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Distinguished ladies, colleagues, and friends,

I am honored by the invitation to open this important assemblage of women leaders in economics and finance. I welcome the opportunity to underscore both the importance of the issues that you are addressing today and the unique role that your group can play. I only regret that I will not be able to participate more fully in your discussions.

Before beginning my remarks, I want to express my **deep sense of loss**, that I know you all share today, from **the tragic death of Anna Lindh**, the Foreign Secretary of Sweden. Perhaps I could ask the Chair if we could share a moment of silence in her memory.

I first wish to underscore **the importance that we in the IMF attach to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015**. It is simply intolerable to see the persistence of extreme poverty and malnutrition, significant gender inequality in health and education, high rates of maternal and child mortality, poor sanitation, and limited access to clean drinking water. The MDGs must serve as a central framework influencing the policies adopted by countries intent on reducing poverty. They also must serve as an important guidepost for the international community, allowing donors to see whether their policies are efficiently focused and well-targeted for poverty reduction.

Realizing the MDGs can directly address the sources of gender inequality—**not only as an objective, but as an instrument of policy**. By successfully reducing child mortality rates, improving the prospects of young girls for primary and secondary education, and increasing access to clean water and sanitation, we can expect to see reduced rates of fertility and population growth; enhanced productivity; and women better able to realize more remunerative ways of supporting their families. In other words, by **addressing gender inequality, we can directly contribute to an increase in the human capital stock of a country**, and thus positively influence the growth of per capita income.

I am fully committed to do what I can, within the mandate of the IMF, to help achieve the MDGs. **For the IMF, the key focus must be on contributing toward realizing the eighth MDG—the development of a global partnership for development**. This means:

- **Fostering global economic stability and growth**, especially in the industrial world, and opening markets to create an environment conducive to higher growth and prosperity in poor countries;
- Helping developing country members **establish a framework for sound macroeconomic policies and institutions**. In close collaboration particularly with the World Bank, we must help our members strengthen the foundations for private sector-led growth and develop a long-term road map toward less aid dependency through better access to private sources of investment and finance. And we must assist developing countries to deal better with exogenous shocks to which they are particularly exposed. Technical assistance is a central element in our strategy to help developing countries build domestic capacity;
- Working with our development partners—low income countries, and bilateral and multilateral donors—to **design Poverty Reduction Strategies for achieving the MDGs**. In addition, we see the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers as an important way to increase the voice and participation of women in policy formulation;
- **Providing concessional resources**—through our Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility—in support of countries' Poverty Reduction Strategies;
- **Encouraging countries to adopt policies, such as higher social spending, that enable the poor to benefit from growth**, by expanding their economic opportunities;
- **Promoting debt relief**: through our enhanced HIPC initiative, the World Bank and IMF have reduced the net present value of the debt of 34 countries by \$39 billion; and
- Reminding industrial countries that their long-standing promise to devote **0.7 percent of their GDP to development assistance** remains the acid test of their commitment to poverty alleviation. Solidarity must rank higher on domestic policy agendas!
- And finally, we must also improve the allocation and effectiveness of development assistance and **break down trade barriers and agricultural subsidies** that limit the exports of developing countries;

In conclusion, I would like to recall the **provision in the Beijing Platform for Action to "ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making."** This is an area where the IMF is having both an indirect and direct impact. First, through our training programs for participants from member countries. And, second, through **our efforts to improve the representation of women in the IMF itself**, particularly in core departments and at the senior management level. *We practice what we preach.* We have **an active diversity program**, and have recently taken steps to further ensure that we achieve a better gender balance at all levels of the IMF. It is my hope that our efforts in this area will help to further focus the IMF and its staff on the need to do all that we can to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you again for your kind hospitality.