



*PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM
OF LESOTHO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

BY

HONOURABLE 'MATHABISO LEPONO

MINISTER OF GENDER AND YOUTH, SPORTS AND RECREATION

OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

AT THE

FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF

WOMEN

5 MARCH 2010, NEW YORK

Please check against delivery

Chairperson,

My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate you and members of the bureau for your election to guide the work of the Commission.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the delegation of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the delegation of Equatorial Guinea on behalf of the African Group.

On behalf of the Government and people of Lesotho, I wish to register our sincere condolences to the people of Haiti and Chile for the disasters that recently befell them.

Chairperson,

While we continue to be confronted by many challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the following are some of the significant initiatives undertaken by the Government of Lesotho to improve the status of women: the establishment of the Ministry in charge of Gender in 1998, the establishment of Gender focal points in line Ministries, Gender Technical Committee and Gender Forum. Recently, country-wide consultations were undertaken towards the establishment of an APEX body for women, to provide for a coherent institutional framework in dealings with women as well as the establishment of the Gender Equality Commission to provide for oversight function.

Chairperson,

Lesotho is party to international and regional instruments on gender equality and the advancement of women. Accordingly, She adopted the national Gender and Development Policy in 2003 to provide for policy framework in connection with sectoral programmes and also provided for 30% quota in the Local Government Elections Act of 2005 as a measure to increase the representation of women in local government structures. Statistics of women in decision making stands as follows: Cabinet Ministers represent 32.2%, Judges constitute 45.5%, Assistant Ministers 60%, Members of Parliament 27%, Local Government Councilors 58%, Principal Secretaries 44%, Deputy Principal Secretaries 34.5% and Directors 48%.

Cognizant of the importance of education as one of the means of empowering women and girls, the Government of Lesotho has progressively made basic education free, accessible and now compulsory to all. Lesotho has exceeded gender parity in access to primary education, achieving 82% for girls and 75% for boys. Completion rates are higher for girls, representing 80%. Further to the provision of formal education, life-long learning and non-formal education have been instituted for the disadvantaged.

Chairperson,

Violence against women and girls, maternal mortality, HIV and AIDS and human trafficking pose tenacious challenge to Government. In this connection, we have put in place preventive and protective measures which include: the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act of 2003; the establishment of the Child and Gender Protection Unit within the Lesotho Mounted Police Service; a One Stop Centre to provide for integrated response and support services to survivors of gender based violence (GBV) and established a Child Help Line. We have also developed a National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence and conducted awareness campaigns in the context of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence and human trafficking. A Roadmap for Accelerating Reduction of Maternal and Newborn Morbidity and Mortality has been adopted. A National Action Plan on Women, Girls and HIV and AIDS has been adopted.

Chairperson,

The Government of Lesotho has a number of initiatives aimed at relieving women and girls of the brunt of poverty and discrimination. It is currently reviewing laws that are discriminatory to women. In 2006, Parliament enacted the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act which removed the minority status of married women. Support services in the form of women's entrepreneurship and skills training as well as access to credit have also been initiated.

In conclusion, Chairperson, it is worth remembering that the reported milestones would not have been possible without the support of our development partners and civil society organizations. We therefore call on their continued support for the betterment of the lives of women.

The Government of Lesotho supports the establishment of a composite UN Gender entity to leverage efforts in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. We fully commit ourselves to cooperate with efforts to the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and all initiatives aimed at the advancement of women.

I thank you.