advance their agendas.
2. Emphasizes the need to strengthen international cooperation in support of national initiatives in developing countries, aimed at promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.
3. Stresses the importance of involving all sectors of society, including private sector, nongovernmental organizations, academy and research institutions, and social, cultural and political organizations, in the achievement of the advancement for women.
4. Appeals for the formation and strengthening of more effective alliances with women in civil society, since it is they who put the gender items on the political agenda and who demanded implementation of public policies for the advancement of women.
5. Appeals to Member States, multilateral agencies and civil society to build on the progress made and not retreat, and to tackle the new challenges that face them in eradicating all forms of discrimination and violence against women, supporting women heads of household and enhancing the social, political and economic participation of women.

Mr. Chairperson,

While gender differences persist, mankind would not overcome underdevelopment and social exclusion. Therefore, the Rio Group countries will remain committed to implementing measures that ensure the empowerment and equality of women and will continue to comply with all the commitments adopted by our countries at the international level, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you.