

PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF VANUATU TO
THE UNITED NATIONS

MISSION PERMANENTE
DE LA REPUBLIQUE
DE VANUATU
AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES

FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN

HIGH LEVEL PLENARY MEETING

"FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON
WOMEN AND TO THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ENTITLED "WOMEN 2000: GENDER
EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

STATEMENT BY THE HON. ISABELLE DONALD
HON. MINISTER OF COMPREHENSIVE REFORM PROGRAM (CRP)
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

NEW YORK
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Madam Chairperson

I am deeply honored to present this statement to you on behalf of the women of my country and the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu.

On behalf of the Vanuatu delegation, I wish to convey to you our congratulation for accepting this most challenging and important role. We are confident that through your guidance, we will achieve the goal of the 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Madam Chairperson

The forty-ninth session of the Commission is taking place at a critical time in the advancement of women and I am delighted to have this opportunity to present on behalf of my government the outcome report of the Beijing Declaration and the platform of action.

This year 2005 marks the 10th Anniversary of our commitment towards Beijing+10 and our focus has expanded significantly since the end of the decade for women in 1985 in response to many international conferences such as in Nairobi, Beijing, the Millennium Development Goals and the call by the Commonwealth Ministers for mainstreaming gender in development.

We are now Madam Chairperson focuses on the 4 benchmarks for women determine by the Comprehensive Reform Program after reviewing the 12 critical areas of our national plan of action on the implementation of Beijing Platform for Action. The following has formed the basis of our national plan of action after the review:

- raising awareness about Gender Issues
need for gender disaggregated data
- supporting legislation to reduce violence against women and children
and to protect the family
and the economic empower of women

Madam Chairperson, we have made a lot of progress to promote the advancement of women and I am delighted to outline the following achievements:

We have completed our combined CEDAW report and will submit the report to the Secretariat while we are here.

Our government's philosophy of working in partnerships for equality has resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between government and non-government organization. With the MOU, the government has work closely with women's groups in the non-government sector to implement a wide range of programmes design to:

- empower women to better care for their families
- become aware of their rights
- encourage their participation in decision making
- develop their economic ability
- raise their awareness about health
- and human rights issues and promote CEDAW

Currently our Government is embarking on tabling a family protection Bill which purposed that domestic violence is a crime and will give power to our traditional and religious authorities to issue protection orders to victims.

Madam Chairperson,

In terms of Gender and economic empowerment, I am please to report to this important forum that since the inception of the women's micro-finance scheme in 1997 to provide loans to poor and disadvantaged women, the scheme has transform from a small project scheme to a financial institution. This year the institution has lend more than \$540,000.00 dollars to more than 500 disadvantage women. Furthermore, as part of this year's (2005) new initiatives, the institution has signed a contract with Habitat Humanity to construct houses for those who are members of the institution. This new concept has attracted a lot of disadvantage women to become the members of the institution.

The Government has grant the institution to operate under the charitable act in which it is exempted from tax, licenses and other fees to allow the institution to be profitable. Since its operation in 1997, it is now anticipate that by year 2009 the institution would be sustain ability viable – without the donor and government support.

Again Vanuatu Government has recognized the call by our women to have a fully-fledged Ministry of Women's in the future and we are committed to further dialogue on the proposal.

In order to encourage progressive development on education for women in Vanuatu, the government has recently completed a feasibility studies on – online tertiary studies for women, and has appointed a committee to develop strategies to implement the recommendations highlighted in the report. It is envisage that the on-line tertiary studies would be another means of providing opportunities to women who wishes to pursue their tertiary qualification.

To promote constructive measures of development and to co-operate with one another to practically implement the equity component of the Beijing Platform for Action, I wish to inform you and your distinguish representative that my government has appointed an equity officer as part of the public sector restructuring to co-ordinate and provide advice on equity issues.

Madam Chairperson,

I reaffirm my government's commitments to the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action because our nation believes that the integration of women in decision making and increasing opportunities for women, will confirm our path of progress towards the development of our country.

As a developing country we still encounter many difficulties and challenges and we still have a long way to go to achieve full equality of women with men but we have made a strong start.

I thank you Madam Chairperson.