

Opening statement
by
Ms. Rachel Mayanja
Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
at the
Thirty-fifth Session of the
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Distinguished experts of the Committee
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to address you at the opening of the thirty-fifth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Since your last meeting, intense negotiations and activity have focused on follow-up to the 2005 World Summit and furthering reform of the United Nations. Allow me to briefly review some of these and their implications for gender equality and women's human rights.

Let me start with developments in the field of human rights. We have witnessed the creation of a new body, the **Human Rights Council**, which will truly make human rights one of the pillars of the work of the United Nations. The first election of the members of the Human Rights Council by the General Assembly was held last week, on 9 May 2006. The inaugural session of this new body, consisting of 47 members, is scheduled to take place on 19 June. Women's human rights had received significant attention in the agenda and work of the Commission on Human Rights, and women expect as a minimum a comparable degree of attention from the new Council. My Office and the Division for the Advancement of Women will continue to work with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen attention of the Council to the human rights of women and to the gender perspectives and in its work. We will also ensure that the interaction between this Committee and the Council builds on the practice developed over a number of years with its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights.

Distinguished experts,

One of the first outcomes of the reform process has been the establishment, by the General Assembly on 20 December 2005, of a **Peacebuilding Commission**. My Office worked closely with different stakeholders to ensure that the resolution establishing the Peacebuilding Commission reaffirmed the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and the importance of women's equal participation in decision-making in matters of war and peace. We advocated that the gender perspective be reflected, not only in the mandate but also in the day-

by the summer, to allow for formal presentation of its recommendations to the next session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2006.

Another Summit recommendation called for a review of all **mandates** of the United Nations Secretariat that are more than five years old. This review, facilitated by the report of the Secretary-General I mentioned earlier, is currently under way in the General Assembly and aims to refine the Organization's focus and renew its objectives. Discussion of the manner in which gender equality and the empowerment of women are currently considered in intergovernmental fora is part of this review, and the General Assembly will conduct informal consultations on this part of the mandate review on 17 May.

Also in follow-up to the Summit, the Secretary-General has requested all United Nations entities to take further steps to strengthen their gender mainstreaming. In response to this request, I have spearheaded an effort of the **Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality**, which I chair, composed of the gender focal points of United Nations offices, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, to develop a system-wide policy on gender equality and a system-wide strategy on gender mainstreaming. We believe that a clear framework is necessary, and a common policy of the UN system will undoubtedly strengthen entity-specific gender equality policies, strategies, and action plans and contribute to enhanced coherence in the whole UN system. The system-wide policy on gender equality is currently under preparation and will be presented to the Economic and Social Council at its July 2006 session. Important elements of the system-wide gender mainstreaming strategy include training, accountability, results-based management, monitoring and evaluation, resources allocation, capacity building and coherence and coordination.

I wish to emphasize that this renewed effort of the United Nations system to strengthen attention to gender equality and the use of the gender mainstreaming strategy has the full backing and support of the Heads of the United Nations system. In fact, I had the opportunity to brief **the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)** on the issues involved the policy 5on (CEB Social C

visibility and influence to gender equality issues. I am at this Committee's disposal for any further discussion of these issues you may wish to hold in the course of your session.

Let me thank your Committee for your strong commitment to gender equality. I wish you success in your deliberations during the next three weeks and pledge the full support of my Office in facilitating your tasks.

Thank you.
