Statement to Executive Board of UN Women, February 9, 2015
Presented by Charlotte Bunch

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Madame Chairperson

Thank you for the opportunity to address UN Women’s Executive Board in this important 20th anniversary year of the Beijing World Conference on Women. I speak as a member of the Global Civil Society Advisory Group and on behalf of Musimbi Kanyoro, President of the Global Fund for Women; I also speak as the founder and senior scholar of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (Rutgers University) and a Board member of AWID (Association for Women’s Rights in Development.)

These global feminist organizations have a long history of advocating for women’s human rights and working to advance women’s movements worldwide – their resources, leadership, and efficacy. Strong civil society movements are key to making the transformative shifts that are crucial to achieving gender equality. Recent academic studies have confirmed what we know through our work with women-led organizations on the ground -- the presence of strong feminist movements is the critical factor in achievement of policy and social changes like combatting violence against women.

We were active participants in the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995 collaborating with governments on its historic Platform for Action. As the GEAR campaign, we worked with member states for over four years to help create UN Women. UN Women is the crucial entity linking the UN to women’s movements in order to implement the gender equality policies and promises made from CEDAW to the BPFA to SC Resolution 1325.

It is therefore of great concern to us that in its 5th year of operation, the budget of UN Women still falls well below the $2 billion that NGOs were calling for at its creation. The mandate for UN Women at the country level and for leading the mainstreaming of gender throughout the UN system is an ambitious one. It recognizes the urgency of redressing inequities of the past as well as of bringing women’s ideas, creativity and energies more fully into policy making that addresses the crises faced by our planet today. This requires more ambitious resources that support UN Women and women’s
organizations. As the body responsible for ensuring resource mobilization for UN Women, we call on you to be the champions of UN Women in seeking to fill this gap and to bring the entity onto an equal footing with other UN bodies like UNICEF.

We are deeply concerned that the growth of inequality in the world has a particularly negative impact on women as does the currency of rising fundamentalisms which both inhibit women’s ability to exercise their human rights. Another force that is limiting women’s economic and political advancement is the gender gap in science and technology, with many women left behind in global technology revolution.

2015 provides a number of key opportunities to demonstrate seriousness about these obstacles and the value of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The political declaration for the Beijing + 20 year review must be strong and action oriented with an unequivocal commitment to its implementation, with resources. The Post-2015 negotiations must be grounded in a human rights framework that includes a strong transformative gender equality goal and sees the gender dimensions of all its goals as critical to their fulfillment. Further, the CSW has the opportunity to strengthen its working methods as outlined by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women.

In conversations about Financing for Development and implementing the new development agenda, the framework must address the gaps in implementation of the BPFA and other gender equality commitments. An increase in resources for this as well as ensuring women’s participation in monitoring that framework is crucial. Women’s machineries and civil society need to be supported in developing accountability mechanisms and monitoring implementation of gender equality policies.

Women and women’s organizations continue to be among the strongest constituencies for the United Nations. Governments must recognize the value of this sector as critical agents for change in the effort to create respect for human rights, peace, climate justice and more sustainable development. Without greater investment in women, including support for UN Women, the Post 2015 goals will be compromised from the start. Women around the world are eager to engage even more in a United Nations that demonstrates that it values women and our contributions to the future.

Thank you for your attention to the voices of civil society.