

**STATEMENT BY HON'BLE MR. C.P. RADHAKRISHNAN, MEMBER OF  
PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION ON AGENDA  
110: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN & AGENDA ITEM 111:  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD  
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> SPECIAL SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 58<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF  
THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 17, 2003**

Mr. Chairman,

We thank the Secretary General for his reports on the agenda items 110 and 111 on the Advancement of Women, and on the Implementation of the Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly respectively. We also thank the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. Angela King; Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women; Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM and Ms. Feride Acar, Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, for their useful introductory statements.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Morocco in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77, under these agenda items.

Mr. Chairman,

The report of the Secretary General on the follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session has provided us with details on the efforts at gender mainstreaming by the United Nations, through the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and through the major Conferences and Summits. Gender mainstreaming, or the recognition of the centrality of the role of women, is accorded a high priority in the work of the United Nations. But this is clearly not enough. Empowerment of women calls for greater affirmative action by all. The review of the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly assume considerable significance in this context. Such a review will be taken up first by the Commission on the Status of Women at its 49<sup>th</sup> Session in 2005. However, a review by the General Assembly, possibly in a high-level segment, would provide an opportunity to renew commitments of the international community in this vital area almost ten years after undertaking firm goals and targets. It will also serve to demonstrate that the elimination of discrimination against women and the empowerment of women continue to remain firmly on the global agenda for action.

The primary responsibility for the advancement and empowerment of women lies with national governments. However, international cooperation is indispensable in this regard. Without such cooperation, developing countries will not be in a position to respond to the serious challenges they face in this crucial area, especially in this era of globalisation. Such international cooperation should include provision of additional financial resources; transfer of technology on concessional, non-commercial and preferential terms; sharing of experiences, expertise, information and data; technical cooperation and capacity-building. We call upon the developed country partners to fulfil their commitments made in the Millennium Declaration and major conferences and summits so as to enable the developing countries to attain goals of poverty eradication and sustainable development. This would assist in the efforts of the developing countries in the area of participation of women in socio-economic and political spheres, equal access to education and training, and improving health care for women and girls.

Mr. Chairman,

The report of the Secretary General on the situation of women in rural areas underlines the fact that inter-governmental processes have focussed on the needs of rural women in recent years, taking into account their perspective and the need for their participation. As mentioned by Under Secretary General Ocampo in his remarks to this Committee, the challenge before us is to ensure that "growth is equitable, inclusive, pro-development and supportive of equality between men and women." The task before this Committee is to give an operational content to the response of the international community to this challenge.

Women constitute 48.3 percent of India's population according to the 2001 Census; 70 per cent of the population resides in rural areas, in 583,000 villages, in the country. Socio-economic transformation of the villages will, therefore, play a crucial role in the overall development of the country. In a renewed commitment to bridge the rural-urban divide, the Government has launched recently a new programme, "Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas" [PURA], across the country, to be implemented over the next five years. This ambitious programme envisages creation of infrastructure, electronic, knowledge and market connectivity in 5000 clusters of villages. It would also involve the active participation of village leaders at the grassroots level. Women have played an important role in the success of the *Panchayati Raj* (self-government at the village level) system in India. An additional feature of empowerment of rural women has been the reservation of 33-and-1/3<sup>rd</sup> per cent of electoral seats for women in the village *Panchayats*. The involvement and participation of women through local self-government will provide a gender perspective in rural development policies and programmes in a direct and effective manner, and will be instrumental in improving the situation of women in rural areas.

Moreover, the effective implementation of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women adopted in 2001 will also contribute significantly to our efforts to improve the situation of women in rural areas. Empowerment has many facets, the key to which is affirmative action in a number of areas including in political participation, securing economic rights and legal empowerment. We have registered noticeable progress in all these areas.

Mr. Chairman,

The report of the Secretary General on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls gives details with regard to some of the national best practices and measures taken by Governments to address and eliminate harmful traditional or customary practices, through legislation as well as education and awareness-building campaigns. We welcome these practices and measures by the Governments, particularly in the light of commitments undertaken by member States at the international level.

The Secretary General's report on improvement of the status of women in the UN system indicates that more concerted efforts are required to achieve gender parity at all levels and categories, since overall representation of women has not increased significantly. We call upon the Secretary General to adopt a pro-active approach in the matter, to strive for tangible improvements in the situation and make every effort to attain gender balance targets by 2006. We should go beyond the repeated and ritualistic exercises in analysing probable causes for the slow advancement of the status of women in UN system and move rapidly towards concrete action. We look forward to the report to be presented by the Secretary General on this item at the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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