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INDEPENDENT STATE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

**STATEMENT
TO THE**

**52nd SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
“FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN”**

BY

**H.E. ROBERT AISI
AMBASSADOR & PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

NEW YORK, 25 FEBRUARY – 7 MARCH, 2008

Chair

I convey to you and members of your Bureau my Government's congratulations on your election and assure you of our support and cooperation during your tenure.

We align ourselves with the Statement delivered by the Ambassador of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Group.

We commend the work of the Commission on the Status of Women which benefits our women and girls around the world including in my country, Papua New Guinea. We take note of the UN Secretary General's report and commend him for underlining the important priority theme of '**Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women**'. We also strongly support his initiative which he launched relating to "The Global Campaign to End Violence Against Women".

Chair

Through the interactive dialogue sessions, a wealth of experiences in terms of lessons learned and best practices fostered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action through our respective National Plans of Action have been exchanged and shared. In relation to this year's theme, we briefly share our country experiences under the following sub-themes:

- A. National Focal Point for Women**
- B. Legal and Policy Framework Addressing Women/Gender Issues**
- C. Funding Sources, and**
- D. Status of Gender Sensitive Budgeting**

A. National Focal Points For Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women:

Chair

There are two National Machineries or focal points for women in Papua New Guinea. The first is the government mechanism set up within the government structures. The other is the Non-governmental body referred to as the National Council of Women with a membership of 39 affiliated member organizations.

A recent initiative of the Government has been to upgrade the government focal point. This is directly in line with the spirit of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform of Action calling on member governments to do so in order to accelerate development efforts towards upgrading the situation of women in our respective countries. More specifically, the Beijing Platform of Action calls on the national governments to "put in place appropriate mechanisms to advance the cause of women" in their respective countries.

Immediately after the Beijing Conference in 1995, a conference of both the government and civil society organizations was convened in Papua New Guinea to reflect on the Beijing Conference outcomes. It was agreed that 'establishing an Office for the Women' was the most immediate task by government and that it should operate as a 'stand alone structure'. Ten years later, this dream has become a reality with the Government's milestone decision to establish the Office as of January 2008.

The Office will be responsible for performing policy planning and research roles including monitoring and evaluation of the Beijing Plan of Action and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others.

B. Legal and Policy Framework on Women and Gender Issues:

Chair

Existing policies and programs relating to women's empowerment and gender equality issues are guided by the following:

- a) The Papua New Guinea National Women's Policy
- b) The Medium-Term Development Strategy
- c) The Gender Equity in Education Policy
- d) The National Platform of Action
- e) The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Convention), and
- f) The Pacific Plan of Action

The Medium-Term Development Strategy, while a five year rolling plan, is also the Government's strategic instrument in implementing the MDGs.

C. Funding Sources

The major source of funds targeting women's empowerment and gender equality initiatives is the Government's responsibility. However, there is never enough to implement the various policies and programs mostly due to competing development priorities of successive governments. However, we do note that funding support for gender based activities in PNG by multi-lateral organizations:

- (a) Preparation of initial report on CEDAW: US\$30,000
- (b) Campaign to "Ending Violence Against Women": US\$300,000
- (c) Review of Women Policy: US\$20,000
- (d) CEDAW Reporting to UN Human Rights Commission: US\$25,000
- (e) Child Protection supported by UNICEF: US\$ 300,000; and,
- (f) Universal Birth Registration (Convention on the Rights of the Child) supported by UNICEF: US\$300,000.

There are other areas where support is needed and we look forward to collaborating with other partners to find ways of working together in on-going needs areas.

D. Status of Gender Sensitive Budgeting

Chair

There is a need to sensitize budget officers and the decision makers alike to make them aware as to why it is important to allocate sufficient funds to fund policies and programs aimed at improving women's empowerment and gender equality. Despite the lack of targeted training of the budget officers and decision makers, at the turn of the century, progress has been made in that the current Government has been consistent in allocating equitable distribution of financial resources which may be improved further with the establishment of the new Office for Women (the National Government Focal Point).

Likewise, the National Council of Women (the NGO focal point for women) has been allocated substantial funds to set up a National Convention Center that will require further funding as well as to sustain and maintain its operations.

We continue to work closely with our development partners. In close consultations with our two focal points, valuable inputs have been made into their country assistance program planning process. It is envisaged that this close collaboration and consultations will continue to be strengthened and maintained in the years ahead.

Other emerging issues

We note and support the concerns raised in the Pacific's Statement on HIV/AIDS and the continuing threat of climate change and its impact on our women and children in our Region. We call on the international community to continue supporting the relevant HIV/AIDS programmes and also to give serious attention to the issue of gender and climate change. Additionally, as Papua New Guinea moves toward the "One UN" and "Delivering as One" concept, we look forward to a better delivery of services by strengthening the UN co-ordination process on the ground.

Chair

In conclusion, my Delegation would note that the National Constitution of Papua New Guinea recognizes women as equal partners in development. Furthermore, the Government's white paper directing development planning process embraces gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as an important development issue. This commitment has been demonstrated with the recent establishment of the Office for Development of Women with a recurrent budget line and technically qualified staff to advise Government through timely research on issues of critical matters affecting the advancement of women, and monitor implementation of international commitments.

It is our firm belief that "financing for women's empowerment and gender equality" is a critical issue, particularly for those of us in the developing countries. We look forward to the successful conclusion of the 52nd Session of the Commission.

Thank you.