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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
56th Session
Rural Women**

Madam President,

Brazil is pleased and honored to join the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and participate in its 56th Session dedicated to Rural Women.

The economic empowerment of women is key to poverty eradication, inclusive societies and sustainable development. Whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or workers, as well as by doing care work at home, women are essential agents of society and fundamental contributors to the economy, both in the urban and rural areas.

In rural areas, women account for a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force. They play a central role in food production and perform most of the unpaid care work. Like their fellow workers in urban areas, rural women are at the heart of their communities' well-being and development.

Yet, rural women and girls, including indigenous women, are more vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion and violence. They face greater difficulties in obtaining access to social services, lack participation in decision-making processes and have restricted access to productive resources, such as land, agricultural inputs, financing and credit.

In line with the spirit of article 14 of the CEDAW Convention and several UN resolutions, the Brazilian Government believes that the situation of rural women represents a specific challenge and, therefore, requires specific

policies and measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the protection of their human rights.

Against this backdrop, Brazil has taken several initiatives aimed at ensuring equal participation of rural women and men as agents and beneficiaries of a people-centered sustainable development. Since 2003, our country has put in place an agenda for the promotion of rural development which integrates policies for rural women while incorporating them into the National Policy Plan for Women.

One aspect of main concern and focus is the fight against violence. A National Forum for Combating Violence against Women in Rural and Forest Areas, integrated by representatives from both government and rural women organizations, was established in 2007. Furthermore, within the scope of the National Network to Assist Women in Situation of Violence, the Brazilian government has also created itinerant unities to facilitate assistance to rural women victims of violence. Another important development was the establishment of a toll-free hotline – Dial 180 – through which women and girls can denounce gender violence in its various forms. It assists around 65 thousand women per month.

Madam President,

Brazil welcomes the launching - by UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP - of the Joint Program Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in 2012. The economic empowerment of rural women is key to promote gender equality and poverty eradication. Empowered women are less vulnerable to violence and abuse. They are also better equipped to achieve autonomy and contribute to sustainable and inclusive development.

Bearing this in mind, Brazil has adopted a series of measures aimed at empowering rural women. These include the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Policy for Women (ATER), the Program for the Productive Organization of Rural Women (POPMPR) and the Women's National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture (PRONAF-Women), which provides women farmers with access to credit and microcredit.

Affirmative Action Programs have also been implemented such as the establishment of minimum quotas for the participation of rural women workers in programs for the commercialization of agricultural production.

Madam President,

Brazil attaches great importance to the discussions on the challenges faced by rural women and supports the adoption of a General Recommendation on the matter by this Committee. We are confident that the outcome of the CEDAW debate of this issue will represent a significant contribution to the empowerment of rural women and the protection and promotion of their human rights.

Last but not least, we would like to commend all CEDAW members for their tireless dedication and commitment. A special word of appreciation goes to Professor Silvia Pimentel, the former President of the Committee, whose outstanding work throughout the years makes us all very proud.

Thank you.