Thank you very much,

Thank you Emma for inviting me to this very important event.

I'm very proud of this initiative and very proud that Italy has been very active in fighting against FGM, and as a member of the new government I assure you that the support will continue and possibly be strengthened.

Italy, on legislative action, has adopted a comprehensive law that not only prohibits female genital mutilation but also mandates a range of prevention measures and support services to victims of female genital mutilation.

National action plans on eliminating the practice offer a framework for the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of comprehensive and coordinated strategies.

We also recognize that synergies among the various actors involved are very important and, to this end, a Commission for the prevention and the fight of the practice has been established since 2006.

Italy also carried out a lot of initiatives in preventing the practice through awareness-raising on the issue and its detrimental effects on psychological and physical health of women and girls. Available support services for victims, promotion of girls and women's human rights, training courses for teachers, other significant measures to protect and assist women and girls who have experienced or are at risk of female genital mutilation are being pursued.

Surveys and studies, as was already mentioned before, to enhance knowledge of the prevalence of the practice represents an important basis for policy and to this end the Italian Department for Equal Opportunities committed a research which underlined that in Italy women and girls victims of genital mutilation were more than 35 thousands, which may seems a small number, but in a country like Italy we consider it a large number.

Italy is also strongly supporting the adoption, by the UN General Assembly of an ad hoc resolution on FGM facilitating the relevant negotiation and discussion among the African partners which however play a key role and keep the leadership on this issue.

Moreover, Italy has promoted and organised a side-event, a concert to be held tomorrow night, focused on the elimination of the practice during this session; in addition, and two other side-events during the 44th and 56th session of this work.

All the actions above mentioned have been underlined as best practices in the Report of the Secretary General of the UN Economic and Social Council on measures taken by Member States for ending FGM.

So I really hope that, also with the help of Italy, the year 2012 will mark a difference, mark the adoption of this resolution and possibly the end of this unacceptable practice.

Thank you and best wishes for your work.