BRAZIL

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Statement by
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Thank you, Mr. President,

One significant challenge of our times has been the increased poverty and inequality within and among countries.

They are a complex and multidimensional problem, with origins in both the national and international domains.

The eradication of poverty and inequality cannot be accomplished through anti-poverty programs alone, as it requires changes in economic structures in order to ensure access to resources and opportunities. Poverty and inequality have various manifestations, from lack of productive resources, of access to land, and of education to inadequate housing, social discrimination and exclusion. It occurs in all countries - as mass poverty in many developing countries and as pockets of poverty amidst wealth in developed countries. It may be caused by an economic recession that results in loss of livelihood, as experienced in 2008. It can also be aggravated by the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets.

Mr. President,

These words were written almost two decades ago by ourselves, the Member States, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. Sadly, they depict a reality we still face, as poverty - and inequality (which I added to that excerpt) - remain our main challenges nowadays.

In addition to them, rural to urban centers migration, massive movements of migrants, refugees and displaced persons have profoundly changed family survival strategies and structures. These changes have placed an extra burden on women, especially those who provide for several dependants.

Today, women-led households account for 25 per cent in most of our societies.

In many countries, women-led households are very often among the poorest because of wage discrimination, occupational segregation patterns in the labor market and other gender-based barriers. Discrimination against women usually starts in the realm of family. This is one of the reasons why - back in Beijing, in 1995 - we coincided on the need to eliminate intra-family discrimination against the girl child and on the supportive, nurturing and educating role of family in improving the status of the girl child.

Education, for instance, is a human right and has always been recognized as an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. According to the Beijing Program of Action, "non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of
educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision making in society. Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable”. These words could not be more relevant today.

Against the backdrop of poverty and inequality, the Post-2015 Development Agenda offers the opportunity to make adjustments and correct priorities for the decades ahead.

To be truly multilateral and faithful to the Rio+20 process, the Post-2015 Agenda should aim for social inclusion and more equitable and sustainable societies. To this end, we have agreed that eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities must be prioritized, while not losing focus on issues and groups that require special attention, such as women, girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, and the youth, all of them as individuals or as members of a family.

As the main basis for the Agenda, the Open Working Group Report containing a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets places human rights and development at the center of the Post-2015 Agenda. It builds on recent successful experiences of developing and developed countries. Those who invested in social inclusion and anti-recession policies in the last 6 years are now reaping the benefits and redistributing wealth. Prioritizing social protection, decent work, education and health can help eradicate poverty and pave a new path for development that is inclusive and sustainable for individuals and families.

Mr. President,

As we have agreed back in Cairo and Beijing, "family should be strengthened and it is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. In different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist. The rights, capabilities and responsibilities of family members must be respected".

In the subsequent years to Cairo and Beijing, we have recognized that families can make an important contribution to development. We have also coincided on the critical role women play in families. They greatly contribute to the welfare of families and to the development of society, to an extent still not universally acknowledged or considered in its full importance.

In the Brazilian case, over the last decade we have experienced unprecedented decline in inequality. This was possible thanks to a framework of economic
stability, access to credit, promotion of decent work, expansion of social protection systems and investment in human capabilities.

Our best-known social protection program, the "Family Stipend", is centered on women. This was the recognition - in practice - of the fact that women head at least one fourth of all households worldwide and in Brazil, and many other households are dependent on female income even when men are present.

The success story of the Family Stipend Program demonstrates that if we had not targeted all kinds of families - single parent, no children, same sex, no parent families - we would not have lifted 36 million Brazilians out of poverty into the middle class. Quite the opposite, we would have contributed to deepening their vulnerabilities and the multiple intersecting forms of discrimination they already suffer.

Such measures would never have succeeded were it not for an open-minded perspective regarding the family unit. Brazil is firmly committed to protecting all forms of families from socioeconomic vulnerabilities, with a view to eradicating poverty, promoting their social inclusion, creating decent work for all and eliminating domestic violence.

We understand that individuals in a family are holders of rights and fundamental freedoms, no matter how their family is constituted. From Brazil's perspective, we should focus our attention on those in a situation of vulnerability, among them children, youth, women, persons with disabilities and the older persons. One of our concerns is to address the many challenges women face in their family life as a consequence of discrimination, bearing the burden of unpaid work, and - above all - suffering from domestic violence, which is a grave violation of human rights and limits the enjoyment of all other fundamental freedoms.

Mr. President,

As a final remark, allow me to express our belief that the UN can stand up for people in need, and recognize vulnerabilities beyond cultural divides and specificities of countries. Human rights are universal and should be universally promoted and protected. A one-dimensional perspective of the family can entail keeping millions of persons excluded from society, depriving them from citizenship and a better future in the XXI century.

Thank you.