

15 January 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the High-level Event of the Barbershop Conference**

**H.E. Mr. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland,  
H.E. Mr. Edward Belfort, Minister of Justice and Police of Suriname,  
H.E. Gabriel Wikström, Minister for Public Health, Health-care and Sports of Sweden,  
Excellencies,  
H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General,  
Distinguished guests and panellists,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to join you here today for this unique event. I thank the Governments of Suriname and Iceland for inviting me to participate in this important initiative.

In communities all around the world, gender inequality harms women and girls and prevents societies from reaching their full potential.

Historically, women and girls have led the fight against gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls and have brought such issues to the forefront of global discourse.

Yet increasingly, the world has come to recognize that achieving gender equality will require the active participation of all segments of society and that men and boys have a critical role to play. Today's Conference is a creative way of moving the dialogue into uncharted territory.

Last September, I had the pleasure of participating in the launch of the HeForShe initiative, which is aimed at empowering men and boys to join in solidarity to end all forms of inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls.

The Barbershop Conference will contribute to transforming gender stereotypes, largely influenced by social norms and beliefs regarding gender roles, and help dispel the fallacy that women and girls cannot be equal partners in the economic, social or political life of our communities.

I am happy to add my voice to the Barbershop initiative and have made gender equality and empowerment of women and girls one of my key priorities for this General Assembly session. To this end, I hope you will all join me for a high-level thematic debate on this topic on 6 March.

As I said at the HeForShe event, real men don't fear women. If you want to be called a real man, do not draw your strength from oppressing women.

Once again, congratulations to the delegations of Iceland and Suriname for this initiative and for the opportunity to address you here today.

I thank you.