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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends,

It is an honour to address you today as we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA).

This milestone is not just a moment of reflection but a call to action—a reminder of the promises made and the work that remains to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

The significance of Beijing turning 30 cannot be overstated. It is an opportunity to renew our commitment to the principles and objectives of the BDPA, particularly in ending violence and discrimination against women and girls. But it is also a moment to confront the harsh realities of our time: a world grappling with multiple crises, rising inequality, and the erosion of hard-won gains in sex and gender equality.

Let me outline seven key reasons why this anniversary is so critical:

First, it is an opportunity to demonstrate a renewed commitment to a visionary roadmap that was unanimously adopted and that remains relevant, timely and practical to this day. It is also a perfect example of the fact that we have often solutions and workable frameworks in our hands. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. What is needed is the political will and the resources to translate commitments into tangible outcomes. I am however deeply concerned that we are further away from committing resources and programs, interventions and institutions dedicated sex and gender equality. Instead, we see a proliferation of austerity measures that eliminate support for the most marginalized and vulnerable groups – where women and children are overrepresented.

Second, this anniversary highlights that we are not yet out of the woods. While progress has no doubt been made, the resistance of patriarchal and regressive forces to this progress has also grown. These forces have permeated our lives, becoming louder, more aggressive, vengeful, and most importantly smarter. They are aided by minions and allies who are decentralized, resourceful, and fiercely loyal. They have crafted a perfectly package narratives that infiltrate every aspect of our lives through our screens and phones, glorifying the commodification, exploitation, sale and abuse of women and girls and selling the idea that they empower and make them free.

Third, we must adopt comprehensive and holistic approaches to dismantle systemic barriers to sex and gender equality: One of the most remarkable features of the BDPA is its comprehensive approach that marries prevention with education campaigns, changing harmful social norms and develops and implements solid legal framework. It also acknowledges the consequences of armed conflict, foreign occupation, and the violation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity exacerbate violence against women and girls. It acknowledges that women living under colonial or foreign occupation face unique and intensified forms of violence, including sexual violence, displacement, and economic hardship.

This means that we need to continue to support strong and responsible social protection systems and taxation systems that are shock resistant and ensure continuity of services and social protection measures for women and girls. This is particularly critical in times of crisis including conflict and climate emergencies, where women are disproportionately

affected. Budget cuts and militarized spending jeopardize peacebuilding efforts and expose women and girls to further violence. States must prioritize gender-responsive budgeting, progressive taxation, trauma-based support and opportunities for women.

Fourth, women's empowerment and participation in all spheres of life are non-negotiable. While women's representation in parliaments has more than doubled in 1995, I have noted a very concerning trend that women continue to be vilified, punished, attacked, and even killed for expressing themselves on issues that are central to their lives, that of their families and communities. The right to think and speak freely cannot be conditional on what women want to say, what their positions are, and whether they are to the liking of the elite or the governments in question. This is the only way to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are met.

Fifth, global solidarity is essential. Though we may not immediately associate the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with solidarity, it explicitly recognizes international solidarity as essential for achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls including those denied self-determination and under occupation. Solidarity is not just a moral imperative—it is a practical necessity and a multiplier for the realization of these goals. Today, more than ever, there is a need to strengthen North-South, South-South and triangular collaboration and cooperation.

Sixth, we must embrace an intersectional approach: We must do better in factoring at the diversity and totality of women's needs and experiences in the assessments and implementation of policies. All of them are equal and valid. A sound approach to intersectionality also means advancing work on all areas outlined by the BDPA, as the solutions it offers are mutually reinforcing. We must therefore refrain from picking and choosing and recognize that while advances have been made on some, others have been relegated in importance.

Seventh, we must strengthen accountability mechanisms. I am very concerned by what I see an increased impunity for violence against women whether in times of conflict or peace including against women who are experiencing unspeakable horrors. The erosion of the rules- based order is fueling impunity and emboldening perpetrators. The absence of a global legally binding global instrument on violence against women is a glaring gap. I join my predecessors in calling for the adoption of a dedicated global treaty on ending violence against women and girls, in the form of an optional protocol to the CEDAW Convention.

So where does this leave us?

We stand at a pivotal moment in history—one that calls for both reflection and decisive action. As we commemorate 30 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women, we must reaffirm the unwavering commitment of States to the roadmap laid out by the BDPA. We must address emerging manifestations of violence against women and girls, and the intersecting barriers posed by wars, climate change, austerity measures, mounting debt, and regressive forces clinging to patriarchal and harmful social norms. These extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures—business as usual is simply not an option.

In this context, global platforms that set the agenda for gender equality, like the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), must rise to the occasion. We cannot afford

for the CSW to operate within the confines of outdated methods; instead, it must be revitalized, bold, and responsive. To this end, I have joined others in advocating for a strengthened and more impactful CSW, that helps implement in law and practice both BDPA and CEDAW to truly serve women.

This means fostering deeper, more meaningful engagement with independent mechanisms dedicated to the rights of women and girls. It means ensuring that violence against women is not an afterthought but a standing item on the CSW agenda. It calls for a shift towards a more rigorous, hands-on review of countries' records on gender equality—akin to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)—to hold states accountable and address backsliding with urgency. Most importantly, it requires a forward-looking, action-oriented approach—one that moves beyond the tradition of issuing consensus statements at the start and end of sessions and instead embraces the need to address the unfinished business of Beijing with practical solutions and decisive steps for progress.

This is a moment that demands courage, and relentless commitment. History, women here today, the women and girls in our lives, and those have yet been born will judge us if we fail – rightly so.

Thank you.