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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF WOMEN AFFAIRS AND CHILD WELFARE

OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

AT

**THE 49TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**2ND MARCH 2005
NEW YORK**

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation congratulates you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We have no doubt in your ability to guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports before the Commission and express our gratitude to the Division for the Advancement of Women for its invaluable contribution to the advancement of gender equality.

Madam Chairperson,

Namibia associates herself with the statement made by the Representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Our intervention therefore is aimed at highlighting some of the achievements made and challenges facing us at national level.

Since independence Women's empowerment and gender equality has been at the center of the Namibian Government's Development programme. Inspired by our national Constitution, we acknowledge that gender equality and women empowerment are prerequisites for democracy and sustainable development.

The National Gender Machinery that has been in existence since independence went through a number of transformations from a Women Desk to a Department of Women Affairs and subsequently to a fully-fledged Ministry, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare. Following the assessment of the National Gender Machinery needs in 2003, a National Gender Mainstreaming Programme is put in place, and with the support of the University of Namibia monitoring and evaluation tools are being developed.

Therefore, The Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action are reinforcing instruments in the process for women advancement in Namibia.

Madam Chairperson,

We recognize the fact that, the road to gender equality is full of obstacles, some based on cultures and traditions as well as the whole concept of power struggle. Hence a need for us to make sure that, everybody is brought on board in attaining gender equality both at the national and international levels. We believe that, the participation of men, boys and girls in gender and women focused programmes is crucial. Hence, a need for a multi-sectoral approach.

Madam Chairperson,

For the past 10 years we have been faced with some challenges that have a negative impact on our gender programmes. HIV/AIDS and its linkage to poverty remains a big challenge. Gender based violence continue to haunt us and the society does not yet fully appreciate the concept of gender equality.

However, despite the obstacles mentioned some progress has been achieved, as the political will continue to be demonstrated in many ways. In addition to the National

Gender Policy adopted in 1997, gender responsive laws such as the Married Persons Equality Act, the Combating of Rape Act (which also recognizes marital rape) Domestic Violence Act among others were enacted. To emphasize those laws, legal literacy training is conducted and the target group includes traditional leaders.

In the area of Education to a certain extent, Namibia has reached the target set within the MDG's. In 2001, the ratio of girls to boys in primary education was 100 per 100 boys, for every 100 boys in Secondary school there were 113 girls, and girls per 100 boys in tertiary education are 111. However, girls continue to dominate in the so-called traditional women fields of study.

With regard to goal four, in 2000 the proportion of 1 year old children immunized against measles stood at 72%, while that of birth attendance by trained health personnel was 75% in the same year.

The Government also provides Anti Retroviral Therapy to HIV positive people. A very important programme considering that the care of orphans has become one of our national challenges.

Madam Chairperson,

Though we have not achieved the 30% women representation in our bicameral parliament, following last year's elections. We have reached the borderline of 25% in the National Assembly, 27% in the National Council, 23% governors, 27% town mayors and significantly 42% Local Authorities Councilors and 50% deputy mayors.

Women are also making inroads in the economy, by becoming owners of small and medium enterprises. However, need still stand to support women in the economy, especially those struggling with income generating projects.

Madam Chairperson,

As we continue to implement the Beijing Platform For Action (BPFA), all international instruments to which Namibia is a party to, i.e. the CEDAW, The African Protocol on People and Women's Rights, The Head of States and Governments Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, Statement of Commitment adopted at the 7th African Regional Conference on Women and the Commonwealth Plan of Action, remain our guiding documents.

Finally, Madam Chairperson, Namibia's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains solid.

I thank you.