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INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

**Regional Perspectives in Progress Achieved and Remaining Gaps and
Challenges in the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**

Written Statement

Submitted by

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Ms./Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2010 is indeed a special year – not only does it mark the **15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action** but we are also taking stock of the progress made during the **10 years** that have passed since **the Millennium Declaration**, with gender equality being – besides an objective in its own right – a key determinant for reaching effectively *all* the Millennium Development Goals.

Before entering into the specifics of the ECE region, let me underline that globally, the **economic and financial crisis puts at risk further progress** to be made towards gender equality and women's empowerment whereas such progress is *essential* for economic growth and sustainable development. Therefore, it is all the more important to consider the crisis as an opportunity to mainstream gender into all measures taken for mitigating its impact and promoting economic recovery, including through stimulus packages and other counter-cyclical policies.

With this in mind, I would like to present the situation, challenges and policy recommendations highlighted at the ECE Beijing + 15 Review Meeting which was held on 2-3 November 2009 and gathered some 350 participants, with a strong presence of both member States and civil society representatives.

The meeting proceeded first with a systematic review of the 12 areas of concerns of the Beijing Platform for Action, and then focused on the topic of “women and the economy”, with two specific agenda items dedicated respectively to *gender-sensitive economic policies in the context of the economic and financial crisis*, and the *role of the corporate sector in promoting gender equality*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The economic and social situation within the ECE region is extremely diverse as it covers the whole of Europe, Central Asia and North America. Nevertheless, both the national reports submitted by our member States and the discussions during our Regional Review Meeting revealed a number of common, fundamental trends and developments:

Most significantly, countries across the ECE region have made **substantial progress** since the last review **in criminalizing violence against women**, as well as in **providing assistance and protection to women and children victims of violence**. In particular, *domestic* violence has received considerable attention, with a few countries having introduced laws against domestic violence in their legislation for the very first time.

Another key priority emerging from the national reports of *all* countries is **improving the situation of women in the economy** by promoting women's access to employment, in particular through reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, and by adopting specific measures combating women's poverty.

In other areas of concern, progress has been much less uniform:

As an example, **national mechanisms for the advancement of women** were extended and strengthened in many countries; however, especially in the Eastern part of the ECE region, they continue to suffer from **lack of political and institutional support** and, often as a consequence, the **lack of financial and human resources**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no readily-available remedy for this implementation gap but the recommendations of the ECE-meeting highlighted two important ingredients for further progress:

First – the **collection of systematic and reliable sex-disaggregated data and statistics**. Indeed, an accurate quantification of gender gaps makes these gaps visible and raises awareness on the size of the problem. Only when gaps are known, could appropriate policies be formulated and progress towards more equality could be measured. Put differently, accurate and reliable statistics are the backbones of good policy.

The second ingredient is: policy measures to **encourage men to meet their family responsibilities**. Indeed, while gender division *at work*