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**STATEMENT ON  
BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**BY**

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**ECONOMIC and SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**Coordination Segment**

**Agenda item 4(a):  
Coordination of the policies and activities  
of the specialized agencies and other bodies  
of the United Nations system related to:  
Review and appraisal of the system-wide  
implementation of the Economic and Social Council's  
agreed conclusions 1997/2  
on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies  
and programmes in the United Nations system**

**New York, 2 July 2004**

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The EU is extremely pleased that seven years after the adoption of the Council's Agreed Conclusions, ECOSOC's coordination segment today focuses on gender mainstreaming again. Gender equality is an issue of securing the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and their empowerment, and as such it is an important *goal* in itself. But gender equality is also a *means* to achieving and sustaining development, and indispensable for the achievement of *all* MDGs. No Society can truly prosper if it leaves the talents of half its population behind.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". With the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, gender mainstreaming became a globally supported strategy for promoting gender equality and securing the enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls. Other summits in Vienna, Cairo and Copenhagen also contributed to this cause.

The EU reaffirms that there are two complementary approaches to achieving gender equality: mainstreaming gender and promoting women's empowerment. The EU underlines the role men have to play in the realisation of gender equality. Specific strategies could be developed for men, addressing them as active players and partners while challenging and changing the unequal power relations between women and men.

In the past decade, progress has been made in the field of gender mainstreaming. But there is no room for complacency. The goal of this segment should be to identify some of the obstacles we have met and strategies to overcome them. This way, we can accelerate implementation of the 1997 Agreed Conclusions. As member states, we fully acknowledge our own remaining challenges on achieving gender equality through mainstreaming. In this statement, we would like to focus on the importance of accountability and reporting and the importance of retaining a gender perspective in conference follow-up as we progress towards the Major Event of 2005.

### **1. The importance of accountability and reporting**

The EU welcomes the Secretary General's report and its overview of progress made and obstacles met. Also, the EU has read with great interest the four conference room papers prepared by the Secretariat. It is evident that awareness on the importance of gender mainstreaming has increased, but that in itself is not sufficient. Gender focal points have been established, but have not always been allowed to be effective. Too often, gender has remained a separate subject with an audience of its own. We welcome the self-critical look the UN has taken and look forward to the interactive panel discussions that are scheduled to take place to learn more about obstacles in implementation and strategies to overcome them.

Key to implementing the Agreed Conclusions is clear accountability of management at the various levels in the UN system. Since performance on gender mainstreaming is essential to the UN's success in fulfilling its mission, it should be a major consideration in assessment of individual performance. This is in accordance with the 1997 Agreed Conclusions which call for accountability measures, including performance indicators.

A sound monitoring system is crucial in this respect, but has been identified as one of the weakest areas in the implementation of gender mainstreaming. This makes it hard to measure progress and to pass judgement on accountability. Sound reporting is required to overcome this obstacle. A gender dimension should be fully integrated, from the earliest stages on. This holds true for all parts of the UN system. To ensure an effective implementation of a two-pronged gender equality strategy, the UN must allocate sufficient human and financial resources.

Systematic integration of gender dimensions in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of CCA/UNDAF and in the CAP process is essential. The UN Country Team should be able to draw on qualified gender expertise either within the Country Team or at Regional Level. The Gender Theme Groups within the UN Country Team could play a key role here. Availability of sex-disaggregated data is of crucial importance to take gender inclusive policy decisions and to evaluate the development impact of development efforts at the country level. The UN has a critical role in supporting national capacity in the preparation of PRSPs and MDG reports.

As we gear up to new peace keeping operations, the issue of gender based violence needs to be stressed as well. Increasingly, UN staff has come across the terrible consequences of gender based violence. On the basis of Security Council resolution 1325, the UN needs to prepare itself to deal with this issue and raise it at the earliest occasion. The UN also needs to assist in dealing with the aftermath, including documenting atrocities. The recommendations contained in Security Council resolution 1325 should be integrated in the operations of peacekeeping missions world wide, and progress must be reported on. It is disappointing to learn that only 17,8% of the Secretary General's *reports* to the Security Council make multiple references to gender. Only 14,2% of the Security Council *resolutions* pay attention to women or gender issues.

The EU expresses its appreciation for the work done by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. Her role was not to do all the work on gender mainstreaming, but to make sure the system does its work. The EU considers such a mandate indispensable and looks forward to the early appointment of a new Special Adviser who can trigger further improvements in the UN system's performance on gender mainstreaming. In a similar fashion, UNIFEM's catalytic role as enabler and facilitator needs to be strengthened. Ultimately, gender concerns need to be mainstreamed more firmly at UNDP and other UN organizations.

The EU welcomes the inter-agency coordination and cooperation that has been established to promote gender equality. The EU encourages the Chief Executives Board to take its responsibility in further promoting the objective of gender equality through gender mainstreaming in all UN policies and programmes. By their activities, of both normative and operational nature, entities within the UN system contribute to the implementation of the legal framework agreed upon by states, including the Cairo and Beijing agendas. This includes the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into policies and programmes of UN agencies, to which the EU remains fully committed.

## **2. The importance of gender mainstreaming in conference follow-up**

ECOSOC's Agreed Conclusions call for the application of a gender perspective to all conference follow-up and for the effective utilisation of gender analysis to identify the differential impact of implementation on women and men. The EU considers it extremely important that in implementing the outcomes of all major UN conferences, we keep a focus on gender. Gender equality is an important goal in itself, and it supports achieving the broader development goals agreed on in these major conferences. Gender equality will contribute to the realisation of *all* Millennium Development Goals, not just MDG 3. No serious strategy for achieving the MDGs as a whole can fail to address women's empowerment as a central concern. Therefore, we should continue to focus on how gender specific concerns can be better integrated into policies and interventions.

### 3. The importance of the intergovernmental process

This brings me to the intergovernmental system. As the international community embarks on the preparations for the "Major Event" in 2005, gender mainstreaming should be regarded as one of the leading strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementing the results of UN conferences and Summits.

The EU appreciates the efforts of ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies to address gender equality as a crosscutting issue in their area of work. The EU values the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women in this respect.

At the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which focused on water, sanitation and human settlements, gender concerns were part and parcel of the discussions. They were fully integrated into the Chair's summary of that meeting. The conclusion was that one of the ways forward to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD outcomes in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements, was to enhance the roles and status of women, as participants and agents of change, and to mainstream gender in planning, decision making and management.

Likewise, the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping adopted a strong gender profile this year. With landmark Security Council resolution 1325 as the valuable framework, a good effort was made to operationalise gender concerns into the work of the Committee. This is the right track to pursue: gender analysis needs to be daily routine. In this regard the Council's Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 have borne fruit.

The EU welcomes the declaration on violence against women of the women ministers of foreign affairs, their women minister colleagues and other government representatives during the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Human Rights. The Ministers underlined that declarations on violence against women have to be matched with actions and called upon political leadership and civil society worldwide to join efforts to eradicate obstacles impeding women's full enjoyment of human rights. The declaration contributed to strengthening the gender perspective of the work of the Commission on Human Rights, in particular its high-level segment.

The EU also congratulates the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for devoting special attention to indigenous women at its recent meeting in May. The EU shares the concern of the forum about the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by indigenous women.

### 4. EU efforts

Within the EU, the cross-cutting obligation to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between women and men has been enshrined in the Union's basic documents. The present EU Strategy is in line with international commitments, in particular the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. It seeks to build synergy between key instruments such as legislation, gender mainstreaming and funding tools. Gender mainstreaming in all policy areas is now being actively pursued both in the Member States and at EU level.

The dual approach of mainstreaming coupled with specific actions has been adopted for several EU processes, such as the European Employment Strategy, the Social Inclusion process, Research Policy, the Structural Funds and Development Co-operation. An extensive training programme for officials working in Brussels and in the delegations in developing countries has begun. Importantly, the European Commission's efforts in this area are explicitly linked with the MDGs, thus fostering closer collaboration between the Commission and the EU Member States, the UN and other development agencies.

The accurate measurement of progress is vital. The European Commission now presents an annual report on progress towards gender mainstreaming in policy areas to EU Heads of State and Government. The European Commission and the Council of the EU have developed gender equality indicators for assessing progress in different policy areas, such as education, research policy, employment and social policies, balanced participation in political and economic decision-making, reconciliation of work and family life, equal pay for women and men and domestic violence.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the EU welcomes that ECOSOC will reiterate the importance of gender mainstreaming and reaffirm the validity of its Agreed Conclusions from 1997, while addressing the gaps and identifying measures to accelerate implementation, including through action plans and timelines. Such an outcome will generate new momentum towards the 'Major Event' of 2005 and marks an important contribution to our shared goal: gender equality.