



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC
OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

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Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations

On

Agenda Item 62

Advancement of Women

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Mr. Chairman

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honor to stand before you for the first time and address the Third Committee on behalf of the Rwandan delegation. In doing so, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, as well as the other members of the bureau on your election. My delegation would also like to commend the Secretary- General for his reports on this Agenda Item that is of great importance to the entire international community.

2010 is gearing up to be a landmark year, it marks the anniversaries of global commitments; the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2010 review of the MDGs. The international community must build upon this momentum to comprehensively address the challenges we face, particularly at a time when our abilities to do so have been greatly hampered by the current economic crisis. To ensure that we collectively achieve the MDGs; we must increase our efforts at all levels, share the stories behind our successes, and learn from each other's failures in hopes of accelerating progress. The widespread social, economic, and cultural benefits of achieving these goals cannot be understated.

My delegation warmly welcomes the General Assembly's decision to create a new UN gender entity that will allow for greater coherence at the country and international level, and foster greater efficiency.

Mr. Chairman,

Rwanda has always been a firm advocate and supporter of women's rights. My government has adopted a comprehensive gender policy that mainstreams gender in all public and private sectors, programs, and budgets of government. Gender equality is provided for in the Constitution, and Rwanda became the first country in the world to have a majority female parliament. Our constitution has allowed for substantial progress toward gender empowerment. Currently, women hold 56% representation in Parliament, and 36% representation in Cabinet. The constitution also provides for a Gender Observatory, charged with putting gender equality at the forefront of government planning, and to ensure that necessary data is readily available to inform policy decisions.

Since 1994, laws that safeguard women's rights have continued to be passed, for instance, inheritance and land laws that allow women to inherit and own land. The introduction of such laws has been integral to social and economic development for women in Rwanda, and has created greater opportunity for financial stability.

Mr. Chairman,

We cannot stress enough the importance that education can and *should* play as we strive to create greater development in our respective communities. The Rwandan government recognizes that Gender Development is a key component in improving economic and social well – being; and has therefore made the education of girls a priority. Enormous strides have been made to improve access to education for girls at all levels. Rwanda has achieved gender parity in primary school enrolment, and the rate of enrolment has continued to increase. However, challenges remain – particularly female enrolment between primary and secondary levels. Girls are either unable to remain in school due to financial constraints, or are forced to drop out in order to take care of younger siblings.

Women are under represented in domains such as science and technology, and despite the critical role they play in trade; they remain concentrated in the informal sector. Bridging such gaps will not only empower women, but also consequently improve our ability to achieve sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

Increased political will and commitment at the highest level are fundamental to ending gender-based violence. As was aptly pointed out by UNIFEM's Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Joanne Sandler, "...violence against women is a worldwide pandemic with a response that has been much too weak." The Genocide in Rwanda in 1994 witnessed some of the most inhumane acts of violence targeted at women and girls, including the deliberate infection of women with HIV/AIDS. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) first qualified the crime of rape as a form of genocide. There have been considerable efforts to provide support by international and local NGOs, which have helped to shed light on the great need to offer assistance to those who live through such crimes. It is important that these women do not become marginalized, but are instead reintegrated into society and given the socio-economic support they require.

The government of Rwanda firmly believes that including women in the promotion of peace and security in conflict and post-conflict situations is integral. In this context, my delegation remains firmly committed to the full implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889.

Mr. Chairman,

The current financial and economic crisis has had a disproportionate effect on women. ILO estimates reveal an increase in unemployment, increased levels of poverty, and violence against women in on the rise. The current crisis presents an opportunity for governments to create social safety nets, decent jobs, and implement policies that specifically address the plight of women.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, women have played and continue to play a pivotal role in the political, social, and economic transformation of Rwanda. The political will and equal participation of women in all aspects of governance has greatly contributed to this transformation.

We therefore call on the international community to support and augment the efforts of member states, in order to better deliver on our commitments towards the advancement of women. We look forward to the prompt establishment of the gender entity to support and compliment these efforts.

Thank you.