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Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Carsten Staur,
Permanent Representative of Denmark
to the United Nations

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E-mail: nycmis@um.dk
www.missionfnnewyork.um.dk/en

Mr. /Madame Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome this opportunity to address the Commission on the Status of Women at its 53rd session and I would like to associate myself with the statement made on Monday by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. /Madame Chair

How can it be that we in 2009 witness so many women around the world with no rights to decide over their body? That we witness so many women denied their rights to full and equal participation in the development of their societies?

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we find the principles of non-discrimination and equality together with a general recognition of the human rights of women and men. These rights also include the right to decide on sexual and reproductive matters. Women all over the world must have access to information and preventive services that enable them to decide freely on matters relating to their sexuality and health.

This is a central issue not least since gender inequalities feed the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is very important for us to recognize the connection between HIV/AIDS and women's human rights.

Mr. / Madame Chair,

Responsibility for care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS is included in the theme for this session, and rightly so. More than two thirds of young people aged 15-24 living with AIDS are female. One important reason for this is gender discrimination. Social restrictions, lack of financial security, lack of access to education and employment all limit women's opportunities and abilities to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS.

Women are the most exposed and most hit by the pandemic. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been feminized, and so has care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. Women and young girls are the main care givers. Women and girls care for the sick family members and are deprived of opportunities to nourish their own future.

It is crucial that we maintain focus on the care giving side of the pandemic, and I am glad to announce that the battle against HIV/AIDS is a strategic priority for the Danish Government, and that we maintain our goal to provide one billion Danish Crowns a year to fight HIV/AIDS by 2010.

Mr. / Madame Chair,

In Denmark we are fortunate that women and men share many of the care giving roles and responsibilities, just as both women and men are active in the labour market and participate in political and decision making processes.

The hours that men work in the family have increased quite rapidly over the last decade, at the very same time as women's participation at the labour market has increased and fewer women work part time.

This is possible because we have an effective public sector, including care giving for children and other dependants.

Mr. / Madame Chair,

The current financial and economic crisis has had visible effects on the labour market. In Denmark the labour market is highly gender segregated. It is a noteworthy feature, that in Denmark it is the male dominated sectors that are facing difficult times. Men are at present more affected by an increase in unemployment. At the same time, Denmark needs to increase the workforce in care giving branches.

This apparent shift in the demand at the labour market presents an unprecedented opportunity to transfer the unemployed male workforce into new sectors, and it could be into the female dominated care giving sector. A change in the traditional perception of care giving roles and responsibilities will benefit society as well as the individual family.

Mr. / Madame Chair,

The economic and financial crisis has diverse impact on poor women and men in the developing countries, primarily on the poorest and most vulnerable - the poor women. It is apparent that the spread of the crisis has

lead to major setbacks in delivering on the global commitments made in the Millennium Declaration.

Last year Denmark initiated the “MDG3 Global Call to Action” to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. We are convinced that gender equality is key to accelerating progress on other development goals, including the MDG on the fight against HIV/AIDS. Many representatives of governments, private sector, civil society as well as prominent individuals have joined the campaign. More than 100 torches are travelling around the world generating and implementing commitments to do something extra for gender equality - for women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights, for women’s rights in general and for women’s economic opportunities.

For its part, the Government of Denmark has doubled its financial support to gender equality and empowerment of women from 2008 through 2010.

Mr. / Madame Chair,

The Danish government maintains gender equality as a top priority.

I am glad to inform that Denmark works persistently to include gender in the process leading up to the UN Conference on Climate Change - COP 15 - in Copenhagen in December. Women and men are affected differently by climate changes, and women and men have a different impact on their environment. But we have a shared responsibility for a sustainable agreement on climate.

Thank You

