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**Informal meeting of the plenary
on the United Nations System-wide Coherence
Gender**

Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Sanja Štiglic
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on behalf of the European Union

New York, 16 May 2008

Distinguished Co-chairs,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

The EU strongly welcomes that the Co-chairs, based upon the indication of various Member States, have included the issue of gender as one of the topics being addressed during the informal consultations. At the same time, we would like to reiterate our support to the bottom-up approach, which offers the United Nations and its Member States the opportunity to examine and focus on the situation on the ground with the aim to better deliver as one in the area of gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment, as well as to identify the main gaps in implementation and to address them at the level of Headquarters. Therefore, keeping in mind the known EU position on gender equality, we would in this statement like to focus on the situation at the country level.

In UN's policies and programmes, gender mainstreaming, promoting gender equality and women's rights, and the empowerment of women, including the elimination of violence against women, are core policy objectives and essential parts of the UN mandate. The United Nations has a central role in assisting its members to strengthen gender equality, including through country-owned and demand driven gender specific programs at the country level.

Reports from the ground show that separate Task Forces have been established to ensure mainstreaming of gender by the UNDAF Theme Groups. In some countries, the UN has also formulated a Joint Programme on Gender Equality to provide a coordinated and multi-sectoral approach in order to support capacity development at national level to implement the national gender equality laws in an effective way. The EU would be interested in listening to the experience and hearing the views of pilot countries and of those of several other countries, which are currently exploring mechanisms to better deliver as one in the area of gender, and would like to ask them to share their experiences and to point out the main gaps in the implementation of gender-related issue in the field.

The UN system has made steady progress in the fields of policy guidance on gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women. The 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) in its resolution reiterated its call upon the organizations of the United Nations development system to mainstream a gender perspective and to pursue gender equality and the empowerment of women in their country and sector-wide programmes, and planning instruments. It is clear that improving gender equality responds to the implementation of MDG3, but also goes beyond it and reduces poverty, stimulates growth and provides channels to attaining Internationally Agreed Development Goals. Gender equality

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

is not only important for development; it is a cross-cutting issue in all main areas of work of the UN including human rights peace and security, development, environment and humanitarian assistance.

The TCPR renewed the emphasis of the UN's responsibility to support the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment on the ground, and as well at the Headquarters' level. It acknowledged the adoption by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination of the system-wide policy on gender equality and empowerment of women. In that respect the EU believes the TCPR represents significant progress and urges the UN System to implement its decisions, agreed by Member States.

There is no doubt that the UN development-related bodies carry a unique wealth of expertise and knowledge in all fields. It is therefore not surprising that a large number of activities are being carried out on the ground. However, it has to be ensured that there is no overlap in the carrying-out of the respective in the mandates of the UN bodies, ensuring a better common functioning.

As already indicated in many statements by various UN Member States, especially during the debate on Governance on 17 April, there seems to be a growing agreement that the work of the UN in the area of gender continues to be fragmented, under-funded and frequently characterised by lack of coordination and accountability. At the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is the intergovernmental body of the United Nations system that is specifically charged with promoting gender equality and the status of women, numerous Member States and also nongovernmental organizations strongly supported the strengthening of the United Nations' efforts - especially at the national and local level - to promote gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women.

Taking all mentioned in consideration, the EU believes that effective delivery on gender equality and the empowerment of women requires greater coherence, stronger accountability and leadership. Effective delivery also requires adequate, stable and predictable funding. The United Nations system needs to dedicate the necessary resources and implement them effectively, particularly at country level. It must be placed in a position to do so. This question needs to be addressed. To move forward on this important issue, we encourage the Secretary General to present the Member States with his views on how the UN can better deliver in the field of gender.

Our joint objective should be to strengthen the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the UN system in the area of gender equality, women's rights and the empowerments of women both at the country level and at the policy and programming level.

Thank you.