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*SPEECH BY THE RT HON HARRIET HARMAN, QC MP, UNITED KINGDOM  
MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITY AT THE OPENING OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN*

Thank you. It is an honour to address this Commission on the Status of Women.

Today we are all thinking of the people of Chile who are suffering from the earthquake, and Haiti.

The UK supports the statement adopted by the Commission at its 54th Session in 2009, and the Beijing objectives. And as Britain's aid programme helps to bring economies out of recession

As UK minister for women I have 3 priorities

- To help women balance their work and family commitments
- To prevent violence against women, particularly domestic violence, and
- To increase the representation of women in our democracy

We have made progress on all of these – and they will be further strengthened when the UK's new Equality Bill becomes law.

Now is an important moment, not just to discuss progress but to seize the opportunity to take a great step forward by establishing our new UN women's agency.

- We agree about the goals set out in the Beijing Declaration
- And last September's UN Resolution agreed to bring together the 4 parts of the UN's work on women into one single, coherent and effective agency.
- There are now women in parliaments and governments in every continent and in most countries in the world.

We all draw strength from each other because even though we are making progress in our own countries we are still pioneers in political systems which remain largely the domain of men.

The new UN women's agency will be most important where the challenge is greatest – where women in governments and parliaments are struggling to protect women from poverty and conflict and to improve maternal health, education, and economic opportunity.

When I meet my sisters in the Parliaments of Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania – as I have over the years –

- I admire their determination,
- I see their progress
- and I believe that they are the best hope for the women in their countries.

The new UN women's agency will back them up in their work. It will back us

North or the South. It is not, it's for women and it's for women everywhere.

back because of our desire to make progress across the piece

make progress on system-side coherence but we must not let it hold up the establishment of the new UN women's Agency

Women are counting on us not just to talk this week but to make progress.

It will be important for all women in every country, in every continent, but it's

in all our countries is mirrored by progress and change in the UN. The

creation of the new UN women's agency will be a testament to the force

of development. It will send a powerful signal to women struggling against the

Let us make this a historic Commission on the Status of Women. Let us make this the year that we create our new powerful UN women's agency.

and to make progress on all the goals we have struggled for for so long.

Thank you