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Statement of Dr. Farkhonda Hassan

Chair of ECA's Committee on Women and Development

Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of my colleagues, the members of the Committee on Women and Development, I do welcome every single participant in today's meeting. Special thanks go to the honourable ministers, whose attendance clearly indicates their commitment and support.

The present meeting gains special importance since it will deliberate and discuss a considerable number of issues related to gender equality that were defined over the post-Beijing Decade.

I would like to emphasize here our deep appreciation and thanks to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD) for the invaluable efforts undertaken to efficiently coordinate and convene all the activities at the continent level. Within the framework of Africa's contribution to the context of the Global Decade Review of the Beijing Platform For Action and to the regional context of the Dakar Platform for Action, the Economic Commission for Africa launched a series of sub-regional meetings at experts' level to review progress achieved and highlight constraints and challenges. ECA's initiative to set up the African Development Forum (ADF) is indeed appreciated. The African Development Forum is designed as a process of initiating an African driven development agenda. It started a process that proved to be successful in encouraging dialogue, building consensus and mobilizing partnerships on emerging issues closely related to the African context.

The development of the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) to facilitate an effective monitoring mechanism on gender equality and gender mainstreaming is also another activity that is definitely worth-highlighting and commending. The idea of having the ADF meeting held in parallel with the 7th African Regional Conference on Women is a laudable initiative that allows for in-depth dialogue by all stakeholders.

The support of ECA and the ACGD to the recommendation of the Committee on Women and Development-in response to the concerns of the non governmental African community- by facilitating NGOs participation and providing them with a forum during these meetings, adds to their many best practices and success stories.

The Committee on Women in Development (CWD), being one of the eight subsidiary organs of ECA, is mandated to follow up on the findings and recommendations of the various sub-regional meetings and to review periodically the progress of the implementation of both the Global and Regional Platforms for Action by member- countries, inter- governmental institutions and non governmental organizations, through convening regularly, under the technical coordination of African Centre for Gender

The 12 Critical Areas

- The persistent burden of poverty
- Unequal access to education
- Unequal access to healthcare
- Violence
- Armed conflicts
- Inequality in economic structures
- Inequality in the sharing of power
- Insufficient mechanisms
- Human rights violation
- Stereotyping in the media
- Environment
- The girl-child

and Development, and in collaboration with other agencies within the UN system. The Committee on Women and Development (CWD) is also to prepare for the 7th African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing +10), which will conclude Africa's assessment of achievements, challenges and obstacles in the Region, and it will put forward its recommendations to ECA's Council of Ministers.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are all aware that despite achievements and progress made, African women face major challenges and obstacles that are still pending. The Poverty Reduction Strategies did not necessarily take into account the gender-gap and related issues. African women are still denied access to productive and critical resources, such as education, employment, trade, industry and decision- making.

Our activities for the present meeting are structured around 12 themes. A close look at the themes indicates that these are meant to serve as reference points during the upcoming review of the Post-Beijing Decade at the Ministerial Meeting. It is also clear that these themes have moved away from aspirations and goals into tools and mechanisms; for example, the discussion of gender disaggregated data, gender mainstreaming and gender responsiveness of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) are signaling our search for effective implementation.

The objective now is not to renegotiate our dreams but to emphasize the accountability of all actors through detailed discussions of goals, targets, achievements and failures, within a consolidated African perspective. We are no longer seeking promises but are demanding action.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I cannot conclude without extending our deep appreciation and thanks to the Government and people of Ethiopia for their hospitality and warm welcome, and to thank again the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Centre for Gender and Development for their unfailing and continuous support.

I wish you all fruitful and productive meetings and a very happy stay in his lovely city, Addis Ababa.

Thank you