Statement of Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women
Introduction of Agenda item 28 on the advancement of women to the Third
Committee of the General Assembly

Chair of the Third Committee H. E. Mr. Stephan Tafrov Bulgaria,
Distinguished Delegates,
UN Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you here today. As I see it, we have one goal and that is to
realize the promise of the UN Charter, to realize the promise of the equal rights of men
and women.

We have reached a time when more parents want the same opportunities for their
daughters and their sons.

We have reached a time when more people are saying enough is enough. Violence
against women and girls must end.

At the same time, we see threats to women’s rights and the lives of women and girls.

Here in the United Nations, we come together guided by universal values, in the belief
that all human beings are born equal in inherent worth, dignity and rights.

All people should be able to reach their potential.

We look forward to the day when our grandchildren will say, I can’t believe that women
and girls used to face such high levels of violence and discrimination.

By taking action together for women’s rights, women’s empowerment and gender
equality, we can make the 21st century the century of women.

We meet today on the International Day of the Girl Child, and our theme this year is
innovating for girls’ education.
Decent Work for Domestic Workers, which just entered into force last month, and to take forward bilateral and multilateral arrangements to protect the rights of women migrant workers.

It is time to ensure that legislative provisions and judicial processes are in place to protect the rights of women migrant workers and guarantee their access to justice.

As we approach the International Day of Rural Women, I am pleased to introduce the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/68/179).

Rural women account for a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force, and are key players in food production and the well-being of their families and communities. Yet they are prevented from fully participating in socio-economic and political life, accessing land and productive resources, and realizing their potential. And this harms all of us.

So the time is now to act on legal reforms so that women, including widows, can own the land they work.

Women farmers must be able to access financial services, water and sanitation, markets and innovative technologies.

We need to promote full employment, decent work and social protection for rural women, both in agriculture and other areas.

We must create decent employment opportunities that provide rural women with a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection, and support vocational education and training.

And we must reduce the unpaid work burden of rural women by supporting improved access to infrastructure, public services such as childcare, and time and labour-saving technologies such as clean energy and clean cookstoves.

We know that women's full and equal participation in leadership and decision-making is critical for the realization of all their rights.

This brings me to the third report before the Committee today, on women's political participation (A/68/184). It provides the most current update on the situation of women in political life globally.
Governments and all stakeholders should use national and regional preparations for the Beijing +20 process to identify where the gaps are and why, and take prioritized action to close those gaps, within specific timelines.

Beijing + 20 is a call for accelerated implementation of commitments made nearly 20 years ago. The time for action is now.

The Beijing+20 process is also an opportunity to strengthen gender mainstreaming in all sectors and in all areas of development, including in the elaboration of the post-2015 development framework.

We need to put the rights of women and girls at the center of strategies to fight poverty and to advance peace and security and sustainable development.

Gender equality and women's empowerment should be reflected as a stand-alone goal and integrated through targets and indicators into all goals of any new development framework.

I pay tribute to the Member States for having the foresight to create UN-Women. I am proud to lead this organization at this critical time. UN-Women will seize the Beijing+20, the post-2015 and all other opportunities, to be a leading voice and advocate for gender equality, and to make a lasting difference for women and girls everywhere.

Together we can make the 21st century the century of women with a vision of equality and dignity for all.

I thank you.