

Statement
of the State of Qatar
At the 49th Session of
The Commission on the Status of Women

Delivered by

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the Supreme Council for Family Affairs
Chairperson of the Committee for Women's Affairs

Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It gives me great pleasure to extend to you our congratulations on the efficient, competent way you have been guiding the work of this commission. I would also like to extend thanks to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the measures taken and the progress achieved in the follow-up to the implementation of the conclusions of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Now, ten years after the Beijing Declaration, it must be acknowledged that the mechanisms for the follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action have succeeded in including the agenda for the advancement for women in the list of imperative tasks. The world has seen numerous movements in this direction on the national, regional and international levels. The follow-up mechanisms adopted have succeeded in urging states and organizations of the civil society to seek vigorously to achieve progress for the benefit of women in numerous domains.

Women and girls are the social group most affected by poverty, illiteracy, the spread of epidemics and disease and armed conflict in numerous developing countries and LDC's. The fact that these impediments limit the efforts aimed at the advancement of women makes it imperative for this year's session to underscore these challenges and to adopt recommendations in that regard. We look forward to a greater role for regional and international organizations in the advancement of women and the enhancement of their full participation in development.

Excellencies,

Under the leadership of His Highness, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifah Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar, Qatar has sought to establish a modern state based on broad popular participation, the rule of law, respect for human rights and elimination of discrimination in all its forms.

This orientation has been accompanied by an integrated institutional endeavor to create all the conditions conducive to a comprehensive renaissance. The endeavor to implement the decisions for the advancement of women was a natural result of a radical transformation aimed at achieving positive change and development.

The previous period has seen major efforts for the advancement of women. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the Consort of His Highness the Emir, has taken it upon herself to be the standard bearer for this advancement, sponsoring many of its programs and institutions. The first step to include gender questions in the process of development was the establishment of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs under the Chairmanship of Her Highness in 1998. Thus, for the first time in my country, there was a body that sought to safeguard women's rights and enhance their participation in all fields. This was followed by the establishment of many institutions and programs along the same lines. The Committee for Women's Affairs in the Supreme Council for Family Affairs undertook to review all plans and legislation affecting women in order to remove any discriminatory provisions therein, and propose any other necessary legislation. We have gone a long way in that direction, and the civil status draft code has attracted a lot of interests, since it is the law that most affects women. Also, numerous independent institutions have been established with a view to protecting and consolidating the stability of women such as the Family Counseling Center, and the Institution for the Protection of Children and Women which seeks to combat all forms of violence at home and in society, and deal with the problems resulting from such violence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have sought in the State of Qatar to create an enabling environment to guarantee the full participation of women in all aspects of the social, economic and political life. The constitution safeguards and all Qatari laws consecrate equality among all the citizens, men and women, without any discrimination. Hence, it was necessary to adopt a strategy aimed at upholding this role through gender planning. Work was initiated on the preparation of gender statistics for men and women in the State of Qatar and conducting the necessary studies and research to acquire sufficient information. This has yielded an integrated national strategy for the advancement of women in the State of Qatar. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs is currently engaged in implementing this strategy in coordination with all competent parties.

Proceeding from its belief in the renaissance based on upgrading the human capital, the State of Qatar, taking into consideration the principle of equal opportunity, has provided for all such essential needs as free education, free and comprehensive health care, and social protection through the Social Security Law, the Retirement and Pensions Law, and the Housing Bill. In recent years, the State of Qatar has launched a bold initiative aimed at comprehensive reform of public education and higher education which would offer our sons various alternatives for better education and specialized education in order to improve the various capacities. The State has also attracted a number of world renowned universities which have opened branches in the Education City. This, no doubt, will open new avenues for advancement for women,

The political leadership has made the participation of women in the Democratic process the focus of its attention. It established a standing electoral committee which is currently engaged in preparing for the first parliamentary elections under the permanent constitution of Qatar. This committee has, as its top priority, the enhancement of women's participation in the coming elections as voters and as candidates, in the wake of the successful participation of Qatari women in the elections for the Central Municipal Council.

In view of the fact that women and girls are the social group most vulnerable to the crimes of trafficking in people, the august Council of Ministers established, in 2003, a committee that elaborated a national strategy to combat trafficking in people, which is currently being implemented by a committee that reports to the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. Moreover, a national human rights committee was established in May 2002, consisting of representatives of the civil society and the government. This committee is mandated to achieve the objectives of international human rights instruments and conventions and includes in its membership a number of women.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

An environment characterized by security, peace and respectful human rights is necessary for the individual, man or woman, to exercise his/her rights, contribute to the process of development and enjoy its fruits. The Middle East region has long suffered the scourges of wars and conflicts as a result of foreign occupation. This situation has adversely affected the Arab individual in general and Arab women in particular, and was one of the major impediments to the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in the region. It is incumbent upon the International Community to accord greater attention to the situation of women in areas fraught with tension and those under occupation since any talk about the advancement of women remains academic as long as insecurity persists.

In conclusion, we wish the CSW success in its work, and hope that it will manage to elaborate modalities to improve the level of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, and the conclusions of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly, and achieve the hopes and aspirations reflected in them.

Thank you for your kind attention, and may God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.