



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

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DEPUTY MINISTER
OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

**AT THE 52ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS
OF WOMEN**

**“FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN,
WITH A FOCUS ON FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY”**

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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We are fully confident that under your able leadership the Commission will accomplish its task successfully.

On behalf of the Government of Afghanistan, I would like to fully align myself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In my national capacity, I would like to add some remarks to this fruitful discussion on financing for gender equality.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my Government's strong support to the Secretary General's Campaign to end violence against women, launched at the inaugural Session of the Commission. Violence against women is a form of intolerable discrimination and violation of human rights that needs to be tackled with our common efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

After more than two decades of conflict, destruction and massive displacement of its population, Afghanistan is faced with unprecedented challenges and the important task of building institutions and capacity to forge a pathway to progress. My Government strongly believes that the sustainable reconstruction and development of the country requires full and equal participation of Afghan women in the political, social, economic and cultural life. My Government is fully committed to empower Afghan women and enable them to contribute fully as an equal partner to the reconstruction and development process in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is strongly dedicated to advance the status of Afghan women by defending and promoting their human rights. A strong policy framework has been established to allow the implementation of this vision. The Afghan constitution, the Afghanistan Compact, the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (iANDS) and the Afghan Millennium Development Goals Report place gender equality as a core objective to attain.

Afghanistan has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Children as well as its two Optional Protocols.

Mr. Chairman,

Since 2001, significant progress has been achieved in my country to ensure women's equal participation in all aspects of life and reduce gender disparities. Allow me to briefly refer to some of these achievements;

- Afghan women have a greater participation in the political arena; the number of women registered for the elections increased from 41.5% in 2004 to 44% in 2005. Afghan women represent 28% of the National Assembly and account for almost 26% of all civil servants.

- In the area of work and employment, women represent 30% of the agricultural workers.
- In order to improve women's access to health, a Basic Package of Health Services has been developed which includes emergency obstetric care. In addition, the number of health care workers has increased to 15,001 in 2007, of whom 49.3% are women.
- In the area of education, 40 % of the 4 million of children enrolled in school are girls. About twenty percent of 50,000 students are females and are presently getting education at the universities and other institutes of higher education. In 2005, 58.8% of students enrolling in Teacher Training Institutions in Afghanistan were female.

Despite progress made, Afghan women continue to face many challenges. According to the Gender Development Index (GDI), which combines life expectancy, educational achievements and standard of living, Afghan women have one of the lowest indicators in the world.

Mr. Chairman,

- Women's difficulties to access health services are caused by complex economic and social factors including illiteracy, poverty, lack of roads and transportation, limited number of female health professionals and poor health facilities. The average life expectancy for a woman in Afghanistan is 44 years. Today, every 30 minutes, an Afghan woman dies because of pregnancy related complications. In rural areas, 30% to 90% of women don't have access to health care services.
- Women in Afghanistan are facing the same challenges in the area of education. These include lack of female teachers, remote location of schools, bad roads and transportation and lack of security. The increase of terrorist activities carried out by the Taliban and Al Qaeda have particularly affected girl's school enrollment and attendance in provinces located in the south and east of the country. Schools are burned and female teachers and girl students are attacked, threatened or intimidated by the Taliban and Al Qaeda. According to the Ministry of Education girls represent less than 15% of the total enrollment in nine provinces in the east and the south of Afghanistan.
- Women in Afghanistan are more likely than men to be engaged in small scale economic activities that are difficult to measure, and that offer less enjoyment of employment rights and benefits. Women receive 3 times less wages than men and only 38.2% of women in Afghanistan are economically active.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government is committed to strengthen its efforts to mainstream gender and implement the various commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As measures to achieve that objective, we have adopted a ten year National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA). Each Ministry has established a unit to facilitate the monitoring of the

implementation of the National Plan of Action and a particular focus has been accorded to monitor the gender related MDGs targets.

Nevertheless the capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) needs to be significantly enhanced to be able to coordinate this effort, to provide technical assistance and gender training to the various Ministries, and to monitor the overall implementation of the National Plan of Action. The Government is also looking towards strengthening the provincial offices of MOWA and gender focal points in line Ministries.

Mr. Chairman,

To reduce gender disparities, my Government supports positive actions that focus on policies and resource allocation to specific programmes for women. In order to implement this vision, a Gender Budgeting Unit has been established in the Ministry of Finance. This Unit is geared to ensure that the budget process is just and fair, and that resources are equally distributed to all citizens. The Gender Budgeting Unit also assists the Government of Afghanistan in meeting its goals regarding women's advancement by analyzing, reviewing and contributing to government policies, programs and budgets. It also provides advice on gender sensitive programming for line Ministries.

Mr. Chairman,

Poverty remains the biggest obstacle in Afghanistan in achieving MDG3. We would like to stress the need for full partnership and expanded cooperation with the international community in our mutual commitment to attain the MDGs and advance the status of women in the world. In that regard, we highlight the need for a considerable increase in the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Least Developed Countries, particularly countries emerging from conflict, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you for your attention.