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Empowering rural women: What role for parliaments?

New York, 29 February 2012

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

We are pleased to announce that the annual parliamentary event on the occasion of the 56th session of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will be held in New York on 29 February 2012. The event, hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), will focus on *Empowering rural women: What role for parliaments?*

The meeting will focus on strategies to empower rural women. The morning session will discuss political empowerment of rural women. This segment will look at ways of ensuring that rural women are fully part of the political process and that their voices are heard and taken into account by parliaments. It will also look at the question of rural women's representation in Parliament. The afternoon session will discuss strategic objectives for the empowerment of rural women, including issues related to economic empowerment, equal access to land, credit and inheritance, education and health. The aim is to highlight actions parliaments can take to overcome barriers and advance the status of rural women. The meeting will therefore provide an opportunity to contribute to the debates at the CSW whose priority theme this year is *The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges*.

The IPU strongly encourages your parliament to request the inclusion of both male and female members of parliament in your country's delegation to the CSW session, including chairpersons or members of gender equality, agriculture or rural development committees. Not only would this ensure their attendance and contribution to the parliamentary event, but it would also facilitate parliamentary inclusion in the CSW discussions which will take place from 27 February to 9 March 2012. A copy of the agenda of the 56th session of the CSW is available at www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/56sess.htm. Please also note that the IPU will be organizing two informal one hour side-events on 1 March 2012. Since the United Nations does not have interpretation facilities in the informal meeting rooms, the debates for these side events will be held in English only.

We will be sending the agenda of the event and other pertinent documents as soon as they are finalized. These documents will also soon be available at www.ipu.org/strct-e/futrmets.htm. Meanwhile, we are pleased to attach the registration form.

Yours sincerely,

Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General