



Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MRS. SUSAN WAFFA-OGOO

**AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE GAMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF 2010**

ON

**THURSDAY 1ST JULY 2010
NEW YORK**

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset, allow me to thank you for the exemplary manner in which you are conducting the business of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is our hope that today's general debate would accelerate the process of the attainment of all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Our theme for the Annual Ministerial Review, "*Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women*" is very relevant and timely, given this year's General Assembly High-level Meeting on the MDGs. It is also timely for the simple reason that negotiations on the operationalization of the new gender architecture are at an advanced stage.

Mr. President,

Gender equality and empowerment of women are at the heart of development dialogue all over the world. It is a cross-cutting theme that underpins the attainment of all internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. The Millennium Development Goals provide a crucial platform for the advancement of gender equality and empowerment of women. We must not allow the current global crises – from economic and financial to the food crises, climate change and pandemics like HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, to distract us from implementing the goals and commitments. If we let our guard down, our modest achievements in the 12 critical areas of concern identified in Beijing would be reversed and a major blow would be dealt to our development goals.

Mr. President,

Let me reassure you that The Gambia is committed to the attainment of the goals and commitments set out in the Beijing Platform for Action, the MDGs, CEDAW and other international and regional instruments that seek to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. The internationally agreed development goals form part and parcel of our national blueprints for development and the government has taken measures to mainstream gender in development policies and strategies. This can be found in our current Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and other policy documents.

Mr. President,

In our quest to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, The Gambia is currently formulating a gender and women's policy for a new decade - 2010 to 2020. Women constitute the major part of The Gambian labour force, especially in the area of

agriculture and their participation in both the formal and informal sectors is steadily improving. In the area of education, The Gambia has achieved gender parity at the basic level in 2005 and we are on track to achieving a similar result in the lower basic, upper basic and senior secondary levels. This is possible because of a number of innovative interventions by the Government, inter alia, President's Empowerment for Girls Education Project, the Scholarship Trust Fund for Girls, Access Programme for Girls at Tertiary Institutions and Re-entry Programmes for Girls and Boys.

Mr. President,

In the area of health, safe motherhood and the reduction of maternal and child mortality and morbidity continue to be a priority. Upgrading and building of new health facilities, access to health services within 3 and 5 kilometers of neighbourhoods, training and recruitment of skilled birth attendants and the provision of free maternal health care are all contributing to significant reductions in maternal and child mortality and morbidity.

Mr. President,

There is no way we can promote gender equality and women's empowerment without creating the necessary legislative environment and framework for the promotion and protection of women's human rights. Apart from implementing our international commitments in this regard, we have enacted the Children's Act of 2008 and Trafficking in Persons Act of 2007. A comprehensive Women's Bill is currently being considered for enactment and it seeks to give effect to all our international, regional and national commitments in the area of gender equality and advancement of women.

Mr. President,

For developing countries, the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals in general, and those that impact on the attainment of gender equality and empowerment of women in particular are mutually reinforcing. I sought to highlight in my intervention today that developing countries, including The Gambia, have already established the blueprints and frameworks for implementing internationally agreed development goals and are making progress towards achieving them. For us, their implementation is a matter of survival and death and there cannot be any turning back. We have learnt critical lessons along the way, especially the central role of gender equality and empowerment of women in achieving the development goals. The other critical component is the urgent need for sound predictable global solidarity and partnerships for delivering on the commitments. Donors and international development partners need to accelerate the fulfillment of their commitments. There is a major gap in the implementation of donor commitments and we need to reverse the trend for the better.

Mr. President,

Developing countries cannot do it alone. It is therefore critical, that the international community, including donors and partners do not use the current global and economic and financial crises to delay or fail to fulfill commitments in the area of ODA, trade concessions, debt relief, technology transfer and market access. For most developing countries major support by donors in the agricultural and energy sectors, finance and microcredit could go a long way in bringing us closer to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. When women are empowered legally, economically and socially, the larger society gets empowered as well. There is ample empirical evidence to support this simple truth. What is critical for the attainment of the internationally development goals in general is the recommitment of the international community to delivering on the past pledges. Let the pledged resources be released now.

We must get 2015 right!

Thank you.