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STATEMENT BY
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AT THE
4589TH MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ON
WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY
JULY 25, 2002

Mr. President, Members of the Security Council, Excellencies, Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my twelve years at the United Nations, this is the first time that I avail myself of the opportunity to address this august and prestigious body, although I have spoken many times in other UN fora.

I do so today because the item on the Council's agenda **Women and peace and security** is near and dear to my heart, as I approach my fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Mr. President,

I begin with the premise that the family is the basis of society and that good family life in inextricably intertwined and interwoven into good national life, which by extension can promote good international life.

Mr. President,

From time immemorial, much of the peace and harmony of the home and family, especially in conflict resolution, devolve upon the woman of the house in her natural milieu as peacemaker. And herein, Mr. President, lies a glorious opportunity to involve women in peace making, peace building and peace keeping at the highest level, nationally and internationally.

The age-old euphemism, "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," remains only a good omen unless women are brought into the mainstream of decision-making at the highest political, educational, social, economical, cultural and other levels. Then and only then will the world give credence and substance to the ancient Chinese proverb—"Women hold up half the sky."

Mr. President

The **4th World Conference on Women** held in Beijing in September 1995 drew up the **Beijing Declaration and Program for Action**. It contains twelve subject areas, six of which were analyzed in the UN publication entitled *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*. This was just before the 23rd Special Session of the UNGA on 6 June 2000, entitled **Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century**. The intent was to show the progress as well as the disparities between women and men worldwide in health, human rights, political decision-making, work, education and families.

Mr. President,

Due to time constraint my delegation will touch briefly on three subject areas: human rights, political decision-making and work.

While progress has been made, we cannot fail to see that we are still a long way from the attainment of the proclaimed goal of **women's right are human rights** as discussed in the Millennium Report, or **the equal rights of men and women** affirmed in the Charter of the United Nations or **everyone without discrimination has the right to equal pay for equal work** as emphasized in article 23 of the Universal Declaration. Yet gender imbalance is nowhere more noticeable than in the workplace where, on an average, women earn at least

30% less than men for equal work. Moreover, in the home, where a woman's domestic role as spouse and mother is so vital to the well being of society, her work is under-valued and underpaid. Unpaid domestic work everywhere is seen as the woman's responsibility.

Mr. President,

Isn't it incongruous that more than fifty years after ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the political landscape is still dominated by men? Yet all international instruments and all national legislatures enshrine the principle of equality between men and women. Men have a responsibility, therefore, to help remove the patriarchal dominance in society and to allow the private virtues of women to go public. Indeed men of quality should never feel threatened by women for equality.

Mr. President,

Gender equality is predicated upon the education of girls and women, so that they can be empowered throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world, to enter the gender mainstream of equal opportunity with men.

The report of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 4-15 and 25 March 2002, tells how far we are from attaining this goal.

Given the opportunity for education, women and girls do as well as men and boys. Some even think that women and girls do better.

Mr. President,

In 1916 psychologist George Stratton of the University of Southern California was describing what he considered the inherent superiority of female brains in seeing the whole picture. Writing on "**Feminism and Psychology**" in *Century Magazine* he expressed the hope that women would dispel masculine illusions when they take their rightful place in society. Men, he said, tend to fix on cogs instead of flesh and blood. Beginning with a generous wonder at nature, they end up with fascination for the tool—the scientific instrument. They establish governments to give order to life, and then end up coveting the functions of government *more* than life. "The masculine genius for organization," Stratton said, needs women's sense of the heart of things, not the trappings."

Mr. President,

I cannot end without recalling from Greek mythology, the resourcefulness, the commonsense and the power of **Women 411 BC**, during the silly and unnecessary Peloponnesian war between the city-state of Athens and Sparta. How the women ended the military madness and exposed the absurdity and futility of war by seizing first the Acropolis, which contained the treasure. Then they refused to have intimacies with their returning men soldiers. Taken together, their actions of seizure and sex strike, according to the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes, a masterpiece in comedy, brought peace and development in a century very, very far removed from the 21st.

Finally Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Women serve as the link between the home where lessons are first taught and learned, and the wider world where they are applied in the pursuit of peace and security.

An ancient Chinese philosopher captures the contribution of women to peace and security best when he said—if there is light in the soul there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation there will be peace and security in the world.

Mr. President,

What a beautiful tribute to womanhood!

Thank you Sir.