



# SOLOMON ISLANDS

Statement by

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On Behalf of the Government of Solomon Islands

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Mr. Chairperson

My delegation join others in congratulating you on the excellent manner you have been managing our heavy agenda. Rest assured of Solomon Islands support and cooperation.

Let me begin by associating this statement with the statement issued by Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum. I contribute to this discussion in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairperson

I reaffirm Solomon Islands commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, and the outcome of the Twenty Third Special Session of the General Assembly and note the importance of the link between the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and our national and sub regional gender commitments.

Mr. Chairperson

I am pleased to say my Government as of last month updated its national policy on women. We are also one of three Pacific nations to adopt the CEDAW Optional Protocol and we will be presenting a national report to the CEDAW committee this year.

Mr. Chairperson,

Many, who spoke before me, discussed the twists and turns on implementing gender commitments and highlighted challenge ahead remains real and urgent.

The issue of climate change and the frequency and intensity of natural disasters continue to displace communities in Solomon Islands. The impact of climate change has placed much emotional stress on the populations as they confront food and water securities on a daily basis. It has also increased tensions within the population and their relationship and access to land and challenged women's traditional rights to land and property. Gender violence has also increased.

Mr. Chairperson

Against this background, a recent study has identified Solomon Islands globally speaking as one of countries with the highest gender violence incidents. This not a record we are proud of. The findings of the report triggered a 911 call out within our wider government system. A policy to elimination of gender violence together with a five year action plan was adopted in February this year.

The Government moved swiftly in collaboration with non State actors in particular faith based institutions, to set up referral network to report and manage domestic violence cases. Similarly, the country's Police Force established a Family Violence Unit and the Ministry of Health has weighed in with its gender violence policy.

Mr. Chairperson,

Economic empowerment of women remains the heart and soul of guaranteeing our women both economic and political security. Measures to increase their visibility and participation in all forms of decisions making process, rests on much investment is made on gender income generating activities. This needs a nation wide coordinated support, it must also be rural based and community driven. We hope more international support can be harness to trigger a gender economic revolution.

Mr. Chairperson

On the issue of gender representation in Solomon Islands national parliament, early last year an ambitious plan for temporary special measures to advance women's participation in decision making at the national level was launched. Unfortunately, it did not canvass enough support to take it off the ground. However the concept sensitized gender representation throughout the country and created a tsunami of interest that warranted wider consultation.

Mr. Chairperson

As part of the process of increasing women's political participation, Solomon Islands, this year will table a Political Parties Bill. That Bill includes a provision for 10% quota for women in all political parties. Other legislative work in progress includes amending old laws that discriminate against women and girls. This includes increasing the legal age of marriage for girls and boys. At present the legal age for marriage is 15 for the former and 18 for latter.

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to say work on mainstreaming gender within the wider government system has began. A stock take was carried out this year and provided the National Women's Machinery with a baseline data to develop targeted gender friendly strategies to enhance gender capacity within the national system.

Mr. Chairman,

Competing national priorities continues to hinder progress in advancing gender priorities and targets. Much of the programmes we carry out are externally funded to our regional and international partners to them we are grateful. The task ahead is huge and more support is needed.

Solomon Islands welcome the new UN gender entity which brings together the four major UN offices working to advance gender equality and call on the UN to have a in country presence with on the ground country activities. Solomon Islands continue to be managed by the UN regionally and hope the UN gender entity will look at its system

Madam Chairperson

Let me close by expressing Solomon Islands deep concern that gender NGOs from Taiwan who have been attending previous CSW are not being allowed in this year. Solomon Islands seeks clarification from the Secretariat on the matter and sincerely hopes the principles transparency and accountability has not been violated.