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**Statement by H.E. Ms. MENG Yixian, Head of the Chinese
Delegation to 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of
Women, Vice-Chairperson of the National Working Committee on
Women and Children in the State Council of China**
(28 February 2012)

Madam Chair,
Dear Friends,

The Chinese delegation associates itself with the statement made by Algeria on behalf of G77 and China and wishes this session success.

Over the years, the international community has worked actively to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and achieved encouraging results. However, arduous tasks and challenges still remain.

In order to promote women's development and gender equality, the Chinese government has always promoted gender equality as a basic national policy. The final review of the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) showed that 23 out of 24 major targets in the program have been realized on schedule. In poverty eradication, for instance, in 592 counties where poverty eradication has been set as a priority, poverty rate among women dropped from 24% in 2000 to 10% in 2010. In education, we have largely eliminated the primary and middle school enrollment gap and further narrowed the gap in high school and university. In health care, the rate of in-hospital delivery increased to 97.9% in 2010, a 48.3% increase since 2000. In-hospital delivery for rural women reached 96.7%, a 48.3% increase since 2000. The Chinese government has also developed and issued a 'Women's Development Plan for the Next Decade', which contains 57 major targets and 88 policy measures in 7 areas (namely, health, education, economy, political participation, social security, environment and law). This program is aimed at responding to emerging situations and problems concerning women's survival and development, with a special focus on women's development in extremely poor and minority regions.

Madam Chair,

The Chinese Government has identified rural women as the priority theme for this year. Everywhere in the world, rural women are the driving force for agricultural production, food security, and rural development. They contribute greatly to the interests of rural communities. It is therefore the common responsibility of all countries and the international community to safeguard the welfare of rural women and promote their legitimate rights, interests and development.

The Chinese Government has adopted many effective measures to advance the development of rural women. Financial support to rural and urban women is provided through micro credit to help them start their own business. All interests on such loans are paid in full by the government. From 2009 to the end of 2011, a total amount of 5.45 billion RMB had been provided in loans to women, with 2.3 billion RMB in interests subsidized by the government. This has directly helped more than 4.5 million rural and urban women with their businesses, which in turn created job opportunities to more than 1 million women. In order to improve the health of rural women, the Chinese government has implemented various measures, such as providing prenatal and postnatal care, regular checkup and treatment for cervical cancer and breast cancer, and post-natal care and development.

Madam Chair,

The United Nations has already adopted a series of documents on women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which calls on the international community to:

1. demonstrate stronger political will and continue to advance gender mainstreaming in all considerations of women's needs and interests particularly in response to financial and economic crisis, disaster relief and reduction, and environmental protection, and make sure that women enjoy equality with men as they benefit from national growth and social development.

2. appreciate and acknowledge the role and contribution of rural women in development and pay particular attention to difficulties and challenges faced by rural women in developing countries so as to provide effective support to their development and empowerment.

Thank you.