



Statement

by

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of the
Permanent Mission of the
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
to the United Nations**

to the

General discussion under agenda item 3 (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 twenty-first century")

**5 March 2012
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**Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

First, let me begin by congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and for the manner in which you are steering the 56th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women.

Timor-Leste associates itself with the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the G77 and China.

Madam Chair,

Timor-Leste welcomes this year's focus on empowerment of rural women and the recognition that the majority of women and girls around the world live in rural areas. Rural women are a driving force for agricultural production, economic growth, and sustainable development; moreover, they are vital to achieving the Beijing Commitments as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

The vast majority of women in Timor-Leste and in many regions of the world live in rural areas. These women are more vulnerable to shocks, natural disasters and climate change, and they generally undertake work outside the formal economic sphere. These women are often less educated, and face additional barriers to education, access to health services, formal economic activities, and participation in government. Additionally, 70% of disabled women are from rural backgrounds, which further compound the challenges they face.

The FAO calculated that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, total agricultural production in developing countries would almost double. It is only through supporting and educating rural women that countries can hope to achieve their Millennium Development Goals. Timor-Leste additionally hopes that Rio+20 gives due recognition to the essential role of women in achieving sustainable development, especially in the areas of poverty eradication and climate change mitigation and adaptation. As we approach the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Conference this June, we must recommit to Principle 20 which acknowledges women's vital role in all three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, and political. In order to achieve sustainable development, gender equality and empowerment, including for rural women, must be mainstreamed into all policies, such as health, education, agriculture, energy, and finance.

Madam Chair,

It is crucial that women gain full participation in both the political and economic sectors of society. The Government of Timor-Leste is working to ensure that women's participation is enhanced and that women's empowerment is ensured in a variety of ways. Last June, our Parliamentary Election law was amended to increase the quota of women on parliamentary candidate lists from 25% to 33%. Currently, women have 29% representation in Parliament, which is highest in our region and 26th in the world. Timor-Leste hopes to reach our MDG Target of 35% women in Parliament soon. Additional efforts are underway to increase the participation of women at all levels of decision making, especially rural women at the district and village levels.

The Government acknowledges that gender based violence is an extremely serious issue and as such must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. The Law Against Domestic Violence was promulgated in 2010, and a National Plan of Action on Gender Based Violence was finalized in 2011. The Council of Ministers will consider the National Action Plan in the coming months.

In Timor-Leste approximately 38% of women over 15 years of age have experienced some form of physical violence. We know that rural women, especially those that are disabled, face obstacles in accessing resources and services. As such the Law Against Domestic Violence establishes a national network of support centres, and access to legal and health services. Timor-Leste is working to address this problem in a holistic manner, including the very critical task of engaging men and boys.

The empowerment of women must be integrated into all sectors of society, as well as in all policies. Timor-Leste is using gender budgeting to ensure that equality and women's empowerment are mainstreamed throughout the Government and the Country. In 2010, the Group of Women Parliamentarians, along with civil society members, and the State Secretary for the Promotion of Equality secured additional funding for the Ministry of Agriculture's gender budget, and a Gender Budgeting Resolution was passed in Parliament as well.

Madam Chair,

Timor-Leste reaffirms its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Thank you.