

*Routine Proceedings*

[*English*]

Canada is also proud to be in the forefront of international efforts to promote political, economic and social equality for women working within key international organizations. Within the United Nations we are one of the leading countries addressing the global problem of violence against women.

Canada recently sponsored a meeting of international experts to develop strategies to eliminate all forms of violence against women. In our Canadian delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which is meeting in Vienna this week and next, we will be seeking broad support for our international measures to counter violence against women.

We have also been working with the Organization of American States to develop an inter-American convention to eradicate violence against women. Indeed, within the Commonwealth, which we are also honouring today, Canada was successful in achieving renewed commitment for equality for women at our recent heads of government meeting. In fact, the Commonwealth leaders endorsed what is now called the Ottawa Declaration on Women in Structural Adjustment which the status of women ministers developed during their meeting here in Ottawa and which is aimed at promoting economic equality for women.

[*Translation*]

At the recent francophone summit, the Prime Minister announced that Canada would sponsor the establishment of a network of legal aid and referral centres for women in order to meet the needs of women in those countries.

On this International Women's Day, Mr. Speaker, while we celebrate our achievements of yesterday and today, it is also important to look to the next decade and the work that remains to be done to break down the final barriers to equality for women.

[*English*]

The challenges are many. I would like to see a future in which the only limits to women's achievements would be delivered by each individual herself. I would like to see a future in which half the seats in this House, in the Senate and in elected chambers across the land are held

by women. And I would like to see a future in which women hold half the management jobs in both the public and the private sectors, and employers consider it routine to help workers better balance work and family responsibilities.

But most of all, I would like to see a future in which Canadians resolve conflicts in non-violent manners and treat each other with fairness and respect.

To achieve this future, women and men must continue to work together. The lessons of the past and the present, the things done when we work together to bring about change, must not be forgotten.

Canada's commitment to the promotion of equality for women right across the world remains firm and unequivocal. On the occasion of International Women's Day, I wish to assure this House that the promotion and protection of women's rights will continue to be a fundamental aspect of both Canadian domestic and foreign policy.

**Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the minister on this very important International Women's Day.

Women have made significant gains in the last century. However, we still are a long way from being equal citizens. We have improved our position in society, not because those in power acted in an altruistic manner, believing that women were deserving of equal rights in the social, political and economic realms; rather, women have earned these rights and the right to be considered citizens and persons because they had to fight long and hard battles, most often without allies. Our rights have almost always been accorded grudgingly.

We are far from having obtained true equality. Women still earn only 65 per cent of what men do, and the glass ceiling still prevents women from climbing the corporate ladder and from reaching the upper echelons of the civil service.

This government's record belies the commitment to the advancement of women. At best, it is an uncomfortable commitment. Stricter gun control laws and the panel on violence against women are notable achievements for all women and for society in general. However, what the government gives with one hand, it takes away with the other.