

**55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

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**Closing Remarks  
14 March 2011**

Mr. Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

The 55<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women convened to share innovations, best practices and successful experiences; to discuss gaps and challenges in implementing commitments and to agree on new ways for overcoming these obstacles in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

I congratulate Member States, as well as representatives of civil society and the UN System, on the interesting discussions that took place during the session. In these two weeks you considered issues of access, quality, and outcomes of education, as well as access to science and technology.

It is clear that the transition from education to the world of work remains fraught with challenges. The continuing weaknesses in the global economic and financial situation exacerbate these challenges, making gender-sensitive and targeted action especially urgent.

I welcome the focus in the agreed conclusions on the following six key areas:

- strengthening national legislation, policies and programmes;
- expanding access and participation in education;
- strengthening gender-sensitive quality education and training, including in the field of science and technology;
- supporting the transition from education to full employment and decent work;
- increasing retention and progression of women in science and technology employment; and
- making science and technology responsive to women's needs.

As noted in the agreed conclusions, quality education and equal access and participation in science and technology for women of all ages are not only imperative for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women – they are also an economic necessity, providing women with the knowledge and understanding necessary for lifelong learning, employment, better physical and mental health, as well as full participation in social, economic and political development.

However, as I said in my opening statement: While the agreed conclusions reflect Member States' commitment, they are only a first step. These commitments must be followed-up at the national level. I call on all stakeholders to take action, and to build the necessary partnerships for progress. UN Women and the entire UN system at country level stand ready to support you in your efforts to implement the agreed conclusions of the Commission.

Chair,  
Distinguished participants,

Ending violence against women is one of the *five thematic priorities* for UN Women, and this year's review theme on the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child provided a welcome opportunity to evaluate progress, identify obstacles and challenges, and highlight necessary steps and measures.

As violence against the girl child continues to require urgent need for action, UN Women will work with partners to help bring greater attention to the situation of the girl child in laws, policies and programmes.

The panel on the emerging issue of gender equality of sustainable development illustrated the unprecedented opportunity provided by next year's UN Conference on Sustainable Development to renew commitments to gender-responsive sustainable development processes, strengthen institutional frameworks and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in these processes at national and international levels.

I was privileged to moderate a panel on eliminating preventable maternal mortality. The Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health provides the framework for all stakeholders towards reaching the MDG 5. We know what needs to be done to save women from dying due to pregnancy-related causes. I urge you to take those actions.

The focus of your 2012 session will be on the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges. We had a very productive first brainstorming on the issues that should be brought into this debate next year.

We also need to assess critically whether past efforts have brought the expected results – and if not, how to change course. I urge all stakeholders to take full advantage of the time ahead to bring this issue to the foreground, and I am pleased to say that UN Women is committed to focus on the situation of rural women at the global and the national level.

I thank you, Chair, and the members of the Bureau, for steering the work of this Commission to a successful conclusion. Thank you.