Thank you Mr. President,

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Malawi, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, The United Kingdom and my own country, Canada.

We would like to congratulate the Executive Director of UNWomen, staff and management, the Secretariat, the Bureau, and all the interpreters, for a successful second regular session of the Executive Board 2012.

This Board took place exceptionally late in the calendar year of Board sessions, which created challenges and constraints for many delegations, but we are pleased with the constructive spirit of the discussions, and we believe that the session has benefitted from a good preparatory process, regular interaction of the key items on the agenda, as well as quality exchanges between the Entity and Board members. We really appreciated efforts to arrange interesting side meetings. Moving forward, we look forward to an Executive Board schedule that align to the intergovernmental calendar and processes.

We would like to congratulate you, Madame Bachelet, for your leadership on the “Paper smart” initiative and for this first “Papersmart” session of the UNWomen Board. We appreciate this approach, which allows us to minimize the costs of documentation while promoting environmentally-friendly practices. Without this initiative, this room would have been full of piles of wasted or unused paper. The situation has greatly improved and we would also like to congratulate the Office of the Secretariat of the Executive Board, Mr Jean-Luc Bories and his team, for the hard work undertaken to get here. Many thanks also to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for their valuable collaboration in this endeavor, and for the logistical and technical support. Without any hesitation, we can say: it is a positive initiative that significantly reduces administrative costs, and enables real-time participation, while greening UN activities. We would
therefore like to encourage UNWomen to share the fruits of this experience and the lessons learned with other funds and programs, and, as much as possible, to apply it to other activities and functions.

Mr. President,

We take cost efficiency and effectiveness very seriously as they are an important part of the governance responsibilities of this Board. They also have a direct bearing on results.

We are very much aware of the impact of last year’s proposal by the Secretary-General to transfer the cost of official meetings to individual Funds and Programs. This proposal and the decision adopted by the General Assembly related to the budget for conference services, impose an additional burden on institutional budgets, and put pressure on the ratio between administrative and programming expenditures. We understand the urgency to contain conference costs effectively, and appreciate the diligent way in which UNWomen is tackling this issue, including through this “paper smart initiative”, while respecting the rules of the Executive Board relating to official languages and the availability of translated documents in a timely manner.

Mr President,

As member states are increasingly demanding effectiveness, it is important for UNWomen to demonstrate that the Entity is exercising good stewardship of public funds, particularly during hard economic times. In this regard, we would like to encourage UNWomen, together with the other UN organizations, Departments and Offices to work together, to share ideas, and to explore other possible ways to improve the efficiency of Executive Boards. We recognize the substantial potential for savings that was realized through the “paper-smart” initiative, and that could be realized by further improving the planning, scheduling, sequencing, management, and conduct of meetings, including informal meetings and other practices and working methods. We would also urge the UN Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) to work in the most transparent and collaborative manner with UNWomen, as with all other Funds and Programs, to come up with the most cost-effective alternatives. The same message was delivered to UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS earlier this year.

As we continue to work together, we encourage UNWomen to keep in mind that the search for efficiency needs to be balanced with the recognition that the Executive Board is a vital means to allow Member States oversight of the activities of UNWomen. As we move into a new year, we stand ready to engage further, and constructively with UNWomen.
Thank you.