



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE  
KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

235 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street, 16<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel. (212)-519-9500  
Fax. (212)-370-1954  
[www.netherlandsmission.org](http://www.netherlandsmission.org)

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**STATEMENT BY**

**H.E. Ms. Marja van Bijsterveldt**

**Minister of Education, Culture and Science**

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Madam Chair, thank you.

Let me first align myself with the statement made by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union.

In 1995 we agreed in the Beijing Platform for Action that gender equality forms the basis of a society where both women and men are free to make their own personal choices, unimpeded by stereotypes and prejudice.

This Platform for Action is a precious commodity in our efforts to ensure a brighter future for women and girls. I am therefore deeply concerned by the restrained use of — and sometimes even critical attitude towards — the concept of gender which has become evident since the previous CSW.

The Netherlands regards it as inconceivable that, seventeen years after reaching agreement in Beijing, the principles that underlie the Platform for Action may once again be open to question. In 2012, surely our efforts should go further than merely propping up agreements we made seventeen years ago. The Netherlands therefore believes that our efforts should be directed towards progress.

We deeply believe in the strength of women. For that reason the Netherlands will continue to work hard on the political and economic empowerment of women, including by supporting the role of rural women in achieving food and nutrition security.

But we must also counter violence against women. Madam Chair, may I ask special attention for LBT women in this context?

We also should improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women.

Because giving girls and women control over their own sexuality improves their chances of living a healthy life and achieving personal development.

It enables them to go to school, to work, to obtain information about their health and education, and to influence their country's government.

Girls and women in rural areas are often more vulnerable. Many of them lack information and have limited access to health care services. These factors increase the risk of maternal mortality. Often younger sisters or cousins care for the motherless child and, as a result, are deprived of the chance to go to school. A lost generation is born.

Madam Chair, we have to ensure that human rights apply to all people, in all places and at all times. Surely they apply also to people of different sexual orientation and gender identity.

I hope from the bottom of my heart that every government wants its citizens to live in safety and liberty, regardless their age, sex, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

If we all agree on this --we should be able to make progress and set the conditions for gender equality.

Let us do as we promised so many years ago and give girls and women control over all spheres of their lives. In doing so, I am convinced we will contribute to a greater goal that we all share: stability, peace and security throughout the world.

Madam Chair,

We often make the mistake of seeing women as victims. But women have an enormous strength. Across the globe we see women building independent lives. Even after tragic setbacks, they pick themselves up and carry on.

Let's take inspiration from their example. Let's move forward with the agreements we made seventeen long years ago. Let's give women the position they deserve, as economic actors and agents of change.

May success and wisdom be ours in the next two weeks — weeks that can make a tremendous difference to the women and girls in our societies.

Thank you.

