Speech of H.E. Ms. Nanténin Chérif
Minister for Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women and Children of the Republic of Guinea

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High Level Parallel Event
« A worldwide ban on female genital mutilation: from the Decision of the African Union to a United Nations General Assembly Resolution »

New York, 27 February 2012

Your Excellency, Mrs. Chantal Compaoré, First Lady of Burkina Faso,
Your Excellency, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women,
Your Excellency, Ms. Emma Bonino, Vice-President of the Italian Senate,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen the Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen the Ministers,
Madame the President of the Inter-African Committee,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to thank the Coalition for inviting the Republic of Guinea to take part in this important event in support of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution banning female genital mutilation (FGM) worldwide.

Our presence here is not accidental, as ever since its independence in 1958, the Republic of Guinea has been a pioneer in Africa in defending the emancipation of women and their effective participation in the decision-making process in all the spheres of the national life. I am even more proud to recall this contribution of our country to the promotion of the rights of women here, at the headquarters of the United Nations, where my compatriot Ms. Jeanne Martin Cissé was elected as first female President of the Security Council in 1972.

In the specific frame of the struggle for the elimination of FGM, the Republic of Guinea was the first African State to adopt a law against this practice in 1962.

More recently, hundreds of former practitioners supported by the Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionnelles Affectant la Santé des Femmes et des Enfants (CPTAFE), as well as by the communities in the prefectures of Kouroussa, Kérourané, Conakry, Mamou, Dalaba, Pita and Kissidougou, have publicly, solemnly and permanently lied down their knives, saving in that way thousands of young girls from the harmful consequences of this practice.

With the full assistance of my department, the regulations for the implementation of the second law banning FGM, passed in 2000, have been developed and its provisions implemented on the whole national territory of the Republic of Guinea.
This shows the clear determination of my country, its Government and its President Professor Alpha Condé, to totally eliminate FGM, which constitutes a real hindrance for women in the enjoyment of their full bodily integrity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Honorable Guests,
It is to continue its fight against FGM that my country has supported all the resolutions at regional and international levels condemning this practice as a clear violation of the human rights of women and asking for its total elimination. I would like to mention the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women, as well as the Decision of the African Heads of State adopted in July 2011 in Malabo asking the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a Resolution banning FGM worldwide during this present Session.

Our support for this project is boundless as we are more than ever convinced that the world unanimously has to say “no” to this degrading and absurd practice. The conquest for the right of women and girls has no nationality, no political color; it is solely universal. I therefore call upon all States, including those where FGM is not practiced, to join this noble Campaign in order to offer to our sisters and daughters, and why not, also to our brothers, a world free from FGM.

Ms. Executive Director of UN Women,
Your Excellency the First Lady,
Honorable Guests,

In his last report recently published, the Secretary General of the United Nations clearly denounced FGM and called upon all the Member States of our common organization to stand against this practice through the adoption of legal tools. In my view, the first legal tool is a resolution of the General Assembly banning FGM worldwide.

Your Excellency the First Lady,
Your presence in April 2011 in Guinea, side by side with our sister, Mrs. Djènè Kaba Condé, First Lady of the Republic of Guinea, in order to support the sub-regional workshop of religious leaders against FGM, was warmly welcomed by the Guinean people and their Government, as well as by the whole international community, which perceived in this common effort a source of inspiration for all your sisters First Ladies of Africa.

This is the opportunity for me to congratulate you all and to encourage you all in your noble and exalted coordination of this international Campaign.

I am particularly happy to address our friend, and I would even say our sister, Emma Bonino, whose engagement, self-abnegation and the deeply rooted conviction for a world free of injustice and violence against women requires no additional proof. I thank the Italian Government, who has supported all our efforts in this struggle.

I address my congratulations and encouragement to the African Ambassadors to the United Nations, and I want to remind them that their African sisters are attentive and that the hope of seeing this General Assembly Resolution adopted without delay should not be disappointed.
Your Excellency, Ms. Bachelet, your appointment at the head of UN is a great hope for billions of women and girls throughout the world. The Republic of Guinea is convinced that this hope will be translated into happiness for the women and girls worldwide.

Your Excellency Ms. Bachelet, dear friend Ms. Bonino, I would like to convey solemnly the message of millions of women and girls from the Republic of Guinea, who, when they were informed that I would share this podium with you, asked me to proffer an invitation to visit them officially in Guinea, so as to be inspired by their rich experiences and also to pass to them your very impressive experience, which makes women the world over proud. The women from the Guinean savanna, forest, mountains and coast expect you on the historic soil of Guinea.

Long live international cooperation for gender equality and the promotion of the rights of women and girls.

Thank you.