



STATEMENT BY DR. GLENDA SIMMS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE HIGH LEVEL PLENARY SEGMENT OF THE 49TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ON THE THEMES: REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE OUTCOME DOCUMENTS OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENTITLED "WOMEN 2000: GENDER EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY" AND CURRENT CHALLENGES AND FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS (New York, 1 March 2005)

Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Participants,

It is encouraging to note the energy that has gone into the planning and commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Beijing and the level of interest that has been generated from all sides into this high level Event. The gathering of such large delegations at such a high political level is a statement of the will and determination of the international community to intensify efforts at all levels to accomplish the commitments made ten years ago and reaffirmed in 2000.

Madam Chairperson,

I congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and contribution to this Event. You are presiding over a particularly significant session of the Commission in a crucial review year for the United Nations and you can be assured of our full support.

The Beijing Platform for Action adopted at Beijing in 1995 and the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", expresses the resolve of the international community to establish a clear path towards the attainment of gender equality, development and peace for women who account for half of the world's population.

Madam Chairperson,

The political will expressed at Beijing and at Beijing + 5 has been translated into action at various levels by many governments all over the world. A significant number have ratified key international legal instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and others. Some have undertaken legal reform measures as well as the introduction of policy guidelines at various levels. These initiatives signify that real progress has been made in realizing the internationally-agreed goals at the policy level.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports to the Commission on the Status of Women and to the 59th session of the General Assembly on measures and progress in the follow-up to Beijing and Beijing + 5 addressing concerns such as violence against women, and the situation of Palestinian women.

A ten-year assessment of the Platform for Action and of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly indicates that although important advancements have been made there are still some critical issues still to be addressed.

Madam Chairperson,

HIV/AIDS continues to pose serious global challenges to realizing the goals set for the advancement of women. The statistics are now showing that the rate of infection and spread of the disease is now more pronounced among the populations of women and girls in many countries. For the majority of women in the developing world, access to affordable drugs to treat the disease, the growing number of children being orphaned by the disease, or stigmatized for being infected with it remains problematic. We must therefore spare no effort in the battle to solve the problem of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Secretary-General has referred to violence against women as the most persistent human rights violation, the elimination of which must remain a high priority. We are encouraged to deal with violence at multiple levels and sectors of society simultaneously and to address the root causes of violence against women, including their poor economic and social status.

Madam Chairperson,

An enabling environment is an important prerequisite to the full realization of Beijing. The Group of 77 and China is therefore concerned that the accomplishment of some of its goals are hampered by such circumstances as natural disasters, armed conflict, occupation and unilateral coercive measures which not only disturb but undo progress already made. The globalised environment in which we now live has presented opportunities but has also resulted in shrinking economies and declining employment rates, making it difficult for women, particularly those in developing countries from enjoying equality within the human rights framework envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action, the CEDAW Convention and the Cairo Declaration.

Madam Chairperson,

The linkages between the MDGs and the Beijing commitments are clearly established. Goal 3 of the MDGs seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and calls for the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015. However the Millennium Project Report indicates that there is limited and uneven progress on gender equality targets. The time has come for a concerted effort by the international community to ensure that the women of our societies are accorded the status that is rightfully theirs and for which they worked so hard.

While it is appreciated that implementation at the national level is crucial to ensuring that women's development is achieved, we are also convinced that accelerated implementation of the Beijing commitments can be further enhanced by international cooperation, including honouring obligations undertaken on overseas development assistance.

Madam Chairperson,

The Group of 77 and China continues to support the revitalization and strengthening of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and encourages the international community to support its viability through voluntary donations, recognizing its valuable contribution to women's development.

The Group of 77 and China reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly and further encourages the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, all sectors of civil society including non-governmental organizations, as well as all women and men, to re-commit themselves and to intensify their contributions accordingly.

I thank you.