

**STATEMENT BY**

**HONOURABLE MARINA NSINGO, MP  
MINISTER OF WORKS AND SUPPLY/  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
AND  
LEADER OF THE DELEGATION**

**DELIVERED**

**AT THE**

**FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Madam Chairperson,**

My delegation wishes to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election to the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women and assure you of our cooperation and support during the deliberation of this session. My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Jamaica on behalf of the group of 77 and China.

May I take this opportunity to thank the secretary general for his reports and his tireless efforts in advancing the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. I also wish to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for hosting the Beijing +10 meeting of ministers; senior officials and civil society; and other partners and their continued support towards gender mainstreaming.

**Madam chairperson,**

Allow me to congratulate Madam Rachael Mayanja on her appointment as Assistant Secretary General and Special Advisor on gender issues and advancement of women and assure her of my delegation's support during her tenure of office.

**Madam Chairperson,**

Zambia remains committed to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We believe that the evaluation of the implementation of the Platform for Action ten years after its adoption provides us with an opportunity to determine how far we have gone in uplifting the status of women in our country.

Zambia further believes that the evaluation of the implementation of Platform for Action and various relevant instruments on gender will reveal that we have made substantial progress. This is inspite of the obvious fact that in our efforts, we have encountered many challenges.

**Madam Chairperson**

Zambia's efforts in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly is evidenced by the following major achievements and measures: -

Government has continued to provide the political leadership and policy environment for gender mainstreaming. This is evidenced by the adoption of the National Gender Policy by Cabinet in March 2000. The policy provides broad guidelines for gender and development activities in various sectors.

Further, in order to ensure the systematic implementation of the National Gender Policy, I wish to report that Government, in consultation with stakeholders, developed and adopted the Strategic Plan of Action for the National Gender Policy (2004 – 2008). The Strategic Plan of Action for the National Gender Policy is not only meant to guide government ministries on how to mainstream gender into their respective policies and programmes but the private sector and civil society as well. The Strategic Plan of Action takes into account the critical areas adopted by the government for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and sets out targets against which progress can be measured.

The issues covered in the Strategic Plan include the following: implementation mechanisms; poverty; culture; family and socialisation; education and training; health; water and sanitation; labour; employment and social security; land; agriculture; science and technology; commerce, trade and industry; transport and communication; tourism, environment and natural resources; energy; information and the media; housing; decision making; gender violence; and the legal framework.

The development of both the National Gender Policy and the Strategic Plan of Action was extensive in terms of participation. The process involved the public sector; civil society organisations, political parties; and the church at various levels. We are confident, therefore, that these documents have the approval and ownership of the Zambian population and that this is a catalyst for their effective implementation.

With regard to strengthening the national machinery for gender mainstreaming, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has established an integrated institutional mechanism at national; provincial and district levels. This consists of: the Gender in Development Division, at Cabinet Office. The positioning of the Division is strategic because Cabinet Office is the apex of government authority; the Gender Consultative Forum, with the objective of providing advice and guidance to Government on emerging issues in gender and development; the gender sub-committees in line ministries; and Gender Sub-committees of the Provincial and District Administration meant to strengthen coordination and implementation mechanisms at these levels.

Further, government has established the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs, Governance, Human Rights and Gender Matters in order to ensure compliance with the objective of gender mainstreaming into all policies and programmes by the Executive.

**Madam Chairperson,**

In order to facilitate a gender responsive policy environment, government has mainstreamed gender into the Transitional National Development Plan; the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper; and the Medium Term Expenditure Framework as a cross-cutting issue. These policy documents aim at, among other things, the following:

- Enhancing women's access to land ownership and other factors of production.
- Enhancing access to information, especially by women.

- Eliminating gender imbalances in access to financial and material resources as a strategy for poverty reduction.
- Providing support to female entrepreneurs.
- Enhancing women's participation in decision making processes.
- Reducing HIV transmission, especially among women and girls.

**Madam Chairperson,**

The Government of the Republic of Zambia initiated the review of the Constitution in 2003 to ensure that gender issues are included. One of the major Terms of Reference of the Constitutional Review Commission is to facilitate the incorporation of gender issues into the Constitution. This exercise provides a great opportunity to the Zambian population to ensure that gender issues are enshrined in the Republican Constitution.

**Madam Chairperson,**

In order to increase women's representation in politics, the Government initiated the Electoral Reforms which, among other things, is aimed at establishing practical measures for increasing female representation in the Legislature. In this regard, it has been proposed by the Electoral Reform Technical Committee that proportional representation would be the best modality of effectively increasing female representation in parliament. This is in line with government's commitment to the implementation of the Southern African Development Community Declaration on Gender and Development of 1997 and its Addendum on the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children of 1998, which commits Member States to reserve at least 30 percent of the positions in politics and decision making for women by the year 2005.

A trend analysis of female representation in politics shows that this has been increasing although at a slow pace. Female representation in Parliament has increased from 10 (6.3 *percent*) in 1991 to 19 (13.66 *percent*) in the current Parliament. At the level of Cabinet, there are a total of 21 Cabinet Ministers comprising 5 (23.8 *percent*) female and 16 male ministers. I commend the civil society and Non-Governmental Organisations for the efforts that they have played in partnering with Government in its efforts to facilitate increased participation of women in politics and decision making positions.

**Madam Chairperson,**

In order to increase women's participation in decision making in the Public Service, Government adopted the Public Service Training Policy in 1996 which aims at providing guidelines for planning, conducting, following up, and evaluating training undertaken by public servants. One of the objectives of the training policy aims at addressing the observed gender imbalances in skills in the public service, especially at senior and specialist levels through affirmative action. The policy provides for specific affirmative action strategies which include the following: -

- Except in special cases, where candidates have equal qualifications, preference will be given to the female candidate.
- Except in special cases, where the necessary qualifications are met, organisations will ensure that 50 percent of the candidates are female.
- Where the female candidate is less qualified than the male counterpart, but still meets the minimum entry requirements for the training programme, the female candidate shall be selected.

It is the view of Government that vigorous implementation of this policy will greatly increase the number of skilled and professionally qualified women in decision making positions. Currently, female representation in the Public Service at various levels is as follows: Permanent Secretary 18.6 percent; Director 23 percent; Deputy Director 18 percent; and Assistant Director 21 percent. I assure you that Government will continue to implement affirmative action in order to ensure that female representation in decision making is increased in accordance to Zambia's commitments.

**Madam Chairperson,**

Gender violence continues to be a major issue of concern. This notwithstanding, it gives me great pleasure to report that Government has began the process of reviewing the penal laws in order to, among other things, provide for stiffer penalties for perpetrators of gender violence and counselling services for the victims. We are currently consulting our stakeholders. We are confident that the proposed legislation will be passed in Parliament and, therefore, enable the law enforcement agencies adequately address issues of gender violence. In addition, the deterrent penalties in this proposed legislation will contribute to the reduction in the occurrence of gender violence.

**Madam Chairperson,**

The implementation of various measures by government, civil society and NGOs has contributed to increased awareness on gender issues at national, provincial district and community levels. This is evidenced by, among others, increased coverage and debates on gender in the print and electronic media; the codification of customary laws by the Zambia Law Development Commission and increased gender responsiveness in the application of customary laws by Local Court Justices.

**Madam Chairperson,**

The Government has faced a number of challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. These include: -

- Limited technical capacities and tools to mainstream gender into institutional programmes, plans and activities especially at provincial and district levels;
- The HIV and AIDS pandemic which has contributed to the loss of lives, especially among women and girls; reduced productivity; and high maternal mortality. This has

contributed to the increase in the number of orphans and the now prevalent child-headed households;

- Poor co-ordination among the various actors - government and NGOs resulting in the duplication of efforts and sub-optimal utilisation of resources;
- Narrow resource base which has contributed to limited funding for the social sector investment and expenditure. The low levels of funding have had a negative implication for the provision of basic education and health care for all particularly the vulnerable groups which include women and child headed households;
- High illiteracy rates among women which is currently above 42 percent;
- Gender biased cultural beliefs, myths, negative traditional practices and stereotyping which discourage and prevent women from actively participating in public life;
- Inadequate gender disaggregated data and indicators which are a prerequisite for effective gender mainstreaming; and
- Continued feminisation of poverty which has placed women in a vicious circle.

**Madam Chairperson,**

Zambia wishes to state that the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will be accelerated through the following measures: -

- Continued provision of support to the institutional framework for gender mainstreaming through institutional capacity building;
- Increased financial and material support towards HIV and AIDS programmes including institutional and community involvement;
- Strengthening of the coordination mechanisms among various stakeholders;
- Increased financial support towards the social sectors and safety nets; and
- Strengthening the capacity of institutions to enhance the provision of gender disaggregated data.

**Madam Chairperson,**

In conclusion, Zambia appreciates the efforts of the UN agencies and the international community in supporting Zambia's commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. With the conducive policy environment; institutional framework and Strategic Plan of Action, Zambia is poised to achieve higher heights vis-à-vis the Beijing Platform for Action; the Millennium Development Goals and other international instruments by 2015.

I thank you