



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
New York**

STATEMENT

By

**Yolenda de Brum- Muller, Representative, Women United Together
Marshall Islands (WUTMI)**

On behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

**On the Occasion of the Fifty-four Session of the United Nations
on the Status of Women
United Nations, New York
9 March 2010**

Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates

Mr. President,

It is an honor to address the Fifty-Fourth Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. I wish to convey our congratulations to your election as chair of this meeting.

Mr. President,

I take this opportunity to assert the Government of the Marshall Islands obligation to the Beijing Platform for Action. I further commend the organization of this very important meeting, and express my appreciation to the Division on the Advancement of Women for convening this global review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Check against delivery

Mr. President,

Women in the Marshall Islands enjoyed a highly respected traditional position, and yet, as in many developing countries the legacy of inequalities faced by women has been in conflict with the fact that traditionally Marshall Islands is a matrilineal society. The traditional source of power for a Marshallese woman has been in her custodial rights over the inheritance of clan rights.

Recent data show that although Marshallese women have made gains in certain areas, disparities persist between men and women in certain spheres. The challenge to fully implement the Platform for Action is aggravated in such as the negative impact of globalization and the lack of human and financial resources.

Since Beijing there has undoubtedly been an increasing awareness of issues of relevance to women. For example, there has been an improvement in women human rights, the participation of women in education and employment inside/outside the home has helped to lessen gender imbalance in the country. However, in some cases, while there is evidence that the rate of women getting higher level of learning or better jobs is in the rise the numbers still indicate that there are fewer female college graduates than male, fewer women appointed to top government jobs, and even fewer getting elected to high level decision-making posts. Additionally, with both parents getting employed outside the home, pressure on family life has intensified and thus has pushed further out of reach needed family protective and supportive services.

Mr. President,

In spite of constraints the Republic of the Marshall Islands is earnestly attempting to implement the commitments made in Beijing and has ratified the CEDAW. The RMI Cabinet recently established the National Resource Development Committee (NRDC) in 2009 to

progress work on CEDAW and CRC, with membership from all relevant stakeholders within government and the private sector. The work on the CEDAW Initial and First Report, to be submitted to the United Nation in November 2010, constitutes the work of the RDC to date.

One of the objectives of the RMI Vision 2018, a 15-Year national sustainable development strategy adopted the RMI Nitijela (Parliament) in 2003, *ensures optimal accessibility to opportunities to ensure wider participation of women in the self-reliant and sustainable development process.*

In 2009, RMI issued a Declaration on Energy which calls for affirmative action to increase women's decision-making authority and building of capacity and capability in energy sector institutions such as Marshalls Energy Company (MEC).

The RMI Code Title 26 Chapter 1, a more recent enactment, deals with the Family and under this Chapter is the Domestic Relations Act that deals with the age of consent (18 years of age for both sexes), marriage and annulment. Responding to domestic findings from a 2003 Study and a 2007 Study, and with the ratification of CEDAW in 2006, attempts have been made between the Government and the national women's organization, the Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) to draft a legislation on domestic violence.

With the current work on the MDGs there is in existence national commitments that enhance the advancement of women. The MDGs progress summary on Goal 3 shows that the RMI is making decent progress in advancing female education, employment, and other economic characteristics, but there remains much room for improvement, including in the sphere of female political representation.

Mr. President,

The RMI Government continues to strengthen its efforts to intensify equality and meaningful partnership with women, for we fully understand that without both, our problem with underdevelopment will not be reduced. Reasonably, however, our efforts alone will not be enough.

We understand that the greatest responsibility rests with individual nations. Their actions will go a long way in improving the status of women in their own countries. However, this does not lessen the responsibility of the world community, especially the developed countries, many of whose resource commitments expressed in various world conferences remain unfulfilled. The Republic of the Marshall Islands humbly calls for stronger commitments and support from the world community so that we may not be left alone in our pursuit to promote gender equality.

Komol tata, Mr. President.