



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR RODOLFO BENÍTEZ VERNON, CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE ECOSOC. New York, 1 July 2010.

Mr. President,

Cuba fully supports the statement by the delegation of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77.

This high-level segment is being held precisely on the 15th anniversary of the successful UN Fourth World Conference on Women.

We reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is absolutely valid and must continue to be a policy and regulatory framework at the international level to foster the advancement of women. Great progress in its implementation has been achieved, but there are still many obstacles and challenges to overcome.

The current global economic and financial crisis, the food crisis, and the negative impact of climate change, among other factors, affect tremendously Third World Countries, particularly women, which are victims of multiple discriminations and forms of violence, namely, wars and conflicts, foreign occupation, imposition of blockades and unilateral measures, labor exploitation, inequalities, and social exclusion.

If the commitments made on resources and Official Development Assistance are not translated into reality, the agreements of the Fourth Conference will be dead letter. The poverty, illiteracy and inequalities prevailing in the world must be eliminated. The need for a lasting peace, a sustainable development, and a just and equitable international order for all must be championed.

Mr. President,

Despite the cruel and illegal economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed unilaterally by the United States against Cuba for over half a century, my country has materialized the aspirations of Cuban women.

However, the blockade against Cuba, condemned for 18 consecutive years by the UN General Assembly, remains the main obstacle to continue achieving progress in the advancement of Cuban women.

Cuba was the first country to sign and second to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Our country has a National Plan of Action to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women, promulgated in 1997. The plan has already undergone two review processes at the national level. The 3rd National seminar to review and follow up that National Plan of Action will be held this year.

There has been substantive progress in achieving equal opportunities and possibilities of Cuban women, even when it is recognized the need to continue working for the elimination of sexist stereotypes in the society and the family and the development of the implementation of an effective gender perspective.

Progress in gender equality and the empowerment of women has been made by working consistently. Cuban women constitute an important force in the economy, healthcare, education, science, the legislative body, among others.

- Cuban women account for 46.7% of the work force in the civil State sector, 67% of university graduates, 66% of technicians and professionals, over 70% of healthcare and education workers, 51% of all researchers, and 56% of the judges.
- Female representation in the National Assembly of People's Power (Parliament) reached 43.32% in last elections (2008), making Cuba the 4th country worldwide concerning the number of women with seats in the Parliament.
- Cuban women constitute 40% of the members of the Council of State, highest organ of power in Cuba, and for the first time, a woman holds the position of Vice-president, the Controller General of the Republic. Women hold 40% of managerial positions at all levels; there are 7 female ministers and 46 female deputy ministers.
- Sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to abortion and free and responsible choice over their pregnancy, are ensured and included in the free and universal healthcare services. Women and men enjoy the necessary specialized services of family planning.
- An advanced legislation guarantees and protects the mother by granting a parental leave for up to one year and the possibility to decide whether to be enjoyed by her or the father.

- Programs aimed at eliminating gender inequalities in education at all levels continue to be improved. The relation between boys and girls in elementary education was 95.2 in 2008, while in high school there were 90.7 girls for every 100 registered students. The relation between men and women in the university reaches 172.1, evidencing the feminization of higher education in our country.
- There are two educational TV channels broadcasting specialized programs for children, teenagers and youngsters, increasing and reinforcing a non-sexist education with cultural patters promoting equality between men and women.

Mr. President,

The call made in Beijing and the commitment to devote 0.7% of developed countries' GDP as Official Development Assistance continues to be a pending task, a desire and a demand from our peoples, and a disgrace for those who wash their hands of the just aspirations and needs of countries in need of assistance.

The achievement of these purposes is closely related to the inalienable rights and principles protected and supported by the Charter of the United Nations, the right to sovereignty and self-determination of peoples with no condition whatsoever.

The full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is closely related to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We must work at an accelerated rate to eliminate poverty and the foreign debt, and to stop the excessive military expenditures, which adversely affect development.

We are certain that only by combining the efforts of the international community, governments, financial organizations, and women movements, the agreements of Beijing will be met and a true equality between men and women achieved. That must be our immediate commitment.

Thank you