

Remarks by Carolyn Hannan
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At the IPU annual event at the Commission on the Status of Women
4 March 2009

Madame President
Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates
Colleagues and friends

I am delighted to have the opportunity to make some brief remarks at the closing of this event.

I would like to acknowledge the very important work of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

I also express my appreciation for the excellent, long-standing collaboration between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This is exemplified by the joint production of the *Map of Women in Politics 2008*, a widely utilized and appreciated tool. The Map makes an important contribution to the review theme of this session of the Commission: "*The equal participation of women in men in decision-making at all levels*".

The annual parliamentary events on the priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women were recognized by the Commission in 2006 as an important contribution by parliaments to the work of the Commission. The increasing participation of parliamentarians at the Commission is also an indication of the relevance of parliaments as key stakeholders in the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

There have been many stimulating discussions on the priority theme: "*The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS*", including in the context of this meeting. The Division for the Advancement of Women's own research on the priority theme gave rise to a number of interesting findings with important implications for policy-making bodies. Many of these you will have considered. I would like to highlight a few which we feel need further attention. The first is that, regardless of the socio-economic and employment status of women, the unequal sharing of responsibilities for household and care work between women and men persists across all regions.

It is also significant that as women increasingly enter the labour market in all parts of the world this does not necessarily lead to more equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men. Many women take on a "double-shift" by attempting to undertake paid work while continuing to have the sole responsibility for unpaid work, or they hire other women as domestic workers to undertake the household and care work they no longer have time to do – which opens up serious policy issues related to decent work since many domestic workers and care-givers work for low wages, with no social security and risk of exploitation. Women may also seek care services outside the home, provided by the state or the private sector - but in many parts of the world this is simply not an option.

In the context of the international financial crisis, it may become more difficult to achieve many of the desired policy responses to this priority theme. Provision of the types of services and facilities required may not be possible because of lack of resources. A challenge will be to keep a clear focus on social development and gender equality in the context of the current response to the financial crisis that is largely couched in te