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Statement

by

Mrs. Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek

**Federal Minister for Women and Civil Service
of the Republic of Austria**

On the occasion of the
56th Session of the
Commission on the Status of Women

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Madame Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union. It is a privilege and an honour for me to address the high level members of the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In Austria, around 75% of the population live in rural areas. Examining the situation of women in rural areas is an important women's policy issue. However, when we talk about women in rural areas, we mean both women farmers and women living in the countryside. It is important to take into account their different needs and challenges.

While the focus in the mid-1990s was on giving the farmers of every day life for women farmers, in increasing attempts were made in the 1990s to reveal and change the disadvantaged position of women in the countryside. A vital impetus towards gender equality in rural areas was given by the gender mainstreaming strategy from the mid-1990s onwards.

Women play an important role in agriculture and currently account for around 41% of agricultural and forestry workers.

The number of female-headed farms has increased significantly over the past ten years. Compared to other countries, Austria has a high percentage of agricultural businesses lead by women. A key factor in this is the strong participation of female farmers in educational programmes in Austria. It is important to help women farmers, who often lack educational qualifications.

On average, 38% of agricultural businesses are headed by women. However, the percentage decreases as the size of the business increases.

The participation of girls and women over 18 years in education is lower in rural regions than in urban areas. One of the main reasons for this is the

educational institutions in large towns and cities. Limited job opportunities, low provision of childcare facilities and adequate infrastructure are challenges for many women. Traditional attitudes, such as women being expected to bear sole responsibility for child care and the care of older relatives, still make life difficult for many women in the countryside.

Decision-making structures in rural areas are often dominated exclusively by men. Increasing female participation in local decision-making bodies is of great importance

here. This issue is being addressed in the "equal opportunities" section of the Austrian Programme for the Development of Rural Areas.

Differences between urban and rural areas are also reflected in the level and distribution of income, with the gap between women at risk of being greater in rural regions than in urban areas.

For many women, especially young women, life in the countryside is becoming increasingly unattractive. Migration from rural to urban areas is often the final consequence. This occurs most frequently among girls and women aged between 18 and 26.

gaps, such as the continuing pay gap, must also take into account the needs of women in rural areas.

In Austria, the introduction of the Transparency Act marked an important step towards greater transparency. Companies over a certain size are now obliged to produce sex-disaggregated staff income reports. This has created a powerful instrument that enables action to be taken against discriminatory wage inequalities. The only countries in Europe to have established a legal basis for this are Sweden and Austria.

Furthermore, job advertisements must now state the minimum wage and how much more the employer would be prepared to pay. Administrative penalties are being imposed for non-compliance. The minimum salary indicator is another important step towards greater transparency.

Role models and stereotypes can prevent women and men from employing their full potential. The introduction of a "paternity leave" in the public sector on 1 January 2011 which allows fathers of newborn children to take time off, is intended to motivate a greater number of fathers to take on more responsibility for child care. Ultimately, the reconciliation between work and private life is an issue that affects women and men alike.

Women's equality measures, such as improving the situation of women in rural areas require budgetary resources. Austria's budget represents its policies to various figures. It reveals how much importance is accorded to equality in society, approving the gender perspective of all levels of budget planning and management needs to be a matter of concern to us all. In Austria, gender budgeting was enshrined in the constitution on 1 January 2009. From 2013 onwards, the Federal Budget Law requires each federal ministry to determine gender equality targets. As a next step concrete measures and indicators in order to realize the respective gender equality outcome have to be defined. This opens up major opportunities for the implementation of gender budgeting and thus for gender equality policy in Austria.

Madame Chair would finally like to briefly mention Austria's current efforts. Austria is making important contributions to international security. Back in 2007, Austria was one of the first countries worldwide to adopt a National Action Plan, implementing this UN Security Council Resolution. Austria marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of this resolution with a comprehensive revision of this Action Plan. The revised Action Plan was adopted by the Austrian federal government in July 2017. The key goals of the new Action Plan are to increase the participation of women in peace support and conflict resolution measures, to prevent violence against women and girls, and to increase the representation of women in international peace operations as well as in decision-making positions in international and European organizations. The new Action Plan takes into account the indicators developed by the United Nations and the European Union in recent years, which will enable the progress made in implementing Resolution 1325 to be measured more effectively in the future. The implementation of the National Action Plan will continue to be assessed annually by an interministerial working group.

...area with partner countries in order to
...ional action plans.

Madame Chair, in concluding I would like to express our recognition
...the first year of existence, in which all the key
institutional foundations were laid. We are looking forward to continuing our
...and will do our utmost to support UN Women in carrying out its
important work.

Madame Chair, the economic and social challenges that we face need to be the
subject of greater political debate. We are confident that this year's CSW session will
...in this area.

Thank you.