

**51st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
26 February 2007**

**Statement
by
H.E. Ambassador Carmen Maria Gallardo
Chairperson, Commission on the Status of Women**

I am honoured to open the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It is a great pleasure to welcome the President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Mr. Dalius Cekuolis, and the Deputy-Secretary-General, Asha-Rose Migiro, to the opening of the Commission.

I extend a very warm welcome to Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Heads of Delegation and Heads of National Machineries for gender equality, and other representatives from Governments and the United Nations system attending this session. I also address my heartfelt greetings to the representatives of the many non-governmental organizations and networks here today.

At this session, the Commission will utilize the new methods of work adopted at its fiftieth session. It will focus on policy development under one priority theme – “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” - and review progress in the implementation of its agreed conclusions on a priority theme from an earlier session – “The role of men and boys in promoting gender equality”. The Commission will also consider an emerging issue – “Elimination of all forms of violence against women: Follow-up to the Secretary-General’s in-depth study at national and international levels”. The new working methods will enhance the Commission’s focus on implementation and monitoring of progress at the national level.

The report of the Secretary-General on this year’s priority theme, the elimination of all forms for discrimination and violence against the girl child, is before the Commission in document E/CN.6/2007/2. It provides an overview of the situation of the girl child, identifies the different forms of discrimination and violence faced by the girl child and groups of girls at high risk of discrimination and violence, highlights the importance of the empowerment of girls, and proposes recommendations for further action.

The report of the Secretary-General on progress made in gender mainstreaming also focuses explicitly on the priority theme, in accordance with the new working methods. It assesses the extent to which attention to the girl child is mainstreamed in policies and programmes at national level, based on a review of information received from Member States in preparation for the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as of updates received in response to a note verbale by the secretariat. The report also analyses attention to the girl child in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and national Millennium Development Goal reports, as well as reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report is contained in document E/CN.6/2007/3.

Despite advances since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, girls continue to face discrimination, violence and neglect. Stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices continue to obstruct the full implementation of laws and normative frameworks. I am confident that the Commission will reach consensus on key policy recommendations to improve the situation of girls worldwide.

Consideration of the theme “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” will allow the Commission to contribute to the follow-up of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children in 2007 and to follow up on the in-depth study on violence against children that was submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

To ensure a strong focus on the priority theme from the beginning of this session, the General Debate will commence immediately after the opening. It will be introduced by keynote presentations on the situation of the girl child. The presentations by the Secretariat and other United Nations entities, normally made during the opening, will be made on Wednesday morning.

In the context of the consideration of the theme of the emerging issue “Elimination of all forms of violence against women: Follow-up to the Secretary-General’s in-depth study at national and international levels”, I would like to draw attention to General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/143 on “the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women” which invites the Council and its functional commissions to discuss, by 2008, within their respective mandates, the question of violence against women in all its forms and manifestations.

Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive form of human rights violations. We can no longer remain silent or take limited, ad hoc, actions. Combating and eliminating violence against women and girls requires determined and concerted efforts by governments, civil society and the international community. The Commission on the Status of Women is well placed to take the lead by drawing attention to the scourge of violence and by providing guidance on actions that should be taken, at different levels and by different stakeholders, to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls that occur in all parts of the world.

Through the high-level roundtables and interactive expert panels, the Commission serves as a forum for exchange on national experiences, lessons learned and good practices. The Bureau takes great care in the selection of expert panellists to ensure a broad range of expertise on the priority theme. Panellists participate in their capacity as experts.

This Commission continues its close working relationship with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. I congratulate the Chairperson of CEDAW, Ms. Dubravka Simonovic, on her recent election and welcome her presence at the

introduction to the General Debate as an indication of the strong synergy between the work of the Committee and the Commission, to the benefit of women and girls around the world.

I thank the Bureau members for their collaboration and efficient support in the preparation of this session. I look forward to a highly productive fifty-first session. Thank you for your attention.
