



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



Permanent Mission of Zambia to the United Nations, 237 East 52nd Street, New York, NY 10022
Tex: (212) 888-5770 Fax: (212) 888-5213 E-mail: zambia@un.int

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STATEMENT BY

**MS. CHRISTINE KALAMWINA
DIRECTOR
SOCIAL, LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE
GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

AT THE

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

**IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOALS AND
COMMITMENTS IN REGARD TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

New York
July 2, 2010

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates.

My delegation is pleased to participate in this year's Annual Ministerial Review of the ECOSOC which is focusing on "the Current Global and National Trends and Challenges and their impact on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women".

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you and the members of the bureau on your election. We are confident that you will direct this meeting to a successful conclusion. May I at the outset thank the Secretary General for his report which provides a good basis for our discussions.

Mr. President,

The Government of the Republic of Zambia strongly believes that gender equality, the empowerment of women and development are closely linked. With Gender equality, a country's ability to grow, reduce poverty and govern effectively is strengthened. This belief was further reiterated at the Beijing plus 15 review process, the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the subsequent reviews of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG), that the economic empowerment of women is a critical factor for sustainable development and the attainment of the MDGs.

Zambia also continues to pay cognizance to the fact that the implementation of the Platform for Action and other internationally agreed targets are a vehicle for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Thus promoting gender equality is an important part of the development strategy in Zambia as it seeks to improve people's standard of living.

Mr. President,

For the past five years Zambia has been implementing the Fifth National Development Plan in which promoting Gender Equality and the empowerment of women has been prioritised. Currently the government has reached an advanced stage in the development of the Sixth National Development Plan in which gender has been systematically mainstreamed in all sectors of development. In addition, Government in its national budgets has been allocating additional funds for the economic empowerment of women to the National Gender Machinery and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare.

In recognition of the fact that the development and implementation of gender responsive policies and programmes promote women's economic empowerment and the attainment of gender equality, Government in 2006 established the Citizens Economic Empowerment Fund with a specific mandate of ensuring that women are given preference in accessing the Fund. This programme has just been recently launched in one of the provinces and is yet to be rolled over to other provinces. The conditions for obtaining this fund have also been relaxed in order for women to easily access the money. 40 per cent of the Fund is reserved for women.

Mr. President,

The government has committed itself to providing women with more access to productive resources such as land; affordable credit, agricultural extension services; and appropriate technology. The financial sector has also joined forces in addressing women's access to credit and related financial services. With the leadership from the Bank of Zambia, the financial institutions are now beginning to engage more with women entrepreneurs in order to address some of the hurdles that women continue to face especially in relation to accessing banking and financial services.

Further to enhancing access to various productive resources, Gender Audits for key sectors such as Land and Agriculture where rural women mostly depend for their livelihoods have been conducted to assess the capacity of the sectors to economically empower women. Implementation of recommendations of the gender audits have already begun to advance gender equality in the sectors. Gender Focal Points and Subcommittees in these sectors and other public institutions have also been established at all levels; with recent development being the establishment of Focal Points at the district level to foster implementation of gender related programmes specifically aimed to empower rural women. Furthermore, capacities among the Gender Focal Points have been strengthened in order for them to effectively mainstream gender in their programmes.

Another promising practice in the empowerment of women and the attainment of gender equality is the allocation of 30 per cent titled land reserved to women while the remaining 70 per cent is competed for among women and men. This land reform policy is already being implemented and has contributed to an increase in the number of women accessing titled land.

Mr. President,

With the target date for the Millennium Development Goals fast approaching, it is an opportune time to reconsider and modify policies and strategies to ensure a more equitable and sustainable development. Furthermore, the upcoming high level plenary meeting of the General Assembly focusing on accelerating progress towards the achievement of the MDGs offers us an opportunity to take stock of where we stand in the achievement of these goals.

In our pursuance to the attainment of the MDGs, Zambia has made steady progress. The MDG on hunger, universal primary education, gender equality, maternal health, and HIV and AIDS are likely to be achieved by 2015. However, gender based violence and the feminization of HIV and AIDS still remain major concerns. Although HIV and AIDS has reduced from 18 to 16 per cent for females and 14 to 12 per cent for males, the prevalence rate is still high, while the maternal health ratio has also reduced from 729 per 100 000 live birth to 449 per 100,000 live births, it also remains high. Further measures, including the provision of resources are needed to ensure affordable and accessible quality health services for women such as primary health care and reproductive health services.

Mr. President,

With regard to education, Zambia has continued the implementation of the re-entry policy for girls who fall pregnant whilst in schools as well as the implementation of affirmative action measures which include the reservation of 25 per cent of bursary schemes for girls at tertiary education while the remaining 75 per cent is competed for among boys and girls .

In the area of decision making processes, Zambia has developed a gender mainstreaming strategy within the Public Service Reform Programme for the period 2007 to 2011. The strategy will contribute among other things to ensuring that more women are represented in key decision making positions in the Public Service and to ensure that all programmes being implemented are gender responsive.

Furthermore, civil society organisations have been providing training in leadership skills and material support for female candidates in the political arena. In addition capacity is being strengthened among various groups of women in different fields including in the area of political participation. This programme is in partnership with our cooperating partners.

Mr. President,

Zambia remains committed to the empowerment of women, however, we continue to face various challenges in our quest to attain gender equality. The eradication of poverty, the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS still continue to wreak havoc on our people. Although Government and other stakeholders have been conducting awareness raising programmes on various negative cultural practices, gender based violence is another area which has negatively impacted on the empowerment of women and the attainment of gender equality.

It is clear that we have a great task ahead of us if we are to attain the Millennium Development Goals, gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is our hope that with the commitment of our government and the good partnership we enjoy with the cooperating partners, we shall attain gender equality, reach sustainable development and the empowerment of women.

I thank you!