



UN Commission on  
the Status of Women  
55th Session ...

24 February 2011

H.E. MS. Ingrid Fiskhaug  
State Secretary of  
International Development

Chairperson, fellow delegates,

I am here today as a stand-in for Norway's Minister of Gender Equality, Mr. Anders Lunde, who is home with his new-born daughter – on a 16 week parental leave.

The Minister lives up to the message he delivered to this Commission last year: that men and boys must take a greater share of family care. This is good for the men themselves and children, and it's good for society as a whole, by promoting women's access to education, technology and decent work.

Chairperson,

Education, technology and decent work are sources of dignity, wealth and power. Fair and equal access for all – regardless of race or class, disabilities or gender – will promote human rights, development and a sustainable peace. These are the values that have long guided Norway's political priorities – at home and abroad.

At home, we introduced universal and free primary education for all more than one hundred years ago. Today more than five million students in Norway, and female applicants are given additional points when competing for admission to polytechnic universities. Close to 80 percent of women have jobs, while our infant birth rate is almost 2.0, the highest in Europe.

Abroad, Norway contributes more than 80 million US dollars annually to UNICEF's program to educate girls in developing countries. We also support poor women's access to information and communication technologies, for example mobile phones, to help them improve their lives.



And we have made the International Labour Organization, with its Global Jobs Pact for Decent Work, a strategic partner in Norway's foreign economic policy.

Chairperson,

Formerly, you may believe that a country must develop and become rich before it can afford to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. That is wrong!

The main aim of our policies was to improve living standards, while Norway was still a poor country. What it was the main aim of the political struggle by the poor and the progressive – not least women – was not only growth, but also social justice and equity, central criteria for our development.

And we have introduced measures to promote gender equality and taxation. We have introduced anti-discrimination laws and subsidized child care. We required by law a minimum of 40 percent of the underrepresented gender in the boards of Public Limited Companies.

And we have introduced measures to promote and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights – including the right to safe abortion and equal treatment regardless of sexual orientation. These measures have not only empowered people and protected their human rights, but also made our economy more dynamic, productive and competitive, by addressing stereotypes and helping women combine work and family life. We have organized, increased the number of people at work and therefore both private and public revenues.

Today, Norway has a gender-segregated labor market and lower average pay for women, but we have reduced the unemployment rate to 5 percent of women in the workforce, and 3.6 percent unemployment – and a GDP per capita close to 90,000 US dollars.

You may think that this is because of our oil. The fact is that oil only counts for seven percent of our GDP, while human resources, including of course the women, represent close to 80 percent of our national wealth.

Chairperson,

In my own experience, Norway has always been a strong supporter of the United Nations work for gender equality and empowerment of women. After more than six decades we can finally celebrate the establishment of UN Women.

With former President Barack Obama, we are confident that UN Women will be the leading global director for gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights – also where these are sensitive and controversial.

In particular, we expect UN Women to bridge the gap between the UN's normative work, including its Millennium Development Goals, and the situation for women and girls on the ground, by helping to

make the UN system's operational activities better in assisting member states to meet their obligations and development objectives.

Chairperson, before I close, let me underscore the following:

We all know what it takes to make a prosperous, stable and peaceful society: It takes freedom, justice and equality for all. And as we have seen so often in the past few weeks, Leaders ignore these facts at their own peril.

When reconciling differences and rebuilding peace, we call on the United States and the United Nations system to fully implement the Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security.

Only by protecting all women's rights and ensuring women's full and equal participation in economic, social and political life can sustainable peace and development be achieved.

Thank you.

make the UN system's operational activities better to assist member states to meet their obligations and development objectives.

Compassion before I close, let me underscore the following:

We all know what it takes to make a prosperous, stable and peaceful society. It takes freedom, justice and equal opportunities. Leaders (know that) act in their own path.

When recognizing differences and rebuilding peace, we call on member states and the United Nations system to fully implement the Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

Only by protecting all women's human rights and enabling women's full and equal participation in economic, social and political life - we can ensure the peace and development for which we

Thank you