



*The
Bahamas*

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION

STATEMENT

by

**The Honourable Loretta Butler-Turner, M.P.
Minister of State for Social Development**

24 February, 2011

New York

Please check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

The Bahamas congratulates you and the members of the Bureau on your election to this 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and also with the statement made by yours truly on behalf of CARICOM.

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased, as a Minister with direct responsibility for women affairs, to present this statement today – a momentous day for women around the world as this evening we will celebrate the historic launch of UN Women. The Bahamas welcomes its establishment, and like many speakers before me, I extend my congratulations to Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women and to the members of her team.

With the establishment of UN Women, we have achieved yet another milestone for women. My Government reaffirms its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. As a small developing country steadily emerging from the effects of the global economic and financial crises, The Bahamas, despite its vulnerabilities, has been able to undertake this past year a number of initiatives to ensure its full and effective implementation of the Platform and various outcomes.

Mr. Chairman,

The many successes we have witnessed since Beijing do not culminate with this evening's historic launch of UN Women. Yes, we have much to celebrate. However, we must be forever mindful that women and girls throughout the world are still experiencing discrimination and gender stereotype in the home, in the workplace and in schools. Persistent poverty, violence and sexual abuse still affect an overwhelming majority of women. Further, illiteracy, the lack of educational and employment opportunities and access to adequate health care are challenges we have yet to overcome. Notwithstanding, with steps taken in the last decade to decrease the global digital divide, we see increasingly new cyber threats targeting young women, girls and also boys. In terms of women's health, it would be remiss of me as a representative of a Member State of CARICOM if I did not

mention the initiative on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which affect women disproportionately than men. More notably, the apparent link of NCDs to poverty and socio-economic development can not be sufficiently underscored. My Government welcomes the upcoming high-level meeting on NCDs to be convened this September and calls for the support of all Member States for this important global health and development initiative.

Mr. Chairman,

I thank the Secretary-General for the reports presented on the priority theme and commend a number of the recommendations related to increasing the representation of women in science and technology.

Mr. Chairman,

The Educational and Employment Acts of The Bahamas fully ensure the equal educational rights for boys and girls and full employment and decent work for men and women. Educationally, boys and girls are able to pursue the same subjects at all levels, including at tertiary institutions. Increasingly girls are pursuing subjects that have traditionally been regarded as 'male' subjects in response to the changing demands of the local labour market. One of The Bahamas' success stories in promoting non-traditional educational training and employment opportunities for young people is the establishment of The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI), which has seen greater numbers of females seeking careers in agriculture, construction engineering, electronics, and automotive and electrical engineering and technology.

Further, a resource booklet to promote careers in science and technology was produced in 2006 for secondary schools by governmental and local civic organizations. The booklet highlights a range of careers in various fields of science and technology, with brief descriptions of the profession and prerequisites for particular fields of study. It also highlights prominent Bahamians in education, training, science and technology. Of note are the significant numbers of females currently holding high-level administrative and faculty positions throughout The Bahamas' educational system. Several are leading associate and assistant professors in natural science and environmental studies and have served as Chairpersons of the Natural Sciences Division at the country's tertiary institute.

While these are notable achievements, I am well aware that this is not enough. With the rapid advancement in information and communication technology (ICT) shaping the global environment, we still have much work to do in The Bahamas to increase women and girls participation in the field of education, training, science and technology. An overwhelming number of female graduates are still inclined to pursue careers in the humanities, social sciences, and judicial fields.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, we must continue our efforts to eliminate the educational and employment barriers faced by women and girls in all spheres of society if we are to empower them to participate fully in this scientific and technical global environment. As Dr. Barbara Hull, a notable virologist from the Caribbean was quoted as having said on the pursuit of careers in science *“All scientific findings, if well used, can benefit mankind. There is no better way to spend your life than in the pursuit of science – with a conscience.”* Let us hope that women and girls around the world will heed the call and pursue careers in this field.

Thank you.

