

# GHANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF GHANA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
19 EAST 47TH STREET  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017  
TEL. 212-832-1300 • FAX 212-751-6743



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# STATEMENT

BY

**HON. JULIANA AZUMAH-MENSAH  
MINISTER FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS**

AT THE

**55<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION  
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 3: FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD  
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND TO THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL  
SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY "WOMEN 2000: GENDER  
EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE FOR THE  
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"**

NEW YORK, 22 FEBRUARY- 4 MARCH, 2011

**Mr. Chairman,**

It is an honour for me to address the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I wish to warmly congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to steer the affairs of the Commission. We are confident that under your stewardship, we will achieve progress in addressing the challenges states encounter in the implementation of strategies towards the promotion of access to, and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology as well as the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

My delegation wishes to align itself with the statements made by Mozambique and Argentina on behalf of Africa and the Group of 77 and China, respectively. We commend the Secretary General for the quality of his report. We are of course aware that in spite of the significant progress made many challenges still exist. We are nevertheless persuaded by the report of the Executive Director of UN Women on the strategic direction that is being chartered to face up to these challenges.

In this connection, we will encourage UN Women to factor in existing regional structures such as the African Union and ECOWAS in the on-going study on field capacities, in order to complement the review of national level capacities. Ghana will continue to promote the access to and participation of women and girls in education, science and technology, convinced that science and technology are crucial for modernization, industrialization and socio-economic development.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In 1987, Ghana launched the Science, Mathematics and Technology Education (STME) designed to address the gender imbalance and misconceptions about girl's participation in Science, Technology and Mathematics Education in general. Accordingly STME clinics were organized for girls. To help sustain this process, the Ministry of Education, in 1991, set up a desk for the coordination of STME. Subsequently, the clinics were decentralized into zonal levels where two or three regions were combined in clusters for each clinic. By 1999, clinics were extended to include girls from the Junior High Schools and organized in all the ten regions of Ghana.

The experiences gained from these Clinics served as a foundation for the establishment of the Girls' Education Unit (GEU) and the Science Education Unit (SEU) in 1997 and 2001 respectively. The combined efforts of these two units have contributed a great deal to improve girls' access and performance in education in general, and science and mathematics in particular. After twenty years of the organization of the clinics, women are currently in employment areas which were previously perceived to be male dominated.

The ultimate goal for the organization of the Clinics is to achieve the target of 30% of female students at the tertiary level taking up Science, Technology and Mathematics related courses. Even though this goal is yet to be achieved, the STME Clinics have produced the following positive results:



- Students (girls in particular) are better able to deal with gender stereotypes associated with female participation in the so called non-traditional careers while misconceptions and psychological barriers to female participation in Science, Technology and Mathematics subjects are gradually being broken.
- Student enrolment in science and mathematics is now higher than before the programme started. At the inception of the STME Clinics for girls, only 12% of students were enrolled in science and 2% in mathematics at Senior High Schools. Currently, female students constitute 25% of students studying science and technology related programmes in the Universities and the Polytechnics.

It is encouraging to note that recent Senior High School examination results also indicate that girls are achieving better grades in science as compared to their performance in previous years. Moreover, some schools have reported higher numbers of girls than boys participating in science programmes, and the former are also performing better than their male counterparts.

The STME intervention has seen a total of 40,908 girls at clinics and camps from 1986 - 2010. Following this success, the focus of the clinics has shifted since 2010, towards building the capacity of both girls and boys in creative thinking, hence the new programme: Science, Technology and Innovation Education (STIE) Camp for students. Organized under the theme: "*Ensuring Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Innovation Education for a Better Ghana*", these camps were targeted at selected students in Junior High in the various regions.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We hope to continue mobilizing all national stakeholders as well as enhance collaboration with UN Women and other development partners. This will require developing our institutional capacities and the provision of relevant technical and financial support at the national and sub-national levels. It will also involve the development of the appropriate interdepartmental programme coordination to ensure an efficient and sustainable system of training and development of scientists for a science literate society. Every effort will also be made to collaborate with our existing regional institutions as created by ECOWAS and the African Union to help realize an African literate society.

I wish to conclude by emphasizing the importance that my delegation attaches to this 55<sup>th</sup> session. We are pleased that the work of the Commission continues to be invaluable in raising and maintaining awareness of issues pertaining to gender inequalities for socio-economic development and peace. In this regard, it is our hope that the outcome of this session will engender innovative strategies that will accelerate efforts at the goal of this year's theme so as to attain gender equality and women's empowerment.

**I thank you.**