



BRASIL

**52nd Commission on the Status of Women
General Debate
Statement by Minister Nilcéa Freire
Minister of the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women
(New York, 27 February 2008)**

(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, I wish to congratulate the UN Secretary General on his commitment to the construction of gender equality and to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which was reflected in his speech on the occasion of the launching of the campaign to eliminate violence against women at the opening of this 52nd Session of the CSW. Unfortunately, the issue of violence against women in all its dimensions remains a challenge to the international community, governments and women. In this regard, on behalf of the Government of the President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, I wish to join the Secretary-General and make before this plenary the commitment to present in 2010 significant progress in the area of violence against women, as proposed by the Secretary-General in the launching of the campaign.

I would also like to congratulate the Commission on the selection of the issue of financing as the main theme of this session. Without budget and without substantial financial support, the promotion of equality between women and men would be nothing more than a rhetorical idea.

It has been recognized in different international fora and conferences, including Monterrey, that investing in the elimination of gender inequalities and addressing discrimination against women are essential to ensure a process of sustainable development. It has also been recognized the important role that women play in the economy of different countries, whether acting directly in the so-called productive sectors, or ensuring to the whole society the reproduction and the preservation of life.

Yet several studies show that in their path towards equality, women still face many obstacles. Institutional deficiencies of the mechanisms for the advancement of women in most countries, insufficient financial support for gender equality programs and for policies targeted to women, as well as planning processes that are gender insensible are among the most important obstacles. Despite some significant formal achievements, fragmented and discontinued political and programmatic initiatives are the common result. The reversal of this situation requires energy and persistence; beyond the reaffirmation of commitments contained in the Beijing Platform for Action and other documents, we should make new commitments in order to reflect the changes that have been processed throughout the world in the last thirteen years, especially in regard to the consequences of an economic model that concentrates wealth and deepens inequalities, with negative impacts on the lives of women. In this connection, I wish to emphasize the Consensus that emerged from the Tenth Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean promoted by ECLAC in Quito, in 2007. In that occasion, the goal of political parity is presented as an unquestionable and essential challenge to the realization of formal changes and advances.

Mr. Chairperson,

I will now try to present three points I deem essential to ensure that women and men are effectively equal in rights and obligations, as determined in the Brazilian Constitution, and which represented progress in the fulfillment of the commitments assumed by Brazil.

1. The separation between the task of monitoring and follow-up of public policies targeted at women and protection of their rights, on one side, and the operational task, with the establishment of the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women, with ministerial status, and the reformulation of the National Council of Women's Rights with increased participation of the Civil Society since 2003, on the other side. The reconfiguration of our gender machinery has enhanced the political influence on the Federal Government and promoted similar configurations within municipal and state governments. The completion of two National Conferences, in 2004 and 2007 – which have resulted in the elaboration of the First National Plan for Women's Policy, implemented until 2007, and the Second National Plan, to be launched next 8 March – reflects the importance of these renewed structures.

2. The elaboration of the Multi-year Plan (PPA) 2004-2007, which defined the reduction of gender, race and ethnicity inequalities as challenges, and the PPA 2008-2011, which represents a move forward in relation to the previous plan, as it proposes as one of the ten strategic objectives of the Government the promotion of gender, race and ethnical equality with immediate consequences on the elaboration of the budget of each ministry for the next 4 years.

For the current period, the Government's Strategic Orientation underlines, in its introduction, the need to address gender and racial inequalities. It affirms: "It is necessary to translate these orientations into practical initiatives and give convergence to public sector actions, by means of a strategy of development with growth associated with the

reduction of social and regional inequalities, the promotion of gender, racial and ethnic equality and the maintenance of prices and sustained fiscal stability."

The objectives of the Government define what will be pursued, with more emphasis, by the Federal Government during the Plan's implementation period, in order to guide the formulation of public policies in the sphere of each Ministry. The fourth objective states: "To strengthen democracy with gender, race and ethnic equality, and citizenship with transparency, social dialogue and assurance of human rights."

The text which describes this fourth objective government affirms that: "The democratic environment shall be permeated by the development of relationships based on equity, without gender, race and ethnic preconceptions, with equal opportunities in all aspects of the social life. In the pyramid of inequality, black women are on the top, followed by black men and white women. Therefore, the perspective of promoting gender and racial equality must be present at the elaboration, execution and monitoring of all government policies, incorporated as a generating principle of democracy, development and social peace. "

It continues: "The gender and race mainstreaming in public policies is based on the idea of elaborating a matrix which enables the orientation of a new vision of competences and holds public agents responsible for overcoming asymmetries in the different spheres of the government. The policies will be really efficient and effective if their differentiated impact on men's and women's lives is taken into consideration and if, in its execution, they allow the equal distribution of their benefits to the whole society. The strengthening of a democratic nation also does not allow any discrimination against people with disabilities, people with a different sexual orientation, young people, the elderly, migrants or any other social group. In addition, it is important that State actions are based on principles of transparency and social control, in order to provide a greater effectiveness in its policies ".

And concludes: "State actions in the field of human rights must be established both on the improvement of public institutions and in the strengthening of the dialogue with society. All national institutions must be mobilized.

3. The definition of a social agenda integrated and coordinated among all Ministries of the social and rights promotion fields of the second term of President Lula, which incorporates a mandatory gender, racial and ethnical perspective.

This agenda places the reduction of inequalities as one of the Government's priorities.

The following goals are part of this agenda: the expansion and improvement of the program of income transfer Bolsa Família; the improvement and expansion of universal access to health; the National Program for Security with Citizenship; and the National Pact to Address Violence against Women. The latter was launched by President Lula in August 2007 and is funded with US\$ 500 million, to be used in four strategic areas: the strengthening of networks to provide care for women victims of violence and the full implementation of Maria da Penha Law, aimed at preventing and punishing domestic and

family violence against women; the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights of women and the implementation of the integrated plan to address the feminization of HIV/AIDS and other STDs; the fight against sexual exploitation of girls and young women, as well as trafficking in women; and the promotion of the human rights of women in detention or in prison.

Mr. Chairperson,

By presenting the above-mentioned points, I would like to reiterate the importance of working with a structured agenda, one that is not fragmented and is coordinated by a leading body for the promotion of gender equality.

It is also necessary to emphasize the strategic role of agencies, funds and programs of the UN system in the implementation of policies, plans and programs in each country and as facilitators of the cooperation in solidarity among nations and countries. In this context, it is extremely important the definition without delay of the new gender architecture within the UN system.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity of this 52nd Session of the CSW to pay tribute to feminist and women organizations, which are a permanent source of inspiration and reference for our work in favor of equality between women and men.

Thank you.