



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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**Statement by Mrs. Ileana Núñez Mordoche, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cuba at the general debate on the priority theme: The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. New York, March 5<sup>th</sup> 2009.**

Mr. Chairman,

First and foremost, allow me to wish you and the rest of the Bureau success in the works of the current session of the Commission, and join the statement by Sudan on behalf of the G-77 and China, as well as the statement by NAM.

Mr. Chairman,

Next year will mark 15 years of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Therefore, we reaffirm the role of the Commission on the Status of Women in the normative follow-up to the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In Beijing we committed ourselves to enhance the national capacities to create and improve policies and programs on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, taking into account gender, including the provision of resources as well as facilities to women who are mainly responsible for the care or the economic support of people infected with HIV/AIDS.

Today, HIV remains a world health problem. An estimated over 33 million people suffered from HIV in 2007, being Sub-Saharan Africa the most affected region with 67% of the total of people with the disease and 72% of deaths on account of AIDS.

Cuba considers that the drain of medical personnel, the lack of efficient public health services, and the impossibility of having access to a proper treatment in poor countries have brought about the fast and unequal dissemination of these diseases particularly in developing countries. Regrettably in this bleak prospect, women and girls have had to play a key role.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the very triumph of the Cuban Revolution, several examples have showed the political will of the Cuba government in the advancement of women, including the responsibility of men and women.

- Cuba keeps a strict follow-up to the commitments undertaken in world Conferences. In the second half of 2009, the III National Follow-up Seminar of the National Plan of Action on the follow-up to Beijing will be held in our country, which is a tool to continue achieving victories in terms of the integration of women into

employment, education, health, politics, culture, science, among other fields of the Cuban society.

- Women represent the 46.23% of workers in the economic sector. We are the 70% of the labor force in the health sector and the 63.80% of the comprehensive general medical doctors, among other indicators. There are 266 female deputies in our Parliament, which represents the 43.32%, being, in this regard, one of the highest percentages worldwide and the highest in our region.
- Cuba was the first country to sign and the second to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). With a strong commitment to women, we welcome the thirtieth anniversary of the Commission created under the adoption of such Convention.
- The Family Code, in force since 1975, is in a process of review and adoption. This instrument provides the obligations inside the family and the responsibility of parents towards their children.
- The new Law of Maternity Leave, in force since August 2003, extended the leave to one year after the child birth and provides the possibility to be applied to both the father and the mother. However, only 30 men have recourse to this new law, which means there are still many challenges to break stereotypes at the family level and in the society as a whole.
- To enjoy the highest level of physical and mental health possible is a fundamental human right, which is universally exercised free of charge by all persons, including women and girls.
- Cuba is among the 14 countries with the lowest incidence of AIDS worldwide (0.1%), thanks to the National Program on Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS. In Cuba, around 10 600 cases have been diagnosed since 1985-86, 33% of which are children and with a proportion of 4 men to 1 woman. At present, men having sex with other men are the most affected.
- Despite financial difficulties and lack of resources faced by our country, as a developing country subjected to a fierce U.S. blockade and to an unjust international economic order, Cuba has offered its modest contribution to support the cause of the human rights of other peoples.
- From 1963 to 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2008, as part of the Cuban cooperation abroad, more than 341 thousand civilians have collaborated in 154 countries; 126 thousands of them have worked as health professionals and technicians in 104 countries. Almost 51 thousand Cuban professionals and technicians are currently rendering their services in 96 countries and 38 thousands of them, mostly women, are working in 74 countries in the health sector.
- The “Operation Miracle”, a solidarity program of eye surgeries, has given back the sight to over 1.3 million patients from 33 countries, from July 2004 to 15 October 2008. More than 30 thousand youths from 124 countries and 5 overseas territories are studying in Cuba; nearly 24 thousand of them are studying medicine.

Finally, allow me to draw the attention of this important Commission to an issue of special concern to the Cuban people: the arbitrary denial of visas by the U.S. Government to two Cuban women, Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva, a question we have reiterated in numerous fora and occasions.

The U.S. Government has, for ten years, prevented these two Cuban women from visiting their husbands who are illegally in prison in the United States. Along with their husbands, other 3 Cubans make up the five antiterrorist fighters who are unjustly imprisoned in this country for the only reason of trying to stop the execution of terrorist actions against our people and the U.S. people *itself*.

The denial of visas to these Cuban women disregards instruments of the International Law clearly expressing the right of prisoners to be visited by their relatives, and the very U.S. legislation.

Therefore, we call upon the honorable Governments and the feminist movements all over the world to demand the immediate granting of visas to Adriana and Olga, as well as the freedom of the Cuban five unjustly imprisoned in the U.S.

Thank you

