



**Permanent Mission of
The Republic of Angola to the United Nations**

**STATEMENT
BY
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PROMOTION OF WOMEN**

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

NEW YORK, 7 MARCH 2005

Madam Chairperson
Distinguished Members of the Bureau
Dear Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour for me and my delegation to participate at this 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which coincides with the 10th anniversary of Beijing world Conference.

I avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your appointment for the chairmanship of this Session.

My delegation and I thank the Secretary General for his statement and agree with his observation that in Beijing women all over the world took a giant leap forward.

We also align with the statement by the delegation of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Madam Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Since independence, in 1975, Angola has faced many political and socio-economic setbacks. The war has had a devastating impact on the socio-economic infrastructures of the country, and, in particular, on the lives of women. The war had produced over four million internally displaced people and more than three hundred thousands refugees in neighbouring countries, 80% of whom were women and children.

As a result the majority of Angola's populations live in conditions of extreme poverty with limited access to education, health care, water, electricity and sanitation.

Women's lives are characterized by high levels of maternal and child mortality, malnutrition, illiteracy, poverty, violence, lack of resources, unemployment in the formal sector, high rate of participation in the informal economy and high prevalence of households headed by women.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Despite of the adverse conditions, the Government has undertaken important measures to address resource, institutional and socio-political constraints in order to progressively comply with its international and national obligations, under CEDAW and Dakar and Beijing Platforms of Action.

Angola has formally acknowledged women's right to equality in its Constitution and has promulgated legislation to address the social, economic, legal and political aspects of gender parity and discrimination against women, as reflected in the Family Code, as well as in legislative provisions related to HIV/AIDS, Nationality, Civil, Commercial and Penal Code, the elimination of all forms of violence against women and the exploitation of women and children, including trafficking and prostitution. Tough, the main obstacle for the full enjoyment of women's human rights is the ineffectiveness of these provisions.

The State Secretariat for the Promotion and Development of Women created in 1991, has been upgraded to a Cabinet – based Ministry in 1997. In addition to its responsibility for the formulation and implementation of national policy on the rights of women, focal points exist, in most other ministries to mainstream gender in Government's policies, programmes and projects. One of these programmes sought to eradicate gender based poverty through the provision of counselling, legal aid and micro-credit and other interventions for rural women.

Last year, the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women considered Angola's combined initial, second and third periodic reports and fourth and fifth combined periodic reports and noted that Angola has adhered to the seven major international human rights instruments and has endorsed the recommendations adopted by relevant United Nations Conferences, Summits and Special Sessions and encouraged the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

SOCIAL ECONOMIC SITUATION

In relation to health and education, the Government has prioritized the rehabilitation of infrastructures and training. Resources are being assessed to remedy the high rates of maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, illiteracy and limited access to water and sanitation. The Strategy and Strategic Framework for the Promotion of Gender to the year 2005, the Strategic Plan on Reproductive Health and the National Plan for Education, for All to the year 2015, the Strategic Programme for the Elimination of Poverty, the Strategic Programme for Rural Development, the Programme for Social Reintegration, the Programme for Family Tracing address specific needs of women and girl-children and to ensure that women can benefit from both formal and informal education.

In the field of unemployment, some, discriminatory attitudes towards young women exist in private enterprises. Despite a non-discriminatory labour law, the public sector is comprised of 60% of men and 40% of women, thus unemployment rates are higher amongst women, and women work predominantly in the informal sector where many of them operate their own business.

VIOLENCE AND HIV/AIDS

Gender based violence is more rampant than ever before, despite of the existence of services which include counselling and legal aid, almost all over the country. Gender based violence includes abduction for marriage, rape, wife beating, early marriage, adultery and it varies across time and space and in intensity and prevalence. It has significant emotional and psychological costs in addition to other issues related to lost productivity, health, loss of self-

esteem and is direct contradiction to the objectives of gender equality and women's enjoyment of their human rights.

Although the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is low comparing to many countries in the region, it is the greatest challenge, once in a gender perspective women and young girls are the most affected not only because of the contamination, but due the impact on their health and on the care of children. Strategies to contain HIV and STI include gender mainstreaming into HIV/AIDS programmes, the establishment counselling centres, antiretroviral therapy for prevention of mother-to-child and the creation of a national Commission with a strong commitment at the highest level.

POLITICAL AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Despite the equal opportunities and entitlements, and legal status of women and men, differences are seen in equitable access, particularly in decision making and governance, leading to lower levels of achievement for Angolan women.

Women's participation in decision making is slowly being promoted, as few women are represented in political and public life. 2 out of 30 ministers are currently women, as there are 10 out of 50 vice-ministers. 26 out of 220 members of parliament are women, while 6 of 66 ambassadors are women (3 in office). Only 2 women work for Regional institutions and no Angolan women is currently represented in international arenas.

Ladies and Gentlemen

My Government reaffirms its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as to the emancipation of women in general. Above all it is aware of the challenges faced in the implementation of its obligations under the Platforms of Action of Dakar and Beijing and of the CEDAW. Women's Rights were affected by social and political changes and had to be protected through civil, political, social and legal measures. Women need to be prioritized in social policies and enjoy equal **opportunities** in the fields of assistance, education, training and employment.

The Government of Angola recognises that as the economy and society modernizes, diverse needs emerge, prompting shifts in traditional roles and responsibilities, value systems, **transformation** in family patterns and, migration.

Madam Chairperson
Ladies and Gentlemen

The signing of the Luena Agreement in 2002, which brought peace to the country, is a positive development that could usher in peace, greater security and **opportunities** for women's empowerment and gender equality.

Now, that the war is an issue of the past, Angola lives a new era. The Government is still taking measures to improve the living conditions of the population and to strengthen

democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law. This trend is an opportunity for strengthening women's access to civil, economic and political rights and legal protection.

Our experience has shown that women are as capable as men. It is time to remedy the old idea of women's vulnerability and recognize that is necessary to remind ourselves about the changing nature of how women's rights are affected and the need for civil, political, social, economic and legal measures. The 2006 General Elections will be the occasion to increase in number of women in decision making positions.

Madam Chairperson
Ladies and Gentlemen

Even with the strongest determination, it will not be easy for developing countries to put in place all the services needed to guarantee women the full enjoyment of their rights. In this, solidarity and exchange of information should be our motto. We look to our friends and partners in the most developed countries to come to the aid of the least developed. As we review and evaluate the implementation of Beijing, we have a historic opportunity. We (women) are the richest as well as the largest generation of human beings. We have a choice before us- to create an unbalanced world which AIDS, poverty, malnutrition, unemployment will cripple societies and condemn vast populations to a life of hopelessness, or we can share in a world of unequalled prosperity.

There is a need of reexamining the institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and to reaffirm where the responsibility for perpetuating the discrepancy between commitments and the implementation lies, because we will not be able to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the NEPAD Programmes and the Millennium Development Goals without the requisite resources.

We must fight gender bias, and teach young men and boys from earliest childhood that women are their equals and worthy of respect. This is a basic value.

We can guarantee the future of our women and young girls if we have the will and the means to do so. We have many problems, I know, but the solution is within our grasp. I hope every one in this hall will commit themselves once more to achieving the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, towards gender equality and equity and persuade that investments in women and girls are not a drain on, national resources, but an investment on our countries' future- and that the investment must be done now for the sake of our future.

LONG LIVE WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD

I THANK YOU FOR KIND ATTENTION