



**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,  
President of the 57th**



For prosperity to flourish, we need peace and security. Women of all cultures know the deep pain of losing their beloved fathers, husbands and sons in armed conflict and wars. They would be harbingers of peace if allowed and empowered to participate in peace negotiating, peace building, peace-keeping and conflict prevention activities, in other words building and promoting a culture of peace.

Economic empowerment of women is a fundamental step towards eradication of poverty. The idea of micro credit to women is yielding dividends around the world. The concept of micro credit was an initiative of Professor Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh. Through lending women small amounts of cash without collateral, and the ensuing success of the loan repayments, he revolutionized the concept of rural economic and social development, coupling capitalism with social responsibility. The concept of micro credit is being copied in 52 countries and the multilateral agencies are supporting micro credit projects around the world at the grass roots level.

Political empowerment of women has also yielded positive results wherever they have the opportunity to participate in decision making. To cite one example, the Panchayat system in India, (local bodies at the village level that are meant to ensure people's participation), which has always existed though dominated by male members, now has a minimum of 30 percent women constituents due to an amendment to the Constitution of India, providing for one third of the seats to be reserved for women. This has allowed women to use their empowerment in, for instance, improving local water and sanitation systems and educational facilities for the children in their villages, thus fostering sustainable development at the grass roots level.

The potential of information and communications technologies for advancement and empowerment of women is unlimited and should be tapped through training and capacity building.

There are many players and stakeholders in the aim to reach the Millennium Goals. Apart from the efforts of the UN family of organizations, multilateral organizations and civil society, the positive role of women also depends on the supportive attitudes of the local family unit, the local