

Islamic Republic of
I R A N

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

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Statement by:
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Before

High-level segment of the Economic and Social Council
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In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. President,

The national policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the advancement and empowerment of women is well defined by, and is based on, the Constitution, taking into full account the Islamic precepts and Iranian cultural values as well as internationally accepted norms. The provisions and measures stipulated in the Five Year National Development Programmes of the Islamic Republic of Iran clearly represent the government's special attention and approach toward promotion of women's rights and their overall status.

The Constitution of the Islamic republic of Iran provides the basis for the empowerment of women with a view to their meaningful participation in socio-economic, cultural and scientific activities. The Constitution guarantees the equality of men and women before the law and a good number of its articles deal specifically with women's rights and provision of necessary facilities for their empowerment.

Article 20 of the Constitution, entitled "Equality before law", specifies that "All Iranian citizens, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria".

In the past three decades after the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Iranian Parliament has worked steadily and persistently to enact a wide range of legislations in support of women and family issues. The considerable presence of women in all 8 rounds of the Parliament has been an important element in progressive development of a gender sensitive legal framework in Iran. This, in turn, has encouraged more participation of women in socio-political activities.

Creating appropriate grounds for equal access to all economic opportunities are among the major principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Cognizant of the significant role of women in development, my Government has foreseen specific measures, in law and practice, to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals with particular attention paid to the employment, education, health and poverty eradication.

The results of such measures have been an 18% growth in education, as well as growth in the women literacy rate from 48.5% to 86%. Those measure have also led to the full medical coverage for families in the rural areas and promotion of health indicators within the country which includes low mortality rate to as far as 0% in 9 provinces, reduction of 20% maternal mortality rate and reduction of 12 % infant mortality rate. Also the significant success of the Islamic Republic of Iran in controlling the HIV/ AIDS disease to less than 1% of the total population has been acknowledged by the relevant UN bodies. Less than 6% of the AIDS patients are women. The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken effective measures to control this disease in four areas of prevention, treatment, counseling services and post treatment care, all free of charge. Moreover, the life expectancy of women has gone up to 74.51 years.

In the field of education, the percentage of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran with higher education has increased from 36 per cent in 1996 to 39.7 percent in 2000 and ultimately in the year 2004 it has reached to 43.5 per cent. In recent years the rate of university applicants among girls has increased in a rapid pace and in 2002 it reached as high as 52.9 per cent. The number of women entering institutes of higher education is currently close to 70% of the total entrants in the previous academic year. This number is 27 times more than 30 years ago.

The indicator for economic participation of women over the past 10 years has also risen by 72%. For instance, the percentage of official employment of women in the country is 13.6% which is 12.3% larger than ten years ago.

Generation of employment and empowerment of women by skills and vocational training and strengthening women cooperatives, especially for rural women, are among the policies that have been implemented.

Mr. President,

The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women is one of the main critical areas of concern in the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action. As a national goal, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has strived to uproot poverty and to promote social justice. The legal framework of the country embedded in the Constitution as well as in the various Development Programs provides suitable grounds for the Government to effectively pursue its poverty eradication policies throughout the country. Furthermore, the “Charter for Women’s Rights and Responsibilities” as a comprehensive model for promoting the status of women bestows the Iranian women the right to enjoy social security and economic facilities and commits the Government to render its support to women in case of poverty, divorce and disability. On the other hand, particular attention has been paid to the expansion of insurance system and women's social services. So far, the number of females benefiting from insurances granted to them by the Social Welfare Organization has increased 1.8 times in 2007 as compared to 1996. Female-headed households enjoy priority for benefiting from these economic and social services.

The government of the Islamic republic of Iran in its efforts to alleviate poverty among low-income women has adopted specific mechanism and measures some of which are as the following:

- Special attention has been paid to female-headed family in planning national policies including following up on the employment policy for female-headed households;
- Implementing the National Plan on promotion of job creation and capacity building among women entrepreneurs, and
- Supporting women cooperatives through establishing and strengthening communication networks for rural women’s cooperatives.

Finally, in the field of political participation, the Iranian women have enjoyed substantial growth and advancement over the past recent decade. The number of women in top managerial positions has increased 10.7%. There are women in high government positions in 40 governmental agencies, in 30 provincial administrations, and 256 district governorates. This shows a 3.25% increase in the number of women appointed to senior executive positions. Appointment of women for ministerial positions, and provincial governors are among the most recent developments in the past 5 years. The number of NGOs active in women's issues has increased up to 736, which is 12 times more than a decade ago. The increasing participation of women in the areas of publishing, arts, film production, sports and scientific Olympiads are among other important achievements in the recent years.

Thank you.

