

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
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HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE

**The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,
the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General
Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards
the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals**

Written Statement *

Submitted by

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Madame President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Partners in Civil Society,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always a pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women. This is one of the most dynamic bodies in the UN system, thanks to the strong voices and participation of leaders from both government and civil society. It is especially thrilling to be here with you to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to discuss how we can make greater progress for girls and women.

Today, as we look forward to the MDG+10 Summit in September, the Millennium Development Goals provide a unifying framework for international development. But we know that the MDGs do not exist in a vacuum. The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs are built on the foundations of the international agreements that came before them, and these agreements must be fully utilized as we unite to achieve the MDGs.

In particular, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provide a solid blueprint, and constituency, not only for advancing the status of women and girls, but also for engendering and accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

As many of you know, last year we completed the 15-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development and I am pleased to report that commitment to the Programme of Action was reaffirmed. The Cairo consensus placed the empowerment of women, gender equality and the right to sexual and reproductive health as cornerstones for action in the vast field of population and development.

And let us make no mistake about it. The right to sexual and reproductive health is fundamental to women's empowerment, gender equality and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. If women cannot make the most critical decision in their lives—to determine the number and spacing of their pregnancies, to determine their fertility—then they cannot make decisions about other matters that directly affect them.

Women's health and rights are the foundation of healthy societies and growing economies. As we strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, MDG 5 to improve maternal health is lagging behind and urgently requires increased investment. During the last decade, funding for global health soared while funding for women's health remained stagnant.

To make greater progress for women, now is the time to prioritize sexual and reproductive health in health system strengthening and global health financing. A health system that can deliver integrated services to women—for family planning; maternal, newborn and child health; HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—is a health system that can deliver to all. Investing in women and adolescent girls is not only the right thing

to do, it is smart economics. We must ensure that women enjoy equal rights and opportunities for employment as we strive to achieve decent work for all.

We also know that education is one of the most important means of empowering women and girls. In addition to universal primary education, we must give priority attention to quality secondary education so that women and girls can reach their full potential. This is extremely important because girls' secondary enrolment rates are falling in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, and we must reverse this troubling trend.

I am pleased to announce that, in the spirit of Delivering as One, six UN system partners will release a joint statement during this session of the CSW to accelerate action to promote the rights of adolescent girls.

To create more just, prosperous and peaceful societies, we must end violence against women and girls, partner with men and boys for gender equality, and promote relationships based on equal opportunity, shared responsibilities and mutual trust and respect. The United Nations is proud of the Secretary-General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women and the launch last year of the network of men leaders.

This year as we commemorate the 10th anniversary of historic Security Council resolution 1325 on women, war and peace, we have an opportunity to strengthen accountability to ensure increased women's participation in peacebuilding, reconstruction and recovery and end sexual violence and impunity.

As we move forward, the United Nations stands with you and we look forward to an institutionally strong and well resourced new gender entity for women's empowerment and gender equality. But let us be clear that the new gender entity will not absolve any of the governments or the United Nations organizations or civil society organizations from their responsibilities to mainstream a gender perspective in all policies and programmes.

Together we can only move our world from this current state of crisis to a state of recovery and renewal, if women take full part in decision-making in homes, communities and nations, and their rights are fully respected. This requires strong national women's mechanisms, a strong presence of women in legislative bodies, equitable laws and policies and vigorous implementation, and mechanisms for holding stakeholders accountable.

To ensure effective programmes and accountability, we need sex-disaggregated data and statistics to monitor progress, strong legal frameworks, and the strengthened participation of women's organizations and civil society. Yesterday at the NGO Global Forum for Women, I received a copy of the NGO Call to Action, which will guide us as we move ahead.

During this financial crisis, when budgets are being cut, and nations are looking for efficiencies, investments must focus on areas that guarantee returns. Now more than ever, it is time to invest in women and girls. This will pave the way for a lasting recovery. Together as governments, civil society and the United Nations, let us give priority to poor women and young people and let us not only renew but actively strengthen our commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality. I thank you.