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Statement by

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of

the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Commission on the Status of Women

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference in Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

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Mr Chairman,

First, I would like to align myself with the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of the EU.

The Netherlands welcomes the discussion about 'Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women'. We are of the opinion that we should first focus on identifying activities and policies that have shown concrete results. The next step is to look at possible financing constraints. In this respect, we emphasize the necessity to speed up our actions to achieve MDG 3 and MDG 5 since these are lagging behind most.

The UN Task Force on Education and Gender Equality has identified seven priority areas of intervention to close the gender gap.

- First of all, equal participation in education. The Netherlands is pleased to conclude that internationally, budgets for "Education for All" have increased dramatically. We have to monitor that current efforts remain on this level. The Netherlands, on its side, will continue to allocate 15% of its ODA budget for this purpose.
- Secondly, we have to look at sexual and reproductive health and rights. In recent years this policy area has come under increasing pressure. Differences of opinion seem to have deepened. In some cases this has led to decreasing budgets. Given the scope of the problem, The Netherlands considers this unacceptable. 'Reproductive health for all' will remain among the key focuses of the Dutch development policy over the coming years. To this end an additional 45 million EURO will be allocated in the coming three years to achieve this goal.
- The 3rd, 4th and 5th priority areas that were identified deal with the economic empowerment of women: time saving infrastructure for women and girls, eradication of discrimination against women with regards to property and inheritance rights, and gender inequality in employment. The Netherlands believes that this is both a challenge and an opportunity. In this regard, we stress the importance of implementing the Decent Work agenda and welcome the World Bank's Gender Action Plan on 'Gender as smart economics' and hope that this leads to new initiatives to integrate a gender perspective in economic policies.
- The 6th area deals with equal participation in decision making processes. In the last few days it has been stressed time and again that the voice of women often goes unheard. This is also resulting from the insufficient availability of funds for civil society initiatives to call for equal rights and opportunities for women. We have listened to this outcry. Recently, The Netherlands has established an MDG3 Fund to sponsor civil society activities to promote gender equality. A total budget of 50 million EURO is available for multi-year proposals. We hope that more governments, international NGOs and the private sector will join us in increasing financial support for these kinds of activities.

- Finally, we should particularly focus on violence against women. We welcome the launch of the UN Secretary Generals' worldwide campaign on violence against women and strongly encourage the Member States to take action and the UN system to ensure a coordinated response. More funds are needed to reach concrete results. In this regard, the Netherlands recently has approved a contribution of 4 million EURO to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. This contribution has been made available in the understanding that the fund shall be open for proposals from UN country teams. Furthermore, we have reserved another 25 million EURO for bilateral activities to combat violence against women.

Gender equality is a goal that should be pursued all around the globe. On the national level, gender equality policy has been given new impetus. The Netherlands Government has approved a new multi year policy plan for gender equality, titled "More opportunities for women". An increased budget has been allocated for the next few years, to be used for the implementation of best practices of gender equality projects, improvement of the knowledge infrastructure, support of innovative networks of women and cooperation with municipalities on gender equality themes. A precondition for providing funding to municipalities is the involvement of civil society and NGOs.

Internationally, we should not forget the women whose needs are greatest: the women who live in areas of conflict. Last December, the Netherlands has launched the Dutch National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325, a plan which summarises activities carried out by the Dutch government, as well as civil society and academic institutions. We urge the countries that have not yet done so to draft their own National Action Plan on Resolution 1325.

Mr Chairman, in conclusion , the Netherlands would like to underline the need of a strengthened, well funded UN gender equality architecture with normative as well as operational responsibilities. Decisive measures to promote gender awareness across the entire UN system are required. Therefore, The Netherlands calls upon the Secretary General to provide leadership in this regard and provide the membership with information about the gaps and challenges in the work of the UN system at field level. We call on all Member States to recognize the need for a strengthened, coherent and coordinated UN performance in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment by supporting the establishment of a consolidated UN gender entity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.