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Commission on the Status of Women**Fifty-fifth session**

22 February-4 March 2011

Agenda item 3 (c)

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming,
situations and programmatic matters****Elimination of preventable maternal mortality and
morbidity and the empowerment of women****Chair’s summary**

1. On 1 March 2011, the Commission on the Status of Women convened an expert panel on elimination of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and the empowerment of women. The discussion was chaired by Mr. Garen Nazarian, Chair of the Commission (Armenia) and moderated by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The panellists were: Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights; Mr. Christoph Benn, Director of External Relations and Partnerships, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis; Ms. Mayra Buvinic, Sector Director, Gender and Development Group, World Bank; Mr. Werner Obermeyer, Executive Director ad interim, World Health Organization (WHO), New York Office; Dr. Julia Kim, Cluster Leader for Mainstreaming HIV and Health and the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations Development Programme; and Ms. Diane Summers, Senior Specialist, Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunizations. Representatives from 17 Member States, one regional group and one civil society organization contributed to the discussion.

2. The panel was convened in response to resolution 54/5 of the Commission on the Status of Women on eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity through the empowerment of women, in which the Commission decided to hold, at its fifty-fifth session, an expert panel discussion on the topic with the relevant United Nations entities, as well as representatives of the private sector and civil society. It provided an opportunity for the Commission to assess progress in addressing maternal mortality, identify good practices and successful interventions, as well as ways and means for further accelerating action with the aim of

measurably reducing and eliminating maternal mortality and achieving Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals on improving maternal health. It was also an opportunity to bring further impetus to implementation of the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health.

3. Achieving Goal 5 on improving maternal health and its target of reducing by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio, remains a significant challenge. Since the 1990s figures have declined, but only slowly. In 2010, an estimated 355,000 women died due to complications of childbirth, and 99 per cent of those deaths occurred in developing countries. The average annual percentage decline in the global maternal mortality ratio was 2.3 per cent, well short of the 5.5 per cent annual decline needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals target. In addition, large disparities between regions remain. In sub-Saharan Africa, a woman's risk of dying from preventable or treatable complications of

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