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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

49TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

2ND MARCH 2005 - NEW YORK

Chairperson,

May I congratulate you and the Bureau on your election to Chair the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I assure you of my delegation's support.

Kenya associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Madagascar on behalf of the African Group. My delegation also associates itself with the statement of Jamaica, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to present on behalf of my Government an appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and platform for Action, including the outcomes of the 23^d Special Session. In addition, my presentation will reflect the gains made and the challenges we face in pursuit of Millennium Development Goals.

Kenya continues to take concerted measures to improve the status of women through policy review and enhanced programme development.

Policy perspectives on gender are reflected in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation and the National Policy on Gender and Development.

Chairperson,

Following a review of the constitution in 1997, Parliament outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex, and introduced affirmative action on the nominations of members of parliament. Consequently, the number of female MPs has doubled and the number of women councilors increased.

Kenya has undertaken a comprehensive review of the Constitution. The draft document has taken into account the principle of affirmative action, equal access to resources and equal citizenship.

Similarly, the Government established institutional mechanisms including the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and the National Commission on Gender and Development. I am convinced these mechanisms will promote, ensure and protect gender equality.

Chairperson,

In the education sector, policy reforms provide an enabling environment for ensuring equality. The enactment of the Children's Act, made universal free primary education mandatory, raised the age of majority for all children to eighteen years, outlawed female genital mutilation, and established the Children's Court. The Judiciary created the Family Court Division of the High Court. As a result, women and children have access to justice. Equally important, is the establishment of a trained specialized police unit to address issues of violence against women and children.

Chairperson,

May I assure you that there has been significant reporting in the media on violence against women. Significantly there is the increased enrollment of women in the mass media education. We are beginning to see a better representation of women's issues and perspectives.

Women are crucial to our national development agenda. They are the major players in agriculture, micro and small enterprises. Unfortunately, women are constrained from fulfilling their full potential. I believe that if we are to effectively address the aforementioned issues, we must sustain our efforts to attain the economic empowerment of women by ensuring equality in: inheritance, land ownership, property rights, and access to markets.

Chairperson,

As highlighted in the **Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and the Millennium Project**, currently before us, the global threat of HIV/AIDS, is not just a health or social issue, but a threat to our very existence. We are aware 77% of all HIV positive women live in Sub-Saharan Africa. HIV/AIDS has adversely impacted on our development with profound consequences for women. The rising number of HIV/AIDS orphans has intensified the burden on women – the primary care givers. H. E. President, Mwai Kibaki's emphasizes on community based interventions has boosted the campaign against the pandemic. Further, the National Women's Programme of Prevention, Advocacy and Support underscores the gender implications. I am convinced the improved provision of reproductive health services and access to affordable Anti Retrovirals, with the help of our development partners, will give impetus to our efforts to combat HIV/AIDS.

Finally, I reaffirm my Governments commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Millennium Development Goals, and the outcome of the 23 Special Session of the General Assembly. It is my conviction that through our collective efforts among Member States, development partners, civil society and other stakeholders, we can achieve our goals.

Thank you for your attention.