

Mr. Chairman

The Netherlands acknowledges the patterns and trends in the unequal sharing of responsibilities between women and men as identified in the SG's report and as outlined by the panelists. In this respect, I would like to draw your attention to a dilemma which we in The Netherlands [and probably other countries,-] are facing at the moment.

On the one hand, one of the key challenges in Dutch policy is to raise the labour participation of women.

On the other hand, freedom of choice in all aspects of life is one of the basic principles in Dutch policy.

For many years, The Netherlands Governments has been promoting a situation in which women are better able to work more hours. The Netherlands policy focuses on enabling optimal individual choices by removing obstacles and creating positive conditions, such as the possibility to switch between full time and part-time work in different phases of life. However, part-time work options are still mainly taken up by women. Stereotypical assumptions about their role as caregivers strongly influence their choices.

The question is how we can change this culture, this is also what I would like to ask the panelists:

- *To what extent are Governments really able to make a major culture shift happen and change the hearts and minds of both women and men?*