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Opening of the special meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

Good morning, everyone, it is an honor for me to be with you today at the opening of the Special Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which includes the Commemorative Session of the 45th Anniversary of the Regional Gender Agenda.

I greet my colleagues at this table:

- Raúl García Buchaca, Deputy Executive Secretary for Program Management and Analysis of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).
- Antonia Orellana, Minister of Women and Gender Equity of Chile, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I also extend my compliments to:

- The Ministers of Women and authorities of the mechanisms for the advancement of women in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The representatives of the feminist, women's and civil society organizations that are with us and that have responded favorably to this call, demonstrating once again Latin America and the Caribbean's commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- Representatives of the Agencies of the United Nations System and Cooperation Agencies.
- Friends who are with us both in this room and virtually and through social networks.

I extend a warm welcome to all of you.

I begin by emphasizing my sincere joy at being present today at ECLAC, and in this room that has seen so many crucial moments for the advancement of regional integration, to celebrate with all of you the 45th Anniversary of the Regional Conference on Women. A Regional Conference that is an example not only for Latin America and the Caribbean, but also for other regions worldwide.

Since that First Regional Conference held in Havana in 1977, which was then called "on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America", the situation of women and girls in the region has faced a paradox:

- On the one hand, advances in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are undeniable in multiple areas, such as their access to education, the labor market or public life.

- On the other hand, we are painfully aware of the human rights violations and gender gaps that affect women in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially those in situations of greater vulnerability or who face multiple forms of discrimination, which continue to be extremely serious in cases such as the burden of care work, limited access to positions of political representation at all levels and the exacerbation of gender-based violence against women and girls.

Faced with this paradox, decisive action by governments and the sustained commitment of States to implement programs and public policies focused on promoting the exercise of rights by 50% of the population is now more important than ever.

The effects of the pandemic, now compounded by the impact that the war in Europe may have on the region, have set back the slight progress made, demonstrating the fragility in which many women and girls live in the region.

The Regional Conference on Women has been a privileged space for promoting discussion, meetings and the adoption of agreements between women ministers and authorities of the mechanisms for the advancement of women. In this framework, over the last few decades a Regional Gender Agenda has been developed that addresses the needs and proposals of women and girls in the region from different perspectives, facilitating a comprehensive and solid approach to the initiatives that the States can implement to fulfill their commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment and autonomy.

This Agenda reflects not only the commitment of the authorities of each of the countries, but also incorporates the voices of feminist, women's and civil society organizations that participate actively and with their own voice in the Regional Conference, as well as those of various agencies of the system and international cooperation.

At UN Women, we are very pleased to maintain a strategic alliance with ECLAC since the XIV Regional Conference in 2020. Since then, and in compliance with the mandate of the Secretary-General to work in a more coordinated manner between the different bodies of the United Nations System, the ECLAC and UN Women teams have been working in a coordinated manner in all matters related to the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference, as well as in the Regional Consultations prior to the CSW.

This has enabled us to join forces to better fulfill our mandate and advance the common goal of achieving gender equality and the empowerment and autonomy of all women and girls.

With this in mind, we have been working for months on preparations for the XV Regional Conference on Women, in permanent coordination with ECLAC and hand in hand with the Government of Chile, in its capacity as Chair of the Regional Conference, and the Government of Argentina, as host country. I would like to reiterate UN Women's commitment to ensure the success of the XV Regional Conference, which will allow us to continue to expand the boundaries of the Regional Gender Agenda, adapting the theory to the dreams of the women and girls of Latin America and the Caribbean.

To conclude, I would like to reflect on the importance of turning 45. At that age, one has lived long enough to accumulate joys and sorrows, dreams and disappointments. Many dreams have been fulfilled and others are still on the to-do list. Resilience manifests itself in everyday life. At 45 years of age, one has the experience of life and all the vitality that comes from the combination of youth and maturity. This is how I would like to imagine the Regional Conference: strong, experienced, with vision and a firm determination to achieve its objectives.

Thank you very much and I hope we have a very productive conference.