



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SOLOMON ISLANDS TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Statement by Mrs. Helen Beck**

**Counsellor**

**Permanent Mission of Solomon Islands to the United Nations**

**at the**

**Fifty-sixth Session of the Commission on Status of Women**

**On the 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century": Implementation of strategic objectives and actions in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges"**

**New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012**

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Madam Chair, my delegation congratulates you and the Bureau on your election and assures you of our cooperation. We thank the Secretary General for his reports that contribute to our discussion.

We also thank the UN Women and CEDAW for their continuing work on women and gender equality and assured them of our support.

My delegation associate with statements by G77 and China, and Pacific Islands Forum and would like to contribute to the discussion in our national capacity. The theme of this session “**Empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges**” we believe is the key to sustainable development to achieve the MDGs.

Solomon Islands is an archipelago of 1000 islands, with a population of 520, 000, speaking 87 languages, with 80% of our population live in rural areas, majority are women and with diverse cultures. Part of society, is matrilineal with women own tribal land and the natural resources, and the other being patrilineal has women with no explicit titles to tribal land and resources.

Our acquired political system does not provide legal protection for the cultural ownership of land and resources by our matrilineal communities to ensure the rights of these women are protected. This has seen systematic alienation of these rural women, of their rights to land and resources. Commercial use of tribal land and resources, have shifted their rights to men.

As a post conflict country, we are mindful of the transitional phase we are going through to ensure sufficient attention is focus on the economic empowerment of women in particular rural women to build confidence for their participation in decision making that affect their lives. This is to ensure institutional mechanisms are in place and integrated through national processes for women at all levels. The challenges are many and we are working with our development partners to address some of them. We are looking at a holistic approach with a menu of programmes and measures to deal with the complexity of our gender challenges as we move forward.

Violence against women is one of the major national concerns as it has increased over the conflict and post conflict periods with fewer economic opportunities, and high unemployment that further exacerbated the pressures on women. Community outreach and targeted programmes for both urban and rural women, has yet to fully address this problem.

Work on mainstreaming gender within the wider government system is work in progress. A base line data is established allowing for development of strategies to enhance gender capacity within the national system, and amend national old laws to address the gender

gap system-wide. The Ministry of Women Youth and Children Affairs is tasked with the advancement of women in the country and to implement newly approved 2010 National policy on Gender Equality and Women Development. The national women machinery is working on a National Action Plan to translate this Policy into programmes and activities for implementation at all levels.

Madam Chair,

Climate change and natural disasters is a survival challenge for rural women in my country. Droughts, floods, sea level rise, king tides are impacting on water, food and security of livelihood. The frequency of natural disasters have increased and displaced communities and caused issues of food insecurity, tension over land resources, access to land and increased violence against women. Moreover it increased challenges for women's rights to land and property. Many rural women are holding back their children from attending schools just to help to secure food for the family. We urge for a reduction of greenhouse gas emission to stabilize global temperature below 1.5 degrees Celsius to protect rural women and security of livelihoods.

Madam Chair, at the international level, empowerment of rural women needs a holistic approach to provide an enabling environment. This includes investment in education infrastructures and services, access to markets, financial resources, water and sanitation, productive capacity building and economic activities to enhance rural women participation in the economic sector at all levels to reduce hunger and poverty.

Our collective search for solutions must also broaden global cooperation to facilitate rural women access to productive resources to support their economic empowerment in addressing food security and sustainable livelihoods.

It is important to have an integrated multisectoral approach to gender equality matched with opportunities to unlock access to financial resources, technology transfer, education and literacy, and other basic services to enable sustainable development transformation for rural women. This rests on cooperative partnership to support targeted development programs to support rural women entrepreneurships.

Madam Chair,

A balance focus on state institutions and investment in the rural sector, must also be given global attention to ensure access to, relevant, rural focused and community based technologies are included in programs for rural women and girls.

To conclude, Madam Chair, empowerment of rural women is critical in mainstreaming gender in sustainable development to facilitate access to education, clean energy, agriculture/food security, health, trade, human and social development, and build resilience against impacts of climate change and disasters in order to achieve the MDGs. Thank you Madam Chair.