



PERMANENT MISSION OF
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High level Plenary

49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL
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Madame Chairperson,

As Minister of Health and Social Development of the Netherlands Antilles, it gives me great pleasure to reaffirm the importance the Kingdom of the Netherlands attaches to this 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This session takes place in an important year, as we prepare for the Review of the Millennium Declaration in September 2005. For us, it is evident that the Millennium Development Goals can not be realized unless the Beijing Platform for Action is fully implemented, and gender equality and the empowerment of women have been achieved.

[1. The global agenda]

Empowerment of women is an absolute must in order to achieve the Beijing goals on equality, development and peace, as stated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The major breakthrough of Beijing was the recognition that human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. This also includes the right to sexual orientation.

In Cairo, we committed ourselves to the goal of universal access to reproductive health services and we defined sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. In Beijing, we committed ourselves to sexual rights. Last fall, we recommitted ourselves to the Cairo Program of Action. At this CSW session, we are here to recommit ourselves to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, wisely stated, "the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed". The same message also clearly speaks from the report of the UN Millennium Project. Furthermore the Netherlands is convinced that gender equality and empowerment of women are indispensable in order to achieve sustainable development.

We find it extremely encouraging that Mr. Annan, in his opening remarks to this Commission yesterday, explicitly called upon all parties to take targeted actions on seven interdependent strategic priorities, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. He said that this was the minimum necessary to empower women and alter the historical legacy of female disadvantage that remains in most societies of the world. I would appeal to all to show the same strong political commitment, at the highest level, in September 2005.

[2. The Netherlands' agenda]

Madame Chairperson,

For the Netherlands, diversity and equal rights must coexist. Men and women must have the opportunity to build an independent existence on the basis of equal rights, opportunities and freedoms, in which differences in ethnicity, religion or conviction, marital status, physical ability, age and sexual preference play no role. The freedom of choice of men and women is an essential condition: justice must be done to this at every phase of life. Every individual may make claim to an economically independent existence and to a fair distribution of work, care and income, free from poverty and violence.

Since 'Beijing', policy has shifted towards a two-track approach, world-wide. The policy is directed at agenda-setting and monitoring, and at the same time, it aims at mainstreaming gender.

[After Beijing, the Netherlands has taken gender mainstreaming on board as a core business. What are we doing to accomplish our goals?

- We have developed a multi year policy action programme and a cabinet strategy on gendermainstreaming. As a consequence each government department was made responsible for its own plan of action and has developed three concrete measures. In addition we also have identified 5 major policy issues where improvement should be

accomplished by 2010. These are were , care and income'; daily routine'; `power and decision-making'; `human rights' and `knowledge society'.

- In order to make sure that the government is made accountable, we have established an independent external Auditing Committee for Emancipation, which will review the state of progress. The results of this review will be made available to the departments and will be presented to parliament in 2006.
- In addition, statistics on work, care and income; education; political and social decision making; violence against women, daily routine and the information society are bi-annually presented in an Emancipation Monitor.]

Madame Chairperson,

Empowerment of women and gender equality can not be achieved without the involvement of civil society. This is why we stimulate civil society's role through the provision of project grants. Currently grant priorities are (i) rights and security, (ii) labour force participation and economic independence, and (iii) decision-making and management.

A special concern for the Netherlands is to promote the combination of work and family life. The main objectives to be reached by 2010 are:

- Net labour market participation of 65% by women;
- A proportion of economically independent women in excess of 60%;
- The share of women in total income from employment in excess of 35%;
- The contribution of men to care to reach at least 40%.

For this purpose, over the last years, 27 million euros were spent to stimulate local experiments to facilitate the combination of work and family life. Creative new alliances between companies, (local) authorities, and social organisations such as schools, childcare and care facilities aim at simple but promising solutions.

We also introduced a life-course savings scheme, which financially facilitates longer periods of unpaid leave for employees.

The Netherlands is one of the 15 countries that have reached the critical mass of women's participation in parliament. Nevertheless challenges remain in the field of decision making in private companies, universities and at local government level.

Madame Chairperson,

[3. Trafficking of human beings]

Some of the most humiliating forms of violence are domestic violence, harmful traditional practices, violence against women in conflict and trafficking in human beings. Innovative approaches are required. Of course legislation is essential, but we can do more. Therefore we have a national action plan on domestic violence, a Committee on Female Genital Mutilation and a Taskforce 'Women in Conflict Situations and Peacekeeping'. In compliance with the Declaration of The Hague (1997), the Netherlands, as of 1 April 2000, was the first country to appoint an independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in human beings. This Rapporteur, who reports directly to government provides insights into the origins, factors and trends in trafficking in human beings. In addition information on the assistance to victims is included. The Rapporteur serves as an important driving force in the prevention and combating of trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual and other forms of exploitation. We also have developed a multi disciplinary plan of action against trafficking in human beings.

Madame Chairperson,

[4. Conclusion]

Let me conclude by saying that I hope that we will all return home from this meeting reinvigorated and ready to pursue our gender goals with renewed spirits.

Thank you.