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**Statement by
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CHAIR

**COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

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Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Today is the last time that I have the honour to address and engage in an interactive dialogue with the Third Committee of the General Assembly in my capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). From among the many issues the Committee has worked on in the past 12 months, I would like today to focus on four: CEDAW's engagement in the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs); the rights of refugee and migrant women and girls; CEDAW's recent and ongoing work on general recommendations; and CEDAW and the human rights treaty body strengthening process.

CEDAW engagement in the follow-up and review of the SDGs

One year ago, the United Nations Summit adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In SDG 5, Member States committed themselves to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Already before the Sustainable Development Summit, 189 States had accepted these principles as legally binding obligations by becoming a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Convention).

The concluding observations the Committee adopts at the end of its review of the periodic reports submitted by States parties to the CEDAW Convention systematically call for the realization of substantive gender equality, in accordance with the Convention, throughout the process of

implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Consequently, this year, the Committee has begun, as a pilot, to make references to specific SDGs, and, so far, has adopted seven concluding observations that link specific SDGs and targets to relevant articles of the Convention. In addition, the Committee has started to include a systematic reference to SDG indicator 5.1.1 (“Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex”) in the lists of issues and questions that its Pre-Sessional Working Group adopts in preparation of the review of State party reports.

In June 2016, two CEDAW members were invited to participate in a workshop organized by UN Women in New York to discuss a methodological framework for monitoring SDG target 5.1. One of the CEDAW members made a presentation on the Committee’s role as a data source for SDG indicator 5.1.1 as well as a potential user of the country reports of the High Level Political Forum for its own State reviews under the CEDAW Convention. The workshop endorsed the Convention as the principal legal framework and as a data source to inform indicator 5.1.1 and agreed on a list of thematic questions for assessing whether the indicator has been met at the national level. This list will be recommended to the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs for adoption as the internationally accepted methodological framework for measuring indicator 5.1.1.

With 189 States parties, the CEDAW Convention enjoys almost universal ratification, and is the only human rights instrument that provides comprehensive protection of human rights of women. It is the firm belief of the Committee that the substantive articles of the CEDAW Convention shall serve as a source for identifying the areas of law that are

covered by the legal frameworks envisaged in indicator 5.1.1 (currently political and public life; violence against women; employment and economic benefits; marriage and family).

Beyond defining the methodology for indicator 5.1.1, the Committee stands ready to inform the SDG follow-up and review process. In that regard, we are pleased that the President of ECOSOC has invited the Committee to provide inputs to the 2017 High-Level Political Forum, which will focus on poverty eradication and discuss all 17 SDGs from the perspective of this theme.

Through its substantive rights and the State reporting procedure, the Convention vests the Committee with a strong mandate to periodically gather, receive and review information on the progress achieved by States parties in realizing human rights of women and gender equality. The Committee is determined to use this mandate to contribute to mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality across all Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Madam Chair,

Refugee and migrant women and girls

On 19 September, at the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants, Member States adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. We welcome the stated political will of world leaders to protect the rights of refugees and migrants; recognize the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls on the move; commit to ensuring that responses to large population movements mainstream a gender perspective; promote

gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; and respect and protect their rights. We look forward to the concrete realization and implementation of these stated commitments.

To mark the Summit, CEDAW, the Committee on Migrant Workers, OHCHR and UN Women issued a joint statement calling on States to: (1) adopt gender-responsive, rights-based policies to address the root causes of forced movements of refugees and migrants, including women and girls; (2) ensure the full and equal participation of women in the formulation of and decision-making on such policies as well as in the prevention of conflicts and their peaceful resolution; and (3) recognize the contribution of refugee and migrant women to global economic growth and socio-cultural progress, given that migrant women fill labour demands in transit and destination countries, remit larger proportions of their income to their countries of origin, and are more likely than men to spend remittances on education, health and family care.

CEDAW's focus on refugee, asylum seeking and migrant women is reflected in many of its concluding observations. In 18 of the 27 concluding observations adopted since October 2015 under the State reporting procedure, the Committee expressed concern about rights violations, threats and barriers faced by these groups of women, such as: racially motivated discourse and crimes; sexual and other forms of gender-based violence which are often under-reported or go unpunished; limited access to justice; exploitation of trafficking victims in prostitution; abusive working conditions; child and forced marriages of refugee women and girls; rape, abuse, confiscation of passports and de facto enslavement of migrant women domestic workers; administrative detention of pregnant migrant women and migrant children; accelerated

asylum procedures leading to expulsion of women asylum seekers; and limited access to education, employment and health services.

To curb such violations and intersecting forms of discrimination against refugee and migrant women, CEDAW recommended that States parties provide capacity building for the judiciary and police; free legal aid and information in their languages on remedies for refugee and migrant women; temporary residence permits for victims of trafficking, irrespective of their cooperation with the police, as well as for other migrant women to reduce their dependence on abusive partners; exit programmes for women who wish to leave prostitution; strict prohibition of harmful practices; regulation and monitoring of recruitment agencies of migrant women domestic workers; labour inspections of private households; alternatives to immigration detention of pregnant women and women with children; gender-sensitive asylum procedures; language classes for and integration of migrant girls into the school system; and income generating opportunities, social protection and health coverage for refugee and migrant women.

Through its work on individual communications under the article 2 of the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention, as well as in its concluding observations, the Committee has repeatedly called on States parties to implement their obligations under international law with regard to the principle of non-refoulement. Over the past year, CEDAW adopted final decisions on ten individual communications, five of which concerned non-refoulement cases. In one case, it found a violation of article 2 (c) and (d) of the Convention because the State to which the author of the communication was to be returned had failed to meet its due diligence obligation to protect her from gender-based violence against

women. In another case, no violation was found because the author had not substantiated a personal and foreseeable risk of serious forms of gender-based violence in case of return to her country of origin. Of the remaining three cases, two were declared inadmissible and one was discontinued after the author had obtained a staying permit.

If there is one lesson to be learned from the large-scale population movements in which so many refugees and migrants perished in recent years in search of a safer and better life, including by women and children, it ought to be the fact that the root causes of such movements extend beyond conflict and persecution. They also include discrimination, gender-based violence, exploitation, climate change, environmental degradation, natural disasters, extreme poverty, as well as lack of access to education, decent work and basic health services. Our Committee will continue to seek strengthening States' accountability for addressing those root causes and for promoting and protecting the rights of refugee and migrant women and girls, by implementing their legal obligations under the CEDAW Convention, including through the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madam Chair,

The root causes of migration obviously not only affect women and girls who are leaving their countries of origin but also those who stay behind, including women victims of gender-based violence, rural women who are often disproportionately affected by lack of infrastructure and basic services, girls deprived of their right to education, and women and girls affected by natural or other disasters and climate change. The

Committee consistently draws attention to the plight of these women in its mandated and interpretative work.

Rural women

In March 2016, the Committee adopted General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women (art. 14 of the Convention), which recognizes the vital contribution of rural women to food security and rural development and the urgent need to enhance the recognition and protection of their human rights. The General Recommendation provides guidance to States parties on their overarching obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of rural women, as well as on their obligations in relation to specific dimensions of the rights of rural women, such as access to political and public life, education, employment, health, economic and social life, land and natural resources and adequate living conditions. FAO, which together with WFP and IFAD supported the Committee's work on this General Recommendation, will organize a commemorative event to mark the adoption of General Recommendation No. 34 later this year in Rome.

Gender-based violence against women

The elimination of gender-based violence against women is high on CEDAW's agenda. In addition its dialogues with States parties, this issue is also under discussion in the various other procedures of the Committee. In this context, the Committee has since 2015 embarked on a process of updating its General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women. Over the past year, as part of its interpretative work on general recommendations to elucidate the normative content and

scope of specific Convention articles or thematic issues, CEDAW, with support from OHCHR, has made significant progress in updating General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) to provide States parties with guidance on eliminating all forms of gender-based violence against women, in all areas of life, including in the public space cyberspace and as related to such phenomena as migration, violent extremism, as well as violence committed in the private sphere. It also aims to further enhance the States parties' understanding of the social structural relationship between violence against women and gender equality and the links between these phenomena and intersecting forms of discrimination. The updated draft General Recommendation also elaborates on the due diligence obligations of States, clarifying this concept with reference to responsibility for omissions of State actors and acts of non-State actors. The draft update prepared by a working group of the Committee has been posted on the CEDAW website for comments by stakeholders, and more than 80 submissions have been received from UN agencies, NGOs and academia to help inform the final drafting by CEDAW.

Right to education for girls and women

In spite of the fact that education has been recognized as a basic human right since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 41 million girls worldwide continue to be denied access to primary education, resulting in women accounting for some 520 million of the world's 780 million illiterate people. In order to elaborate the obligation of States parties under article 10 of the CEDAW Convention to ensure that the right to education is accessible and affordable for all girls and women, on an equal basis with boys and men, CEDAW is working on a general recommendation on the right to education for girls and women. The draft

General Recommendation goes beyond concerns of capacity and access and also addresses rights within education and the provision of high quality education in safe school environments, free of patriarchal stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes that tolerate sexual abuse and harassment of girls and women. It moreover addresses rights through education to equal employment opportunities, equal pay for work of equal value and women's right to equal participation in political and public life.

Disaster risk reduction in a changing climate

In February 2016, CEDAW held a half-day of general discussion on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate, organized by OHCHR with support from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. A panel of high-level experts in the fields of women's rights, disaster risk reduction and climate change set the stage for the elaboration of a general recommendation on the topic. The General Recommendation will provide guidance to States parties on the measures they should take to comply with their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil women's rights in the context of disaster and climate change. The draft General Recommendation recognizes that disasters and climate change disproportionately affect women and girls, compared to men and boys. Crisis situations compound intersecting forms of discrimination against women and exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities. The Committee will invite States parties and other stakeholders to comment on the draft General Recommendation and will also conduct consultations at the regional level.

Madam Chair,

Treaty body strengthening and cooperation with partners

In an effort to further rationalize its working methods, in line with General Assembly resolution 68/268 on the outcome of the treaty body strengthening process, the Committee continued to enhance the structure of its constructive dialogues with States parties by further strengthening the role of country rapporteurs; decided to continue operating in country task forces; decided to shorten standard paragraphs, use uniform language for the issues of concern and recommendations and limit the number of follow-up paragraphs in its concluding observations, as well as to limit the same to a maximum of 6000 words; and streamlined its procedures for assessing States parties' follow-up reports and for adopting lists of issues prior to reporting under the simplified reporting procedure designed to ease the reporting burden on States. Through such measures and with the additional meeting time granted under General Assembly resolution 68/268, it was possible for the Committee to slightly reduce its backlog of State reports despite a stark increase in the number of reports received during the year.

Before I close, and as my term as CEDAW Chair comes to an end, I would like to thank our partners including the Inter-Agency Group on CEDAW Reporting, comprising UN Women, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and FAO, that provides invaluable country-specific information to CEDAW; OHCHR, UN Women, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, IFAD and UNISDR which have generously supported the Committee's work on General Recommendations; the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWR) Asia-Pacific that brings local NGOs to our sessions

through its Global to Local Programme; and the Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights which regularly hosts thematic events for CEDAW.

Finally, let me thank OHCHR for its support as Secretariat of the Committee. The work of the Committee has continued to grow in 2015-2016, and while the treaty body strengthening outcome provided welcome new resources, our staffing support has not kept pace with the growth in our work nor the expectations placed on the Committee by women across the world.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity and stand ready to answer any questions you may wish to pose.
