



Statement by H.E. Eleonora Menicucci de Oliveira
Minister of State of Brazil of Public Policies for Women

Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women

New York, July 9, 2012

(Check against delivery)

Madam President of CEDAW, Ms. Silvia Pimentel,

Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Jan Eliasson,

Madam Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Michelle Bachelet,

Dear panelists,

Ladies and gentlemen participants at this session,

I salute the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for its 30th anniversary and stress the importance of the consolidation of women's rights.,

It is with pride and honor that, as the Minister of State of Public Policies for Women of Brazil, that I am representing President Dilma Rousseff at this session.

Ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the Nations that comprise this important forum for the world debate regarding gender issues,

The historical decision of the UN, in 1979, to create the Committee, has had an undeniable impact on the imperative to build more democratic societies. The women and men who in these 30 years, have been a part of this committee in the hope of contributing to the promotion of women's equality have reason to be proud.

We all know how important the values of democracy, justice, human rights and liberty are. We know that to achieve them it is fundamental that all women in the world, without exception, have their rights guaranteed and respected.

As the first woman to be elected President of Brazil, it is an honor to reaffirm the commitment of the Brazilian government to work jointly with CEDAW towards the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, in accordance with the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To honor women and girls is a duty of the State and my commitment to the women citizens of my country. Only in this way will we be successful in our struggle for dignity and development for all.

There are 97 million of us, Brazilian women, 51% of the population. 40% of our households are headed by women. This majority of women still struggles on a

daily basis for equality. We are making efforts, through consistent public policies, to build a more egalitarian society overall, as well as with regard to gender relations.

Today the majority of the social programs conducted by my government favor women. The “Bolsa Família Program” (Family Stipend Program), a program of income transfer which benefits 13.5 million families, gives women the power to receive and administer financial resources. The program “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” (My House, My Life) which guarantees accessible housing to low income families, gives women the titles to properties, except when the man holds child custody. The National Program of Family Agriculture, which supports small farmers, who are responsible for the majority of the Brazilian food supply, also favors women.

These are some of the policies which establish my government as the one with the largest set of programs in support of women in our history. But we want to go even further. To this end, I have elected the eradication of extreme poverty in Brazil as a top priority of my government, thus generating opportunities for the social and economic inclusion of historically marginalized sectors of society.

Fighting extreme poverty in Brazil is still synonymous with fighting feminine poverty. For this reason, our struggle against extreme poverty demands the elimination of discrimination and the full participation of women in leadership positions, whether in the private or public spheres.

I am proud to affirm, moreover, that we have made significant progress in combating violence against women and children. It has been five years since we passed the “Maria da Penha” Law which punishes these crimes. It is our firm commitment to continue confronting this issue. For we will only become a country that is truly free and equal for all if we reduce the rates of violence and produce a culture of peace for our daughters and sons.

We, women, are creators of our own life stories. I am fully aware that I speak on the behalf of women and that, when they hear me, they are certain of just how far they can go. They can look at their daughters and be certain that, yes, a women can do many things – even lead Nations.

I believe that this will be the century of women and that the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* will have a decisive role in continuing the struggle for the fulfillment and adherence of more countries to this Convention.

One of the greatest Brazilian writers, João Guimarães Rosa, has said:

“The flux of life mixes everything up. Life is like this: it heats up and cools down, tightens and then loosens, calms down and then unsettles. What it demands of us is courage.”

Let us always have the courage to continue the fight for gender equality! Count on me on this challenging but possible path.