



Permanent Mission of Eritrea
to the United Nations

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**Statement delivered by Ms. Luul Gebreab
President, National Union of Eritrean Women
53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women
New York, 04 March 2008**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Representatives of the United Nations agencies and the NGO community,

From the outset let me thank the UN Secretariat for introducing the reports of the Secretary General to the 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). My delegation associates itself with the statements made by Sudan on behalf of G77 and China, and by Cuba on behalf of NAM.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is celebrating its 30th anniversary, and this happily coincides with the lead organization of the women's movement in Eritrea which is also celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. So the 53rd session of CSW is a very important event to the Eritrean women as they are also celebrating the successes they have so far achieved and the challenges they face.

The definition of caring and its significance to the female world has been eloquently presented by the esteemed experts, and the specific strategies to adopt to the different socio-economic and political status of different countries have also been widely discussed.

My delegation concurs with the report of the Secretary-General that the perception of men as breadwinners and women as caregivers persists resulting in unequal sharing of responsibilities between men and women in providing care in the context of HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

There is a need for targeted and concerted efforts by all stakeholders to enhance the role of men and boys in the household work and care giving and to find a way of reconciling work and family responsibilities for both women and men.

In the Eritrean context, where more than 65% of the population are agro-pastoralists, parental leave or family allowance do not go to the heart of the problem and alleviate the heavy responsibility women assume in providing care for the family. This amplifies the need for the policy to be as targeted as possible for better results.

In Eritrea, with 2.4% HIV prevalence and given that the majority of the population live in rural areas, on top of the existing policy frameworks and widespread sensitization programs, medical treatments and care about the pandemic disease and other infectious diseases, appropriate labour saving technologies such as flourmills, hand pumps, motorized pumps, energy saving stoves and solar facilities are being installed with the clear objective of reducing the disproportionate burden placed on women and improving the living conditions of the people. The improved stove, in particular which saves up to 50% of fuel (mainly wood) and which has a better ventilation is a major contribution to reducing Eritrea's alarming rate of deforestation, reducing the amount of time women have to spend collecting fuel wood, and improves rural women's health working condition. The stove, locally known as Adhanet- meaning the saviour, received the 2003 Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy.

The Donkey and Canvas project, for instance, has also been useful in some rural communities of Eritrea not only by relieving women and girls from fetching water and carrying it on their backs, but also by allowing girls to go to school and by motivating some men and boys to fetch water with the ease of transportation.

Therefore, the challenge in many countries, including mine, is not only changing societal attitudes and norms that disadvantage the girls and women but also to look at ways and means of improving the socio-economic situations and the physical infrastructures that would create better opportunities for girls and women. At the same time these improvements would promote the full participation of boys and men in care giving and household work.

These are some of the examples that I would like to share with the CSW but most of these targeted interventions, which are the results of serious efforts of the Government, need to be scaled up and intensified in a sustained way so that the desired changes in all of the 12 critical areas of concern as outlined in the Beijing Platform of Action can be achieved. The link between the priority theme of our discussions and the other critical areas of concern are clear and this underscores the need to approach the issue of women in a holistic manner. In this context, the Government of Eritrea, as its commitment to equality of women and men has adopted in 2004 a National Gender Policy. The policy paper is premised on the principle of equality between men and women that has been forged through the collective struggle of the Eritrean people for independence and the remarkable participation of Eritrean women therein.

In the interest of time, the policies adopted and the steps taken in favour of women by the Government of Eritrea and their outcomes, including the banning of practice of FGM, will be presented at other occasions.

Before I conclude my brief intervention let me add my voice to those who have called for better working conditions for migrant women who are toiling without basic social benefits in the paid domestic work.

Thank you.