

STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY U KYAW TINT SWE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
UNION OF MYANMAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AT
THE HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING
OF THE
49^m SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Madame Chairperson,

First of all, may I express our thanks to you, and to the members of the **Bureau for the** thorough **preparations made** for this very significant session **of** the Commission **on** the Status **of** Women. **We** wish **also to** praise **you** for your strong **leadership**.

My **delegation** fully associates itself with the statement **delivered** by the distinguished **representative of Jamaica on behalf of** G-77 **and** China.

Madame Chairperson,

A **decade ago**, the **international** community **adopted** the Beijing **Declaration** and Beijing Platform for Action, to ensure **better** lives for women throughout the world. We thank the **Secretary-General** for **preparing** a **comprehensive** report which has facilitated **our review**. **May I also take** this **opportunity to congratulate Madame Rachael Mayanja on** her **appointment as** Assistant **Secretary-General** and Special **Advisor** on gender issues and **advancement** of women. At the same time we **acknowledge and express** our thanks to the Division for **Advancement** of Women, the CEDAW Committee and UNIFEM for their **valuable** contributions. The Trust Fund managed by UNIFEM has brought together UN agencies and women's networks to support 175 initiatives in 96 countries in a vast array of areas to make the world a **better place** for women. These efforts should **be encouraged and strengthened**.

Madame Chairperson,

Myanmar has **taken effective measures to** fulfill the Millennium **Development** goals. The Third MDG is to promote gender equality and the **empowerment** of women. In this regard, I **am happy to** inform this august **assembly** that Myanmar women **have for** centuries, **enjoyed extensive** rights, such **as** the right **to** inherit, the right **to own** land, the right **to half of all assets** in **cases of divorce**, the right to retain their **maiden name** throughout their life, to **name** a few. **However**, we cannot remain **complacent**, there are yet further **endeavours to be made** and challenges to **overcome**. May I share with you **several** milestones **achieved** in Myanmar after the Beijing **Conference**, to build on what was **achieved** so far **and to meet** the challenges **ahead** :-

- The Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs was **established** on **July 1996, to systematically carry out the measures for the advancement of** women.
- The Myanmar **National Working Committee for Women's** Affairs was **formed on 7th October, 1996 and** State, Division, District **and** township **level Working Committees** for women's affairs **were established**.
- The **establishment** of the Myanmar Women's **Entrepreneurs** Association .
- The **Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF)** , an umbrella **organization** for the many NGO's working **for all-round advancement of women was** formed **on 20th December 2003**.

Women and poverty & women and the economy

Madame Chairperson,

Myanmar women's **participation** in the work force and in the non-formal labour market has **increased** significantly. **Women** who **have traditionally been involved** in **trade** either as **shopkeepers** and brokers in general **merchandise businesses, have become better educated** and increasingly **involved** in micro, small and medium **enterprises**. They **have become more** dominant in the **expanding** informal sector. This emerging force of women plays an important role in the country's **development**. Some of the most successful business women have become well-known public figures.

Micro credit and microfinance contribute significantly to achieving poverty reduction. A **notable advancement** in this aspect is a micro-financing **project introduced** in 1997 in **collaboration** with the UNDP. The **project** is **geared** towards **poverty** reduction through **promotion** of self-reliant micro business **opportunities** and **provision** of access to small-scale credit. In micro-finance **operations, approximately 99 percent** of the **borrowers** are women.

In the formal work force, teaching is one of the most popular careers chosen by women. At the primary school level over 70% of the teaching force are women and at the secondary level over 76% of the teaching force are women. At the tertiary level, the **percentage** differs, in Medical Institutions Over 70% of the teaching force is women and in the technology and computer studies discipline, over 66% of the teaching force is women. It is also **notable** that in one of the most **respected** and **prestigious professions**, the health **profession**, women medical **doctors** constitute **over 54%** of the working force and women **specialists** constitute **over 52%** of the working force. Vocational training such as weaving, sewing and **livestock breeding** classes are **held** in **collaboration** with UN Agencies to **equip** women with **better** skills **to generate** income and **alleviate poverty**.

Education and training of women

Madame Chairperson,

Myanmar places a great deal of importance in educating girls today and traditionally. The **gender** ratio at the basic **education** sector is 50.08% for **boys** and **49.92%** for girls. And in the higher **education** sector, the gender ratio is **40.84%** for **boys** and **59.16%** for girls. Myanmar's forest **cover over 50%** of Myanmar's land **area**. The **delicate balance between** maintaining the **ecological** system and **harvesting** the forests **have been maintained** for centuries **and we are** proud **to say** Myanmar **women play an important** role in **environment conservation and** the forestry sector.

Violence against women

Madame Chairperson,

Many delegates, who have spoken before me have highlighted zero tolerance for violence against women. My delegation fully shares this view. The sub-committee for violence against women of the national machinery has taken integrated measures to prevent and reduce violence against women by studying the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures. Researches were carried out in many States and Divisions to explore the magnitude of the problem and according to the findings of the researchers, physical violence is nine percent and mental violence twelve percent. Counseling and training workshops have been held and centers that provide assistance have been established in the various States and Divisions of the country. Educational talks on violence against women and on the laws protecting women are given regularly in local communities. The most effective form of media to reach the public, public television, plays an important role. Video plays and TV skits have been aired by all TV channels and many famous Myanmar stars take part in these endeavors, as responsible and active members of civil society. Effective legal remedies are also taken against those who committed violence against women. Punishment commensurate with the crime are meted out.

Trafficking in women and girls

Madame Chairperson,

In order to address the issue of trafficking in women and children more comprehensively and effectively, a new working committee to deal specifically in trafficking was formed in August 2002 with the Deputy Minister for Home Affairs as Chairperson of the Committee. A joint innovative measure taken by the National machinery and UN-IAP was the formation of a multi-disciplinary mobile team to combat trafficking in women and children was setup in 2002. This mobile team has carried out training courses throughout the country, for government officials from concerned departments and members from NGO's. The mobile team itself comprises of government officials from related departments such as the Attorney General's Office, Immigration Department, the People's Police Force, Education and Social Welfare Departments and NGO's.

Nationwide preventive and supportive activities, such as awareness raising among the community and its leaders, capacity building of its volunteers, including educational talks on trafficking and violence against women and supportive services extended extensively by a national NGO, the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association augments the Government's efforts.

Myanmar acceded to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocol, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air on March 30, 2004. Effective enforcement action is taken against the traffickers under Myanmar Law. Traffickers are liable to be punished with prison sentences, the maximum being life imprisonment.

Women and Health and Women and HIV/AIDS

Madame Chairperson,

The **Government** of Myanmar has made unremitting efforts to **provide** health information, related services and to improve health services, particularly primary health care. Essential **reproductive** health care, which includes **maternal** and child health care, **essential obstetric care, prevention and management of post-abortion complications, management of** RTIs/STIs and **adolescent reproductive** health, has **been implemented** as part of the **National** Health Plan. HIV/AIDS is one of the three **diseases regarded** as a **national** concern in Myanmar.

The National AIDS Programme has **implemented various** HIV/AIDS **Prevention** and control activities in **cooperation** with related Ministries, UN Agencies and NGO's. Since women and girls are most **vulnerable** to HIV/AIDS infection, **Myanmar places** top priority to HIV/AIDS **education activities** for women and youth. These efforts are **being made** by **national** NGO's such as the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare **Association** and Myanmar Red Cross Society.

School base healthy Living and AIDS **Prevention Education** (SHAPE) **Programme** has **been implemented** since 1997, in **coordination** with the Ministry of **Education** and UNICEF. The **Programme** now **reaches** 14,000 schools in 122 townships in 2004. To **prevent** transmission of HIV to women, as well as from HIV positive mother to child, **widespread** life skills training **programmes and** AIDS **education targeted** at **women** of **reproductive** age are **being conducted** throughout the country by MMCWA, MRCS and other NGOs in **collaboration** with the Department of Health.

Community-based education, care and support activities have been effectively **implemented** in **collaboration** with **various** NGO's through their grass roots with **outreach** community **participation approach** for counseling **and home-based** care to **people** living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA, their families and communities.

Madame Chairperson,

May I **conclude** by reaffirming Myanmar's firm commitment to the **Beijing Declaration** and Beijing Platform for action.

Thank you.

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