



# **MALAWI**

**STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE JOYCE BANDA, MP.,  
MINISTER OF GENDER, CHILD WELFARE AND COMMUNITY  
SERVICES DURING THE HIGH LEVEL PLENARY**

**ON THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE OUTCOME  
DOCUMENT OF THE TWENTY THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**AT THE**

**FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**7 MARCH 2005**

***(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)***

## **Chairperson**

At the outset, I would like to align my delegation to the statement delivered by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Let me also congratulate Ms Rachel Mayanja for assuming the position of Special Advisor to the Secretary General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of women.

## **Chairperson**

The Government of Malawi reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which Malawi ratified in 1987, significantly contributed to the creation of an enabling environment for women's advancement and gender related programmes at national level.

Policy measures in gender are clearly stipulated in the National Platform for Action, the National Gender Policy, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the National Strategy on Gender Based Violence, and the National Gender Program.

Malawi recognizes that the empowerment of women is central to the attainment of the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, government designated the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services as the National Gender Machinery to provide oversight coordination of the Gender policy and Programme. To ensure full participation of NGOs in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, a network of NGOs working on gender was created to work hand in hand with government in fulfilling its obligations on the gender agenda. Overtime, gender mainstreaming has been embraced as the key strategy for the attainment of gender equality.

A number of policies and programmes aimed at creating a conducive environment for poverty reduction among women have been developed. Malawi is implementing small and medium scale enterprises development programmes targeting women which have improved women's access to credit, advisory services and markets.

## **Chairperson**

Malawi Government strongly believes that education is critical to the attainment of gender parity. In this respect free primary education was

introduced in 1994 resulting in a significant increase of enrolment of girls in primary schools.

Gender equality cannot be achieved without guaranteeing women's reproductive health rights. Thus Malawi, through its comprehensive sexual and reproductive health programme provides maternal and neonatal care services, family planning and prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS. Some notable achievements include the increase in contraceptive prevalence to 26%, the reduction of fertility rate to 6.3% and infant mortality rate to 104/1000 live births. Despite these achievements Malawi remains challenged by high maternal mortality rate of 1,120/100,000 live births and critical shortage of skilled health personnel.

The elimination of violence against women is an essential element of the Beijing framework and of immense importance to achieving sustainable development, peace and security. Malawi is committed to addressing gender- based violence as a priority. A network against gender-based violence is now in place with men as active partners. Police victim support units have been created in all districts. A proposed domestic Violence bill has been developed to increase appreciation of evils of gender based violence among the general public and increased demand for better services to address incidences of gender based violence at all levels.

### **Chairperson**

In recognition of the critical role of Women in Power and Decision making Positions, Malawi has created a conducive policy and institutional framework for enhancing women's participation. Malawi has a woman Inspector General of Police for the first time, the Malawi police service and the Malawi army have made great strides in placing women in decision-making position. In addition, parliament has 13% women, an increase from 8.5% in 1999.

To address Human Rights of Women, a Special Law Commission on Gender responsible for reviewing gender related laws has been instituted. So far, the Wills and Inheritance Act has been reviewed and the family law is under review.

On Women and the Environment, there has been a review of forestry, natural resources, environment and fisheries policies to increase women's participation in natural resource management at all levels.

In general, Malawi has made progress in the implementation of Beijing Platform for Action. However, a lot of work still remains to be done in order

to really attain gender equality. Women's position in the society remains subordinated. Their access to Information Communication and Technology is an emerging issue that needs to be addressed in order to improve their access to development and market information.

HIV/AIDS continues to decimate the gains made in all aspects of women's advancement and as it brings along the burden of care of the sick and orphans hence reducing their labour in the productive economy. The majority of women lack access to affordable drugs to treat HIV/AIDS. Therefore the international community must spare no efforts in the battle to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.

### **Chairperson**

Finally, allow me to conclude by saying that Malawi has firmly placed the gender agenda on its development endeavors because it recognizes that sustainable development with a human face cannot be achieved unless women, men, boys and girls work together as partners in development.

**I thank you.**