Thank you Mr. President. I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of Belgium, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and my own country, Canada.

Let me begin by thanking UN Women for the report on audit and investigation, the report of the Audit Advisory Committee, and the management responses.

A strong and independent audit function is a crucial instrument to ensure accountability and to provide feedback for improving performance. We are therefore pleased to see that the staffing and funding levels of the audit function of UN Women have increased. It is our understanding that the numbers of offices that will be audited each year is also expected to increase, and we would be grateful for confirmation of this.

With respect to the management responses to the two reports, we appreciate the systematic way in which issues identified in the report are being addressed. We recognize the strong commitment shown in addressing audit and investigation issues, while strengthening the oversight systems of the institution, and decentralizing its activities at the same time. Decentralization with delegation of authority and clear accountability lines will strengthen field presence through professionalization of operations and accountability systems. We look forward to continued information on the implementation of the regional architecture and its performance.

We encourage UN-Women to continue to strengthen its internal audit function capacity in order to ensure that it has sufficient coverage to carry out its current and future risk-based audit plans. We also support the Audit Advisory Committee’s suggestion that UN-Women closely monitor whether value-for-money is obtained through outsourcing internal auditing.

With regard to risk management, we support UN-Women in developing a formal risk management framework, and believe it to be essential to ensure that the organization is able to deliver on its mandate and achieve its strategic outcomes. A framework is important not only to ensure identification and mitigation of risks. Risk management must be integrated into all business practices with clear accountabilities. We welcome information on the status of the new enterprise risk management process which was scheduled to begin in March 2014.
Our delegations believe that follow-up on audit recommendations is critical for organizational effectiveness. In this regard, we find that the report provides insufficient information with regard to, for example, how long the recommendations have been outstanding, and to what risks these expose UN-Women. We would welcome a more fulsome report on follow-up on audit recommendations in future reports.

Mr. President, our delegations support and applaud the initiative of disclosing the internal audit reports, as this shows UN-Women’s commitment to transparency and accountability. We note the recommendation from the Report of the Audit Advisory Committee on the development and implementation of a communications strategy to ensure that audit results, recommendations, and management actions are sufficiently accessible. We would welcome an update from UN-Women on the development of such a strategy.

We would also expect UN-Women to present to the Executive Board the annual report of the Board of Auditors in full in future sessions.

We appreciate the information on investigation cases that were closed. We would appreciate if UN Women could systematically provide data on allegations, investigations and outcomes to enable Board members to understand trends in ethical behaviour within the organisation.

To conclude, we are pleased with the quality and rigour of this critical oversight function and encourage UN Women to continue to improve the implementation of recommendations, in particular, high priority recommendations in areas such as programme management, advances to implementing partners, procurement and resource mobilisation, where recurring issues have been identified.

Thank you.