



PORTUGAL

**Fifty-Sixth Session of
the Commission of the Status of Women
General discussion**

**Statement by
H.E. the Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs
and Equality of Portugal
Ms. Teresa Morais**

New York, 29 February 2012



Madam Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for me to address you on this Commission, on behalf of the Portuguese Government, that took office in June 2011 and is therefore the first time that I have the opportunity to participate in its work.

As a privileged forum for the discussion and the assumption of commitments, I have the highest expectations in the outcome of the work of this Commission.

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the Portuguese Constitution, and one of the crucial tasks of the Portuguese State is to promote it, in a transversal and effective way, through appropriate public policies.

The progress and the quality of democracy will only be fully achieved when we have succeeded in eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and their under-representation.

The Program of the 19th Constitutional Government has defined greater accountability of the State in the achievement and promotion of policies for gender equality throughout society by enhancing equality between women and men, not only as a matter of rights and social justice, but also as a precondition for the achievement of the objectives of sustainable growth, jobs and solidarity.

Policy in this area is obviously based on the framework of international guidelines and commitments, including the core principles of the Beijing Platform for Action.

There are clear progresses in building equality in law and many steps taken to achieve effective equality between women and men.

We, in Portugal, achieved a reasonable situation as regards levels of political participation of women and men, but the same cannot be said with regard to representation of both sexes in economic decision-making, where the presence of women is clearly insufficient.

In order to change this situation, Portuguese Government approved, last week, a resolution requiring companies of the public sector the approval, implementation and evaluation of plans for equality, to achieve a balance in the presence of men and women on the boards. The same action is recommended, for now, to private companies. The evaluation results will be done by Government every six months.

Madam Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

Portugal is currently implementing the following National Plans and Programme of Action:

- IV National Plan for Gender Equality, citizenship and non-discrimination (2011-2013);
- IV National Plan against domestic violence (2011-2013);
- II National Plan against trafficking in human beings (2011-2013);

- National Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Resolution 1325 (2010-2013);
- II Programme of Action for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (2011-2013).

These plans are strategic instruments of public policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

The commitment to mainstream gender in all governmental activities, namely, in all policies implemented at the central and local levels of Public Administration, is also translated on the adoption of gender equality plans and on the institutionalisation of ministerial equality advisors and teams in each of the eleven ministries that comprise Portuguese Government.

These Plans are a fundamental tool in gender mainstreaming. Accordingly, all ministries have prepared or carried out a revision of the existing ministerial plans and are preparing, at sectorial level, the execution of the measures with regard the implementation of the National Plans.

The successive Governments, at least in the last decade, encouraged the municipalities to implement Municipal Plans for Equality.

The National Equality Body (*the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality*) recently launched the contest "*Live in Equality*" intended to distinguish best practices of the municipalities in promoting gender equality.

This is of extreme importance as local authorities have a fundamental task in providing women, especially those living in rural areas, an opportunity to identify the constraints on their full participation in economic and public life, and to develop specific initiatives in their favour.

Finally, let me finish by saying that the deep economic crisis we are facing in Europe can be a risky moment for the promotion of equality.

The budgets are overwhelmed, unemployment and precarious work rise and women being more likely than men to be adversely affected.

Therefore, all our attention must focus on ensuring that the situation does not lead to a deteriorating position of women in labour market, on the contrary, we have to recognise their professional qualifications and take full advantage of their potential in order to overcome this critical moment.

It will not be easy... but the fight for women's rights never was!

I wish a fruitful work to the Bureau and to the Commission in the next two weeks.

Thank you for your attention.