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## **Commemorative Roundtable**

*Convention on the Elimination of All Form of  
Discrimination against Women:  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Adoption by  
UN General Assembly*

**Statement on behalf of  
United Nations entities  
by**

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Executive Director  
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**New York, 13 October 2004**

Distinguished panelists and colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address this commemorative round table on behalf of many parts of the UN system. Today I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organization, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNAIDS, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNIFEM, and the World Health Organization.

The UN family always strives to speak with one voice, and today we are actually doing it.

There is no better occasion for unity than the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

CEDAW spells out the universal human rights of women, including the rights to political participation, equality before the law, equality in marriage and family life, in the world of work, in education and health, and cultural life. In a unique provision, States are also required to ensure that rural women are able to enjoy their rights, including the rights to benefit from development and enjoy equality in inheritance and land ownership, and States are called on to consider temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between women and men to eliminate discrimination, and

against women, which the Committee has worked so hard to ensure is addressed as a human rights issue. The Committee has also addressed the issues of gender equality in the world of work, HIV/AIDS, trafficking and smuggling, as well as the situation of refugee, asylum seeking and other displaced women and girls.

The Convention also provided the basis for provisions in many important global agreements. Important here are the agreements, particularly on women's reproductive and sexual health rights, reached ten years ago in Cairo at the International Conference on Population and Development, and in 1995 in Beijing at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Lawyers and judges have relied on the Convention in their quest for justice for women. Parliaments, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and others have been inspired by the Convention as they have pursued their human rights work. And women and girls around the world have been empowered to claim their rights because the Convention has spelt out their terms.

During the 25 years since its adoption, the Convention has guided the work of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in many ways. UN entities around the world have supported the ratification of CEDAW, and its Optional Protocol, as well as the work of the Committee. They have also urged its domestication—or the reflection of its provisions into national law.

The UN system has worked, and continues to work, to build awareness and capacity at the local level to bring the words of CEDAW to life. Support is provided to women's and girls' rights organizations,

