# CSW56: Norway's statement on final day

3/15/2012 // As negotiations at the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women ended, Norway's UN Ambassador Morten Wetland delivered a strong statement in defence of gender equality and women's rights. Ambassador Wetland warned against the use of religious, cultural and certain so-called moral arguments to block decisions and avoid obligations that would save hundreds of thousands of lives every year.

"Madame Chair, fellow delegates,

The term - "Moral Hazard" – is often used when someone takes a risky decision - because they know that someone else will pay if the decision is wrong.

I am sad to say, this is precisely what we have witnessed at this year’s meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women:

In statements and in speeches - and in negotiations -

we have seen how moral values have been evoked,

to deprive women of their Human Rights, their opportunities - and ultimately, for some - their life!

This is the real Moral Hazard of our time!

Fellow delegates,

Norway fully respects and protects religious freedom and cultural diversity.

But we cannot accept that religious, cultural and certain so-called moral arguments are being used to block decisions and avoid obligations we all know would give millions of women freedom and save hundreds of thousands of lives every year.

All countries and cultures have their traditions and hold them dear.

But in 2012, with the knowledge we now have with regard to women’s rights, opportunities and health, we also know that certain perspectives and practices are harmful –and dangerous – to women.

This means we have to compromise.  Many will have to let go of some traditional convictions, also when they are based on religious belief or culture.

After all, every country, every culture and every society undergo permanent change.

That’s what’s called – development.

Norway will therefore continue to insist that the United Nations, including the Commission on the Status of Women, should take rational decisions for a better world for all – including all women.

Thank you Madame Chair."