Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on your election as the chairman of the Third Committee of the 68th Session of the General Assembly. I want to assure you and your bureau of the cooperation and support of the Lithuanian delegation. We are convinced that, under your leadership, this session will be a full success.

As a member of the European Union, Lithuania fully subscribes to and actively supports the EU policies in the domain of advancement of women, protection and promotion of women’s rights. Lithuania associates itself with the statement made by a representative of the European Union.

Lithuania attaches great importance to full and effective implementation of women’s rights, referring, first of all to The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action.

We highly appreciate the activities of UN Women and congratulate Madame PhumzileMlambo-Ngcuka on her recent appointment and her passion in moving forward the agenda of women’s rights and empowerment. Only women free from violence and fear of violence can fully contribute to developing modern societies.

I am glad to mention, that in 2012 Lithuanian representative became a CEDAW member for the first time. Lithuania actively participates in the international initiatives and deliberations concerning the UN Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 Development Agenda, where within the general human rights context great importance is attached to women’s rights as well as equal opportunities of men and women.
In this contest the international and regional cooperation is very important. I am glad to mention, that the EU body - **European Institute for Gender Equality** - was established in Lithuania and it significantly contributes to European exchange of the best practices combating violence against women. It also provides comparable data, analysing domestic violence and suggesting relevant solutions.

Inevitably, a key issue in the context of women’s empowerment and full realisation of their human rights is combatting violence against women.

My country applies a holistic approach towards the issue of violence against women. We have improved legal framework by adopting the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence which took effect in 2011. The obligation to mainstream gender in all policy areas is implemented by a continuous National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men which started in 2003. Current Programme covers the period of 2010-2014 Seeking to eliminate gender inequalities the Programme sets comprehensive objectives in the following areas: employment, science and education, health-care, environmental protection, national defence, decision-making, EU and international cooperation and developing mechanisms and methods to implement equal opportunities for women and men.

Currently we are preparing the draft of National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Provision of Assistance to Victims for 2014-2020 which will identify new goals, implementation tools, strengthen cooperation and concerted efforts taken by various actors in eliminating violence.

Legislation alone, however good, is not sufficient to change status quo. We have undertaken a series of practical actions, including the creation of specialized assistance centres offering integrated assistance services to the victims, including psychological, medical and legal help. Last year such specialised centres started to operate in all municipalities of Lithuania. Temporary shelters for violence victims and their children have proven highly important, and need to be further expanded. Courses on human rights for school children were expanded to include the subject of domestic violence/violence against women. Basic information including hotline number for victims of domestic violence was also printed on school notebooks, thus bringing it into the homes. Educating children to be aware of the issue and to react was an important factor in expanding discussion on domestic violence and thus causing greater popular engagement on the issue.
Anti-violence publicity campaigns have been used, including with the help of local celebrities and sports stars, in order to break the silence on the matter. What turned out to be very useful in breaking the silence was some well known public figures and celebrities sharing their personal stories of enduring domestic violence- in order to overcome the sense of shame or stigma that such violence often imposes on the victims.

Women’s economic independence, employment and entrepreneurship play a significant role in tackling violence. Where women have economic and financial choices, leaving an abusive relationship is considerably easier. We therefore have invested consistently in developing women’s entrepreneurial skills, at home and also through our development cooperation programmes elsewhere.

In 2012 the women’s unemployment rate in Lithuania was smaller than men’s: 11.5 % women and 15.1 % men. Women’s employment rate in 2012 was almost equal to men’s: 61.9 % women, 62.5 % men. At the same time women are better educated than men in Lithuania: 63.5 % of graduates with a bachelor’s degree and 67.1 % with a master’s degree are women, while men respectively – 36.5 % bachelor’s and 32.9 % master’s degree.

Local NGOs play an enormous role in promoting the cause of combatting violence against women and providing hands-on support to the victims, especially victims of human trafficking.

What has been somewhat difficult and what is largely missing in the debate on violence against women is the participation and active involvement of men. In our publicity campaigns we have sought to involve male role models, well know figures who could help redefine the perceptions of masculinity and violence, particularly among adolescent boys who are highly susceptible to image issues. Such efforts need to be expanded, both domestically and internationally.

Thank you for your attention.