



Statement by
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Ambassador, Permanent Representative

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL
High-Level Segment 2010
GENERAL DEBATE

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Mr. President,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Colombia welcomes that the ECOSOC addresses in 2010 the implementation of the goals agreed by Member States to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women. Strategies for achieving these objectives should reflect the commitments made in Beijing, Beijing +5, the Millennium Summit, and at international conferences that have included gender issues in their discussions. The application of our human rights obligations, and in particular the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, is also an essential framework that should govern all national actions.

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to refer to some specific areas that are essential to foster women's empowerment and gender equality.

In the first place, Colombia considers that the access of girls and women to education, without discrimination of any kind, must be consolidated as a prerequisite to achieve empowerment and equality.

In Colombia, we have achieved universal coverage in basic education. With regard to equality in access, girls and young women represent 49.9% of all students in primary and secondary education, and 53% in training programs for rural youth, in long-distance technical education and in professional education. Currently, we are working to expand coverage in secondary education and improve educational quality. Also, our policy provides for new measures of education on equal rights and duties of men and women, and supports education in sexual and reproductive health.

Secondly, I would like to refer to the economic empowerment as a prerequisite for enabling women to take control and strategic decisions about their own lives. Colombia believes that this empowerment is crucial for the realization of women's fundamental rights, as well as for advancing in inclusive and sustainable

development and poverty eradication.

With this perspective, at the national level, the technical training for employment has been strengthened, and a program for the comprehensive development of women entrepreneurs is in place. Likewise, the program Banking for Opportunities has increased women's access to microcredit; the implementation of the Law on Rural Women is in progress; and an Agenda for Equality at Work, with the involvement of key business associations, is advancing. Our policy for the eradication of extreme poverty, and the cash transfer program "Families in Action" benefiting 2.6 million families, have also had an impact in this area.

In the Commission on the Status of Women, Colombia introduced the resolution on women's economic empowerment adopted last March and co-sponsored by 65 States. We hope that the permanent consideration of this theme in United Nations will promote new developments in national agendas and in international cooperation in this field.

As a third topic, we emphasize the importance of protecting women against the violence that affects them and hinders the achievement of equality and empowerment. Our national actions against violence are developed at different levels. The Democratic Security Policy implemented during the government of President Alvaro Uribe has significantly reduced all forms of violence and crime affecting Colombians. The Presidential Office on Gender Equality also implements programs such as the policy Women Builders of Peace and Development and the Plan for the Defense of the Rights of Women in the Judiciary, which offer specific tools to address gender-based violence. On the other hand, the Congress has strengthened the laws against specific forms of violence such as trafficking in persons and domestic violence, and in 2008 adopted a new law to comprehensively address violence against women, which is now being spread at local levels.

In the United Nations we support the Secretary General's campaign UNITE to end violence against women and positively recognize the creation of its database on violence against women.

Finally, I wish to refer to the participation of women in decision-making within the State, whose reinforcement is an international priority. In Colombia, the Quota Law has helped to increase participation in the executive branch, where women hold on average more than 30% of decision-making positions. In the new Congress elected for 2010-2014, participation of women in the Senate rose from 12 to 18%, and in the House of Representatives from 10 to 12%. This increase indicates that, although we continue to advance, there is still room for progress.

Mr. President,

Colombia reaffirms the importance of international cooperation to support national efforts for gender equality and empowerment of women.

In this regard, my country welcomes the accomplishment by the General Assembly in the reform of the gender architecture and the decisions for the creation of the new gender entity of the United Nations. In its operationalization we hope that Member States will ensure the consolidation of an entity with the sufficient political hierarchy, and financial and technical capacities to effectively promote the agenda for gender equality and empowerment of women in all regions the world.

Thank you very much.