

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Information Note on 56th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the Women's Commission (WoC)'s participation at the 56th Session of the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) from 27 February to 1 March 2012 in New York, the United States (US).

BACKGROUND

2. CSW is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council, dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body on women issues. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide. CSW meets annually for a period of 10 working days in around late February to early March.

56th SESSION OF THE CSW

3. The 56th Session of CSW was held from 27 February to 9 March 2012. The priority theme this year is "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges".

4. The China delegation was led by Madam MENG Xiaosi, Vice-Chairperson of the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council of China and the Vice-president of the

All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). Mrs Stella LAU, the WoC Chairperson and Mr Andrew FAN, Assistant Secretary of the Labour and Welfare Bureau attended the first four days of the session as part of the China delegation.

5. At the session, participants shared experience, practices and views in relation to the implementation of the previous commitments in various international conferences and conventions with regard to the priority theme. Member States, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and UN entities participated in the session. A series of parallel events were also organised by Member States and NGOs which provided additional opportunities for information exchange and networking.

6. The tentative agreed conclusions (**Annex A**) will be adopted to call on governments and UN entities to take the following actions in order to ensure the full participation of rural women in the development, implementation and monitoring of macroeconomic policies, national development plans and poverty reduction strategies, and their full access to on and off farm employment opportunities and to productive resources, assets and services –

- a. strengthening gender-responsive policy environments;
- b. leveraging investment for rural development to improve food security and reduce poverty;
- c. expanding rural women's access to resources, assets, employment and services; and
- d. strengthening rural women's participation and leadership in decision-making.

7. At the general discussion on 28 February 2012, the head of the China delegation delivered a statement on progress being made in the promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights and interests. In addition, the WoC Chairperson gave a verbal statement on the Capacity Building Mileage Programme and the Funding Scheme for Women's Development in Hong Kong at one of the panels which reviewed national experiences in implementing the agreed conclusions of CSW 52 on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" on 1 March 2012. Both statements are at **Annex B**.

JOINT US-CHINA PANEL ON RURAL WOMEN AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

8. The US and China jointly held a panel on rural women and sustainable development as one of the side events on 27 February 2012 to explore the possibilities of mutual collaboration in involving more rural women in decision-making and implementation of policies and programmes that are of great importance to food security, economic growth and sustainable development of both states. The panel was co-chaired by Madam MENG and Melanne VERVEER, the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues of the US Administration. Hong Kong representatives attended the panel together with over 300 delegates worldwide.

NETWORKING WITH ACWF AND WOMEN'S NGOs

9. The WoC Chairperson took the opportunity to host a networking dinner with representatives from ACWF and Macao SAR on 29 February 2012. 5 and 2 representatives respectively from ACWF and Macao SAR joined the dinner and exchanged ideas with Hong Kong representatives on various issues of concern to women.

ADVICE SOUGHT

10. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Women's Commission Secretariat
March 2012

Agreed conclusions on financing gender equality and the empowerment of women

1. The following agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission are brought to the attention of the General Assembly as an input into the preparations for and outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008.

Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women*

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which emphasized the need for political commitment to make available human and financial resources for the empowerment of women and that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors to achieve the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which called upon Governments to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all policies and budgetary processes, as appropriate, in order to promote equitable, effective and appropriate resource allocation and establish adequate budgetary allocations to support gender equality and development programmes that enhance women's empowerment.

2. The Commission reaffirms the declaration adopted on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which stressed that challenges and obstacles remained in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and pledged to take further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation.

3. The Commission recalls the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002, which affirms, inter alia, that a holistic approach to the interconnected national, international and systemic challenges of financing for development, sustainable, gender-sensitive, people-centred development, in all parts of the globe is essential.

4. The Commission also recalls the 2005 World Summit and reaffirms that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the International Conference on Population and Development and other relevant United Nations summits and conferences are essential contributions to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in particular, on the

* For the discussion, see chap. II, paras. 61-64.

promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

5. The Commission reaffirms the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and takes note of the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women towards the practical realization of the principle of equality between women and men and between girls and boys.

6. The Commission also reaffirms that States have primary responsibility for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and that gender mainstreaming and national machineries are necessary and play a critical role in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and that, in order for national machineries to be effective, a strong institutional framework with clear mandates, location at the highest possible level, accountability mechanisms, partnership with civil society, a transparent political process, adequate financial and human resources and continued strong political commitment are crucial.

7. The Commission recalls that the Platform for Action recognizes that its implementation requires adequate financial resources committed at the national and international levels and that strengthening national capacities in developing countries in this regard requires striving for the fulfilment of the agreed targets of overall official development assistance from developed countries as soon as possible. The Commission recognizes the importance of the full utilization of all sources of development finance.

8. The Commission also recognizes the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality and, to that end, the need to promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres and to strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender.

9. The Commission reaffirms that gender equality and the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are essential for advancing development, peace and security, and stresses that peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men and to development.

10. The Commission reaffirms that the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, and also reaffirms the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development.

11. The Commission notes the growing body of evidence demonstrating that investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth and that increasing women's economic empowerment is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to the eradication of poverty, and recognizes that adequate resources need to be allocated at all levels, mechanisms and capacities need to be strengthened and gender-responsive policies need to be enhanced to fully utilize the multiplier effect.

12. The Commission reaffirms the goals aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and improving maternal health by 2015, as contained in the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the goal of achieving universal access to reproductive health, as set out at the International Conference on Population and Development, which are critical to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

13. The Commission recalls the recognition in the Beijing Platform for Action of the role of the United Nations, including funds, programmes and specialized agencies, in particular the special roles of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), within their respective mandates, and recognizes the role of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women, as part of the United Nations system, in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and, therefore, in the implementation of the Platform for Action.

14. The Commission also recalls that the Bretton Woods institutions, other financial institutions and the private sector also have an important role to play in ensuring that financing for development promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

15. The Commission recognizes the importance of non-governmental organizations, as well as other civil society actors, in advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

16. The Commission is concerned that insufficient political commitment and budgetary resources pose obstacles to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and continue to undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of both national mechanisms for the advancement of women and women's organizations in advocating for, implementing, supporting and monitoring the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

17. The Commission is concerned about the growing feminization of poverty and reiterates that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today, and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in

particular for developing countries, including the least developed countries. In this regard, the Commission stresses that achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals is a global effort that requires investing sufficient resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

18. The Commission remains concerned about the lingering negative consequences, including for women, of structural adjustment programmes, stemming from inappropriate design and application.

19. The Commission expresses its concern about the under-resourcing in the area of gender equality in the United Nations system, including at UNIFEM and INSTRAW, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women, and stresses the need for more effective tracking of resources allocated to and spent on enhancing gender equality and the empowerment of women across the United Nations system, including on gender mainstreaming.

20. The Commission states that the global commitments for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women since the Fourth World Conference on Women, including through the Monterrey Consensus, have yet to be fully implemented.

21. The Commission urges Governments and/or, as appropriate, the relevant funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, and invites the international financial institutions, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, bearing in mind national priorities, to take the following actions:

(a) Increase the investment in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, taking into account the diversity of needs and circumstances of women and girls, including through mainstreaming a gender perspective in resource allocation and ensuring the necessary human, financial and material resources for specific and targeted activities to ensure gender equality at the local, national, regional and international levels, as well as through enhanced and increased international cooperation;

(b) Ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for activities targeting the elimination of persistent obstacles to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action;

(c) Design and strengthen poverty eradication strategies, with the full and effective participation of women, that reduce the feminization of poverty and enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts of globalization;

(d) Create an environment in which women and girls can fully share the benefits of the opportunities offered by globalization;

(e) Integrate a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting of all national economic policies, strategies and plans, in a coordinated manner across all policy areas, including in national development, social protection and poverty reduction strategies, and involve national mechanisms for the advancement of women and women's organizations in the design and development of such policies, strategies and plans with the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(f) Incorporate gender perspectives into all economic policymaking and increase the participation of women in economic governance structures and processes in order to ensure policy coherence and adequate resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(g) Give priority to assisting the efforts of developing countries, including the least developed countries, to ensure the full and effective participation of women in deciding and implementing development strategies and integrating gender concerns into national programmes, including by providing adequate resources to operational activities for development in support of the efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(h) Remove barriers and allocate adequate resources to enable the full representation and full and equal participation of women in political, social and economic decision-making and in administrative entities, in particular those responsible for economic and public finance policies, in order to guarantee the full and equal participation of women in the formulation of all plans, programmes and policies;

(i) Strengthen the capacities and mandates of institutional frameworks and accountability mechanisms, including of national machineries for the advancement of women, and ensure that they are continuously and adequately resourced and given the authority necessary to carry out their critical role in advocating for, supporting, monitoring and evaluating the integration of gender perspectives in all policy areas and the implementation of gender equality plans, programmes and legislation;

(j) Strengthen a coordinated and institutionalized dialogue between national mechanisms for the advancement of women, relevant governmental agencies and entities, including ministries of finance and planning and their gender focal points, and women's organizations in order to ensure the integration of gender perspectives into all national development policies, plans and budgets;

(k) Cost and adequately resource national policies, programmes, strategies and plans for gender equality and the

empowerment of women, including gender mainstreaming and affirmative action strategies, and ensure that they are incorporated into overall national development strategies and reflected in relevant sector plans and budgets to achieve international and regional commitments for gender equality, including Millennium Development Goal 3;

(l) Allocate resources for capacity development in gender mainstreaming in all ministries, particularly within national women's machineries and finance ministries and, as appropriate, local authorities, in order to ensure that domestic resource mobilization and allocation are carried out in a gender-responsive manner, and reinforce national efforts in capacity-building in social and gender budget policies;

(m) Improve, systematize and fund the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated and gender-related data, including data disaggregated by age and other factors and data on women's contribution to the care economy, and develop necessary input, output and outcome indicators at all levels to measure progress in financing gender equality and the empowerment of women, in particular in introducing and implementing gender-responsive approaches to public finance;

(n) Undertake and disseminate gender analysis of policies and programmes related to macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment, external debt problems, taxation, investments, employment, markets and all relevant sectors of the economy and support and facilitate research in those areas, with a view to achieving the objectives of the Platform for Action and with respect to their impact on poverty, on inequality and particularly on women, as well as to assess their impact on family well-being and conditions and adjust them, as appropriate, to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services;

(o) Carry out gender-sensitive analysis of revenues and expenditures in all policy areas and take into account the review and evaluation results in budget planning, allocation and revenue-raising in order to enhance the contribution of Government expenditures to accelerating the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;

(p) Develop and implement, where appropriate, methodologies and tools, including national indicators, for gender-responsive planning and budgeting in order to systematically incorporate gender perspectives into budgetary policies at all levels, with a view to promoting gender equality in all policy areas;

(q) Urge developed countries that have not yet done so, in accordance with their commitments, to make concrete efforts towards meeting the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national product to least developed countries, and encourage developing

countries to build on the progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help meet development goals and targets and, inter alia, to assist them in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(r) Ensure the effective and equitable participation of developing countries in the formulation of financial standards and codes, with a view to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(s) Strengthen the focus and impact of development assistance, specifically targeting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, in line with national development priorities, through both gender mainstreaming and funding of targeted activities and enhanced dialogue on those issues between donors and developing countries, and strengthen mechanisms to effectively measure resources allocated to incorporating gender perspectives in all sectors and thematic areas of development assistance;

(t) Encourage the integration of gender perspectives in aid modalities and efforts to enhance aid delivery mechanisms;

(u) Identify and implement development-oriented and durable solutions that integrate a gender perspective into the external debt and debt-servicing problems of developing countries, including least developed countries, inter alia, through debt relief, including the option of debt cancellation under official development assistance, in order to help them to finance programmes and projects targeted at development, including the advancement of women;

(v) Encourage international financial institutions to continue to take gender perspectives into account in the design of loans, grants, projects, programmes and strategies;

(w) Identify and address the differential impact of trade policies on women and men and incorporate gender perspectives in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of trade policies, develop strategies to expand trade opportunities for women producers and facilitate the active participation of women in national, regional and international trade decision-making structures and processes;

(x) Undertake gender-sensitive assessments of national labour laws, policies and programmes and establish gender-sensitive policies and guidelines for employment practices, including those of transnational corporations, building on appropriate multilateral instruments, including the conventions of the International Labour Organization;

(y) Allocate adequate resources for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace, including unequal access to labour market participation and wage inequalities, as well as reconciliation of work and private life for both women and men;

(z) Establish and fund active labour market policies devoted to the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including the full participation of women in all international and national development and poverty eradication strategies, the creation of more and better jobs for women, both urban and rural, and their inclusion in social protection and social dialogue;

(aa) Take measures to develop, finance, implement, monitor and evaluate gender-responsive policies and programmes aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship and private initiative, including through microfinance, microcredit and cooperatives, and assist women-owned businesses in participating in and benefiting from, inter alia, international trade, technological innovation and transfer, investment and knowledge and skills training;

(bb) Fully maximize the role of and ensure access to microfinance tools, including microcredit for poverty eradication, employment generation and, especially, for the empowerment of women, encourage the strengthening of existing and emerging microcredit institutions and their capacities, including through the support of international financial institutions, and ensure that best practices are widely disseminated;

(cc) Undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies;

(dd) Take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women and increase their access to and control over bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, giving special attention to poor, uneducated women; support women's access to legal assistance; encourage the financial sector to mainstream gender perspectives in its policies and programmes; ensure women's full and equal access to training and productive resources and social protection; and facilitate equal access of women, particularly women in developing and least developed countries, to markets at all levels;

(ee) Strengthen education, health, and social services and effectively utilize resources to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and ensure women's and girls' rights to education at all levels and the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as quality, affordable and universally accessible health care and services, in particular primary health care;

(ff) Address the overall expansion and feminization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, taking into account that women and girls bear a disproportionate share of the burden imposed by the HIV/AIDS crisis, that they are more easily infected, that they

play a key role in care and that they have become more vulnerable to violence, stigma and discrimination, poverty and marginalization from their families and communities as a result of the HIV/AIDS crisis, and, in that regard, significantly scale up efforts towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010 and ensure that those efforts integrate and promote gender equality;

(gg) Ensure adequate financing for women's full, equal and effective participation at all levels in conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace negotiations and peacebuilding, including adequate national and international funding to ensure proper access to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and other relevant programmes for women and girls;

(hh) Reduce excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production and acquisition, taking into consideration national security requirements, in order to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, including for gender equality and the advancement of women;

(ii) Ensure that adequate resources are allocated for activities targeting persistent serious obstacles to the advancement of women in situations of armed conflict and in conflicts of other types, wars of aggression, foreign occupation, colonial or other alien domination as well as terrorism;

(jj) Integrate a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of national environmental policies, strengthen mechanisms and provide adequate resources to ensure women's full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels on environmental issues, in particular on strategies related to the impact of climate change on the lives of women and girls;

(kk) Strengthen coordination, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in the United Nations system for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including through more effective mainstreaming in all aspects and enhancing its capacity to effectively assist States, at their request, in implementing their programmes on gender equality and the empowerment of women and, to that end, make adequate and reliable human and financial resources available;

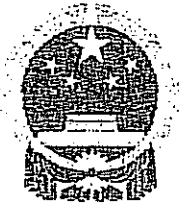
(ll) Create and enhance a supportive environment for the mobilization of resources by non-governmental organizations, in particular women's organizations and networks, to enable them to increase their effectiveness and to contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women, including through assisting in the implementation of the Platform for Action and participating in policy processes and programme delivery;

(mm) Provide assistance to States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women, upon their request, to support the implementation of the obligations of States parties under the Convention.

22. The Commission invites the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to continue to give, while exercising its mandated functions, due consideration to financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women in its work.

23. The Commission requests Member States, with a view to strengthening financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, to integrate gender perspectives in the preparations for and outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Qatar in 2008.



PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

350 EAST 35TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016
<http://www.china-un.org>

**Statement by H. E. Ms. MENG Xiaosi, Head of the Chinese
Delegation to 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of
Women, Vice-Chairperson of the National Working Committee on
Women and Children under the State Council of China**
(28 February, 2012)

Madam Chair,
Dear Friends,

The Chinese delegation associates itself with the statement made by Algeria on behalf of G77 and China and wishes this session success.

Over the years, the international community has worked actively to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and achieved encouraging results. However, arduous tasks and challenges still remain.

In order to promote women's development and gender equality, the Chinese government has consistently promoted gender equality as a basic national policy. The final review of the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) showed that 23 out of 24 major targets in the program have been realized on schedule. In poverty eradication, for instance, in 592 counties where poverty eradication has been set as a priority, poverty rate among women dropped from 24.2% in 2002 to 12% in 2009. In education, we have largely eliminated the gender difference in primary and middle school enrollment and further narrowed the gap in high schools and universities. In health care, the rate of in-hospital delivery increased to 97.8% in 2010 from 72.9% in 2000. In-hospital delivery for rural women reached 96.7%, a 48.3% increase over 2000. The Chinese government has also developed and issued a new program on women's development in China for the next decade, which contains 57 major targets and 88 policy measures in 7 areas (namely health, education, economy, political participation, social security, environment and law). This program is aimed at responding to emerging situations and problems concerning women's survival and development, with a special focus on women's development in extremely poor and minority regions.

Madam Chair,

The Chinese delegation appreciates that the Commission has identified "rural women" as the priority theme for this year. Everywhere in the world, rural women are the driving force for agricultural production, food security and rural development. They contribute greatly to their countries, societies and families. It is therefore the common responsibility of all countries and the international community to safeguard the welfare of rural women and promote their legitimate rights, interests and development.

Over the recent years, the Chinese government has adopted many effective measures to advance the development of rural women. Financial support to rural and urban women is provided through micro credit to help them start their own business. All interests on such loans are paid in full by the government. From 2009 to the end of 2011, a total amount of 55.6 billion RMB had been provided in loans to women, with 2.3 billion RMB in interests subsidized by the government. This has directly helped more than 1.3 million rural and urban women with their businesses, which in turn created job opportunities for more than 4 million women. In order to improve the health of rural women, the Chinese government has implemented programs that offer subsidies to rural women for in-hospital delivery, regular checkup and treatment for cervical cancer and breast cancer, and prenatal and post-natal folic acid supplement.

Madam Chair,

The United Nations has already adopted a series of documents on women, including rural women. What we need now is action. To this end, the Chinese delegation calls on the international community to:

1. demonstrate stronger political will, and continue to advance gender mainstreaming, giving full consideration to women's needs and interests particularly in responses to the financial and economic crisis, disaster relief and reduction, and environmental protection; and making sure that women enjoy equality with men as they participate in, contribute to and benefit from national growth and social development.

2. appreciate and acknowledge the role and contribution of rural women in development, with particular attention to difficulties and challenges faced by rural women in developing countries so as to provide effective support to their development and empowerment.

Thank you.

Speech for WoC Chairperson at Panel 3

The 56th Session of UN CSW, New York

1st March 2012

Review theme:

Evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions of CSW 52 on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women".

Focus:

National experiences in implementing the agreed conclusions of CSW 52

Distinguished delegates,

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has been making great efforts in promoting the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong. In implementing the agreed conclusions of the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's Commission, a central mechanism which facilitates the Government to give due consideration to issues of concern to women, has taken forward two major initiatives that aim to empower women in a sustainable manner. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you Hong Kong's experience.

Capacity Building Mileage Programme

2. With assistance from the HKSAR Government, the Women's Commission has been administering the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) since 2004. CBMP is a flexible learning programme tailored to the needs and interests of women, with operational support from the Open University of Hong Kong, Commercial Radio, and around 70 collaborating non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It is delivered through radio broadcasting and courses offered face-to-face and on the internet, supplemented by optional learning activities. The courses provided include building harmonious families, parenting, family health, women leadership, management of personal finance and other practical issues in daily life.

3. Since its launch, CBMP has effectively encouraged women of different backgrounds and education levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development through the large network of audience it reached. Feedback from the students indicated that they benefited from CBMP in terms of increased interests in learning, enhanced confidence and knowledge in resolving problems in daily life, and sharpened communication skills which help improve their interpersonal relationships in the family and employment contexts.

4. Funding-wise, the HKSAR Government has actively bolstered up the investment in the empowerment of women. With CBMP's proven success in encouraging women's life-long learning, the Government has throughout the years allocated sufficient funding to expand CBMP and a two-tier bursary scheme has been set up to provide fee remissions to those students with financial difficulties. More encouragingly, starting from 2012-13, the Government will provide an annual funding of around \$8 million to turn CBMP into a recurrent project. By taking into account the diversity of needs and circumstances of women in Hong Kong, part of the funding will be allocated to support our collaborating NGOs in launching courses in English and Putonghua with a view to facilitating women of ethnic minority and new arrival from the Mainland to join CBMP.

Funding Scheme for Women's Development

5. Apart from CBMP which provides an array of institutionalised learning pathways for women, the Women's Commission launched a pilot funding scheme for women's development in collaboration with the HKSAR Government last year. Women's leadership is one of the four priority areas as advocated in the San Francisco Declaration that calls for primary attention from the APEC Member Economies. To echo this important document and unleash women's capacities and potentials, "Women's Leadership Training" was adopted as the theme of the pilot funding scheme and women's groups were provided with funds to organise programmes and activities that were able to develop and enhance the leadership skills of women, as well as to encourage and facilitate women to become leaders in the local

communities.

6. Reassuringly, the pilot funding scheme helped create and enhance a supportive environment for the mobilisation of resources by NGOs, enabling them to contribute to the empowerment of women and ultimately realisation of women's due status and potentials. By following up with this worthy cause, it is expected the funding scheme will be further developed to adequately address the needs and concerns of women in Hong Kong.

Conclusion

7. All in all, the HKSAR is committed to empowering women through different channels.

8. I hope that all of us here will have a good sharing of the good practices and strategies in further enhancing the interests and well-being of all women and girls across different places today, and I wish this year's CSW session a big success. Thank you.