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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
54th Session
Access to justice**

Madam President,

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Brazil welcomes the CEDAW members to its 54th Session. We would like to specially commend Professor Silvia Pimentel for her outstanding work as president of the Committee in the last few years. During her mandate she led CEDAW's activities towards the advancement of women's rights and the improvement of equality and non-discrimination in member States.

Brazil understands that justice is still unequally accessed by women and men, throughout the world, both in developed and developing countries. Women often face social, economic and procedural difficulties to have their rights guaranteed by the justice system. Women members of vulnerable groups are particularly targeted. Therefore, Brazil recognizes the relevance of the adoption of a General Recommendation on the matter by CEDAW.

Brazil has taken several measures to overcome this challenge. In 2006, the Maria da Penha Law was adopted, establishing mechanisms to fight domestic and family violence against women. Based on the law, Special Courts on Domestic and Violence against Women have been created.

According to the Secretariat for Women Policies, from 2003 to 2010, there was an increase of over 160% in services aimed at providing access to justice for women at risk of domestic violence, which include the creation of specialized police stations, shelters, specialized public defender and prosecutor offices, and specialized courts.

Furthermore, in 2012, the Brazilian Supreme Court decided unanimously that criminal suits grounded on Maria da Penha Law can be filed, even without the representation of the victim. It is worthy mentioning that Maria da Penha Law is known by 94% of the Brazilian population, it is Brazil's most popular law.

Brazil has also established, in 2005, a toll-free hotline (Dial 180) through which the Brazilian women can complain about gender violence in its various forms. It assists around 65,000 women per month. Since 2011, Brazilian women in Italy, Portugal and Spain can also use the service.

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Brazil believes that empowerment is also key to guarantee the access of women to justice. Empowered women are less vulnerable to violence and abuse. They are also better enabled to access justice.

On February 26, the Group of Women Ambassadors in Geneva will promote the event - “The power of empowered women”- to highlight the transformative impact of women as actors in societies around the world. A high-level panel of inspiring women leaders will share their personal experiences, and highlight the enabling factors that have allowed women to assume positions of leadership in virtually every field. We hope to see all of you there. Gender equality – It is in our hands!

Thank you.