



ITALY

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Mr. Chairperson,

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement that delivered by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

The hopes and lives of millions of people depend on the renewed strength of the United Nations. A renewed strength in promoting justice and dignity within a multilateral framework.

Italy's renewed commitment to peace and international cooperation, true to its responsibilities within the European Union and the United Nations, is demonstrated by our presence in nineteen peacekeeping missions throughout the world; our leadership in establishing a universal moratorium on the death penalty; our commitment to the fight against tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS; and our many programs for the poorest regions of Africa with the invaluable contribution of the various NGOs and movements.

The sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the true prism through which to view the revitalization of the United Nations at the dawn of the Third Millennium.

Giving a central role for the autonomy and dignity of women and girls in today's agenda is the condition for the dignity and wellbeing of all.

Women's bodies are still both the battlefield and the prize in a war that, although dispersive, is still bloody. A war waged by old and new conservatisms, and old and new fundamentalisms that delay or impede the liberation of multitudes.

Now more than ever the human rights of women are trampled on, denied, repressed, as it is underscored by the daily, universal massacre of the innocents. Abuse, discrimination, persecution, oppression, violence.

And the most extreme expression of discrimination – not to consider girls worthy of being born because of their gender.

Throughout the world, in Europe and Italy, there is still too great a gap between what women represent in terms of knowledge, professional skills and talent and what they are enabled to offer to institutions and society.

Yet the strength of the world's women is overwhelming and can bring about historic changes. Strong women leaders have risen and asserted themselves in the political and moral realms. I am referring to Aung San Suu Kyi and Ingrid Betancourt. They pay a high price for their courage in standing up for their convictions, and even make the ultimate sacrifice, like Benazir Bhutto. The international community must request the immediate release of Ingrid Betancourt, as well as of all of the women and children kept hostages as we will discuss later in this session.

It is essential that this session, too, conclude with the request that governments adopt measures and laws to combat every form of discrimination against women and to foster respect for their human rights, their value as human beings, their freedoms, autonomy and dignity.

To honor the Universal Declaration means shouldering the moral imperative of saying NO to:

- Human trafficking and exploitation
- All forms of desecration and mutilation of the female body
- Segregation and persecution of those who choose to lead free and autonomous lives
- The practice of pre-natal gender selection, as result of which hundreds of millions of females have never been born

To honor the Universal Declaration means promoting positive actions for:

- The full recognition of women's human rights and equal opportunities. For the affirmation of their freedom, autonomy and self-determination. Without any ethical relativism.
- Guaranteeing women's right to health and recognizing their responsibilities also in the field of sexual and reproductive health. In this regard, I want to recall that in Italy a wise and balanced law has allowed us to reduce drastically the scourge of clandestine abortions.
- Recognizing the merits of women in every field and at every level, starting with the work world.

On these issues, the Italian government – together with women’s associations and movements – has started a multi-year action plan for women’s rights and equal opportunities.

With reference to human rights:

- A 20-million-euro plan against harassment of and violence against women, homosexuals, and transsexuals
- Strict laws against stalking and homophobic acts
- A plan against human trafficking, particularly of women and children
- Actions against female genital mutilation in the affected countries and in Italy

With reference to social rights and empowerment:

- Tax measures and incentives for women’s employment, entrepreneurship and the emergence of care-giving labor from its informal status
- Transitional regulations for equal opportunities in accessing boards, institutions and public undertakings
- Regulations aiming to introduce gender budgeting in state administrations and new attempts at transforming the State’s budgeting into gender budgeting
- Funding to insert gender statistics into national and international statistical programs.

Mr. President,

At the opening of this very session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Secretary-General launched a campaign to eradicate violence against women by 2015, calling on all member states to live up to their responsibilities in this field.

Italy fully and wholeheartedly supports the Secretary-General in this battle for civilization.

Mr. President,

Italy has always supported the implementation of Resolution 1325 “women, peace and security”, through its development assistance and by making it one of

its priorities during its two-year term as an elected member of the Security Council.

We have already stated clearly and we profoundly believe that the Security Council and the international community should shift gears from a mere annual celebration of resolution 1325 to its actual everyday implementation. Only if we see concrete and effective results in the status of women in conflict and post-conflict situations will we be able to say that we have fulfilled our obligations under resolution 1325.

In this context, Italy fully supports the Secretary-General's renewed appeal launched at the opening of this session to set up a monitoring mechanism on violence against women and girls, within the framework of resolution 1325, and strongly hopes that there may be actual progress in this direction already by the end of this year.

Mr. President,

The challenge is, for the first time ever, to make human rights – women's human rights in particular – a criterion and inspiration for political action and international relations, always and everywhere.

The status of women is the dividing line between conservatism and progress in every field. Progress in the status of women is needed for a growth that safeguards the environment and the future and to build a new humanism that places the human being, his dignity, and responsibility at the center of the universe.

It is a political battle, but also a cultural one. We know how hard it can be. We know how much resistance and closed-mindedness we will come across. But I know that it is a battle for civilization. Our very future is at stake.