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Introduction

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*Introductory Remarks on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary Commemoration of the
UNIFEM-Managed UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
16 February 2007, ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters*

Thank you, Shashi.

Welcome Madame Deputy Secretary-General,
Minister Gayflor,
Excellencies, Ambassadors, Distinguished guests

What a difference a decade has made. Ten years of innovation, experience and activism have shown that ending violence against women is possible. It is a pandemic that can be stopped. It is a problem that has a solution.

For over two decades, women have struggled to break through the shame and silence that surrounds this violence to put it on every national and global agenda. Half a million women signed a petition to submit to the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, demanding that violence against women be recognized as a violation of women's human rights. Two years later, at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, women demanded State accountability for actions to prevent and eliminate violence against women. Now, in an important recognition of this accountability, the General Assembly has adopted a Resolution to intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

UNIFEM has supported all of these initiatives, and welcomed the establishment by the General Assembly of the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women as a system-wide funding mechanism to drive this work forward. The Trust Fund enables UN partners and donors to come together to invest in practical steps to stop the violence that has fractured communities, devastated lives, and robbed the gifts and potential of millions of women and girls.

Trust Fund grantees address the multiple forms of violence that women experience, including home based violence, by families and partners; violence inflicted through harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation; violence in situations of conflict and crisis; and violence related to trafficking and HIV/AIDS. Grantees focus on ensuring prevention and protection, strengthening systems of criminal justice, health care and social support to respond to women survivors and provide needed services.

Since its establishment, the Trust Fund has granted over US \$13 million to 226 initiatives in over 100 countries. Last year the total awarded was US \$3.5 million — nearly twice that in 2005 and four times that in 2004. Grants totalling US \$2.8 million were awarded to 28 initiatives in 20 countries, all focused on ensuring that policies and laws to address violence against women are implemented. A second round of grants amounting to \$0.7 million will be awarded for work on the link between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS.

We have learned from the work of the Trust Fund that no single intervention will end violence against women. This requires multiple strategies working across sectors, including:

- 1 – revising legal and policy frameworks to strengthen women's human rights;
- 2 – strengthening institutional accountability; and building women's agency to access justice;
- 3 – changing attitudes through advocacy campaigns and partnerships with men and youth;
- 4 – working with community leaders to build safe neighbourhoods and communities of support;

- 5 – linking end-violence activists with those working to end poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS;
- 6 – strengthening social support services; and
- 7 – supporting research and data to empower women’s rights activists to advocate for needed change.

Together these strategies can significantly reduce violence and its consequences. For them to succeed in addressing violence at its roots, however, violence against women must be seen for what it is — a gross violation of women’s human rights, and totally unacceptable, in all contexts and situations. For them to succeed, we need strong leadership and investment.

In the last decade, UNIFEM has spearheaded a set of regional and global advocacy campaigns, working with media, governments and women’s groups to change laws, develop national action plans and scale up community-based interventions. Now we must take this struggle to the next stage — to institutionalize the strategic, practical actions that can bring about change, and incorporate them into national development planning, security sector reform, and state accountability mechanisms. Only when measures to address violence against women are an integral part of national strategies for development will violence against women become a rare occurrence instead of a global pandemic. Only then will women be able to live free of violence because it is our right.

It is now my great pleasure to welcome Deputy Secretary-General Migiro, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, United Republic of Tanzania. Before that, she was Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children, during which time UNIFEM had the pleasure of working with her to promote women’s empowerment in Tanzania and the region. She is a legal scholar and widely respected leader who has been a strong champion of gender equality and development. We are very pleased to have you among the leadership of our Organization at this critical time.

Welcome, Madame Deputy Secretary-General.