

Statement of H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, President, Economic and Social Council at the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations, New York 28 February, 2005

Madam Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women,

Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Over half of Mankind is, actually, Womankind, yet this majority has been discriminated against worse than any minority. This discrimination affects not only women, but children, families, the entire community, retarding the progress of societies, states and human civilization.

2. This Commission, therefore, has a major role to play in realising the aspirations and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations to end wars, promote peace and promote progress in larger freedom. This wide responsibility is reflected in the Commission's mandate to promote women's equality, progress and rights in the political, economic, social and educational fields.

3. This is a hallmark session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It is being held ten years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, twenty years since the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and thirty years since the Mexico City World Conference of the International Women's Year.

4. This is also the year when the World's leaders will gather here in New York, in September, to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, including the MDGs and to observe the Sixtieth Anniversary of the United Nations.

5. Success in the struggle for women's equality and empowerment is essential for the realization of the Millennium Declaration's goals. Most importantly it is vital for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Three of the eight MDGs are focused on issues that are largely within this Commission's purview: gender equality and mainstreaming, child mortality and maternal health, including ending HIV/AIDS as well as universal primary education. Indeed, the achievement of all the 8 MDGs is interlinked and interdependent. We shall not end poverty and hunger unless we can ensure the full potential of women participation in the development process. The international conference on "Gender Mainstreaming and Millennium Development Goals" next month in Islamabad will, I hope, reinforce this message.

6. Considerable progress has been made over the last three decades in advancing the rights and status of women. This Commission's contribution to this progress has been significant, yet the challenges we face are also considerable. Women continue to suffer discrimination and exclusion. They continue to shoulder unequal burdens and have an unequal access to resources and opportunities. They continue to be the primary victims of wars and conflicts, of abuse and poverty.

7. This session of the Commission on the Status of Women will, no doubt, help to develop a better understanding of the Strategies required to respond to these pervasive challenges through specific plans and time bound actions.

8. The establishment over the past decade of a number of new mechanisms to support gender equality at the national level, including parliamentary caucuses, gender equality commissions, ombudspersons offices, women's rights commissions, and focal points in the Government Ministries is an emerging signal of the commitment of Member States to respond to the challenges and achieve our agreed objectives as set out, inter alia, in Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action.

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates,

9. As this session opens, we must all commit ourselves to fulfil the commitments made at Beijing. We should move faster, from commitments to concrete actions so that gender equality and the empowerment of women are realized. This, in turn, will considerably enhance the prospects of realising the Millennium Goals. We, in ECOSOC, look forward eagerly to the outcome of your deliberations and to your important contribution, to the success of the High Level Plenary meeting of the General Assembly in 2005.

I wish you all a very useful and productive session.

Thank you