



**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland
to the United Nations**

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AT THE 54TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

AGENDA ITEM 3 - FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND TO THE TWENTY-THIRD
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ENTITLED
"WOMEN 2000: GENDER EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"

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**Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,**

I have the honour to address the Commission during this session to review progress made on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by Equatorial Guinea on behalf of the African Group and Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We further thank the Secretary-General for his reports under agenda item 3: follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

Chairperson,

This 15 year review process affords us an opportunity to reflect on the milestones that we have thus far achieved, share our experiences and to learn from interactions with all delegates, consider strategies on how best to overcome the challenges in the promotion and protection of the rights of women, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland recognizes women as equal citizens and is committed to the promotion and protection of their human rights. Apart from the Beijing Platform for Action our country is party to several critical human rights instruments all of which promote gender equality, such as CEDAW which has since been translated into the local language, siSwati.

Chairperson,

The government of the Kingdom of Swaziland is in the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa as well as the SADC Gender and Development Protocol. The latter has also been translated into siSwati.

Also in place is the national constitution which contains a comprehensive bill of rights that includes an equality clause. Other rights and freedoms of women articulated by the constitution include family rights, inheritance rights, land rights, employment, access to resources, equal participation in politics and decision-making and other economic, social, political and cultural spheres of life.

Chairperson,

With regard to the implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern noted in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government, in collaboration with NGOs working on gender has made major strides in policy, legislation and programmatic interventions focusing on women and children. To this end, government now has in place People Trafficking and People Smuggling (Prohibition) Act of 2009 which addresses human trafficking and seeks to protect citizens, especially women and children from being trafficked. Furthermore, is the development of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Bill which criminalizes all forms of gender-based violence.

Government is strengthening its capacity on information dissemination and participation of the media as well as reviewing other related pieces of legislation. To enhance further these operations government has established several co-ordinating mechanisms such as CEDAW National Reporting Committee, the National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA) and the National Children's Co-ordination Unit (NCCU).

Chairperson,

Several policies have been approved to create an enabling environment for the development and protection of the rights of women in the kingdom, i.e the National Development Strategy, the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan, the National Children's Policy, the Strategic Education Programme to benefit the girl child, the roll-out of free primary education and the Health Policy. The strategies covered in these policy documents will be fully encapsulated in the National Gender Policy which is still being finalized.

On another note, the theme for this year's celebration of International Women's Day on March 8th will be centered on the Beijing Platform for Action. Moreover, Government is ready to host gender conferences and meetings so as to raise the profile and awareness of the Beijing Platform for Action and the areas of concern articulated therein.

Chairperson,

Despite progress already achieved, the Kingdom of Swaziland, faces a myriad of challenges including HIV and AIDS linked with the rapid increase in the number of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children, high incidences of poverty, gender-based violence and unemployment. Our country is also not immune to the global energy, financial and economic crises which threaten to erode the gains that have already been made. The effects continue to undermine the national development agenda. The emerging threat of climate change is evident in our country as we experience sporadic episodes of heavy rains, severely hot weather and drought, all of which have immensely impacted on our food security.

In conclusion, **Chairperson**, the government of the Kingdom of Swaziland would like to recognize the immense contribution of civil society organizations working on gender and the rights of women, towards ensuring gender equality, the empowerment of women and the full recognition and protection of the rights of women. Our appreciation goes to all our development partners we call for their renewed commitment as we work towards the attainment of millennium development goal number three. We remain committed to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. We are confident that by translating our commitment into action women in the Kingdom of Swaziland will be better placed to fully enjoy their rights.

I thank you.

