

GHANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF GHANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
19 EAST 47TH STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
TEL. 212-832-1300 • FAX 212-751-6743



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STATEMENT

BY

**HON. AKUA SENNA DANSUA, MP,
MINISTER FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS,**

AT THE

**53RD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

ON

**ITEM 3(A)(I): IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND
ACTION IN THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN AND FURTHER
ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES: "THE EQUAL SHARING OF
RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND
MEN, INCLUDING CARE-GIVING IN THE
CONTEXT OF HIV/AIDS"**

NEW YORK, 4TH MARCH, 2009

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my delegation I would like to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau elected to guide the work of this session. We are confident that you will steer the session's deliberations to a successful conclusion.

We also bring you felicitations from the new President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Professor John Evans Atta Mills, his government and the people of Ghana.

We take this opportunity, once again, to thank the international community for supporting Ghana through another round of democratic elections which resulted in the peaceful transfer of power from the ruling party to the main opposition. This point is made, Mr. Chairman, to reiterate the fact that it is only in conditions of peace and stability that developmental challenges such as HIV/AIDS and providing the needs of the poor and vulnerable, especially women, children and PLWHAs could be tackled effectively.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of the G77 and China and the Non Aligned Movement.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his thought provoking reports before us and the valuable recommendations contained therein. These reports undoubtedly set the momentum for the consideration of our discussions at this 53rd session.

Mr. Chairman,

It is an acknowledged fact that HIV/AIDS is not only a health and developmental challenge but also one of gender. The Government of Ghana attaches paramount importance to the incorporation of HIV/AIDS into reproductive health and rights programmes and has also integrated gender into HIV/AIDS policies and programmes to remove the disproportionate burden on women, especially older women, as care givers to people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

It has also been amply demonstrated that young women are disproportionately vulnerable to infection, whilst elderly women and young girls are disproportionately affected by the burden of care giving.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the recommendation in the Secretary General's report that policies and programmes on household responsibilities should be informed by statistical data on demographic change including changes in fertility rates, ageing population and household composition. To this end, we in Ghana have incorporated gender concerns into our demographic and health survey data collection tools which take

cognizance of gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS and promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

We are collaborating with the Ghana Statistical Service in the collection of socio-economic data and sex-disaggregated data to inform policy decision and programme implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

We have also taken concrete steps at national, regional and district levels to:-

- Raise awareness on stereotypical patterns of behaviour for women and men and also revised school curriculum and textbooks to reduce stereotyping;
- Address issues of stigmatization and discrimination in HIV/AIDS;
- Target vulnerable groups such as commercial sex workers, migrant workers and equip them with alternative livelihoods;
- Create and site voluntary counselling and testing centres at strategic locations to give women and girls, men and boys access to voluntary counselling and testing to establish their HIV/AIDS status in order to facilitate their access to anti-retroviral treatments;
- Implement policies that address orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS;
- Use micro-credit as entry point for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS education to empower women and reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS;
- Intensify advocacy in communities to change the perception that women are better care-givers than men;
- Intensify advocacy to families and communities to ensure equal share of responsibilities in care-giving especially within the context of HIV/AIDS so as to ensure that women and girls have leisure time to do other things including participating in decision-making;
- Provision of financial support to care-givers of PLWHAs through social protection programmes such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) which gives cash transfers to needy families including care-givers to PLWHAs.

Mr. Chairman,

Other strategies include workplace HIV/AIDS awareness creation programmes to enable women and men reconcile their families and work responsibilities as well as effective

integration of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programmes in sexual and reproductive health.

Mr. Chairman,

Adolescent health and development programmes and services are also integrated into the health system to cover reproductive and mental health, adolescent nutrition, counselling and information education and communication programmes. Skills development programmes comprising life skills and livelihood programmes are being provided for the youth especially young women and girls living with HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the Government has incorporated into its reproductive health programmes ways of addressing harmful traditional practices that affect the reproductive health of women and men and have implications for HIV/AIDS such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, food taboos, poor health seeking behaviour and the use of herbal preparations.

A Gender and Health Policy has also been formulated to address gender concerns and to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues into the health sector programme of work.

Mr. Chairman,

We identify with the recommendation in the Secretary General's report that comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and gender-sensitive national policies and strategies on labour and social protection be put in place to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men. As such we have in place an HIV/AIDS policy and strategic implementation plans at national, district and regional levels on stigma and discrimination, care and support.

A policy to address orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS infection is being implemented with the active participation of our female traditional leaders. Strategies to manage and control the spread of HIV/AIDS and new infections and to provide care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS are being implemented. These interventions have resulted in a reduction in HIV/AIDS prevalence rate from about 2.7% in 2007 to 1.9% as at 2008.

We, however, need to engage male partners and constituencies more in programmes and strategies to provide more services and intensify awareness-raising to accelerate and promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

Our government remains firmly committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the outcome of the Twenty Third Special Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, please permit me to acknowledge the tremendous contributions our development partners are making towards Gender and Children's Support Programmes in Ghana. They include; UNIFEM, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO UNICEF, UNAIDS, GTZ, DFID, CIDA, DANIDA, EKN and African Development Bank. We are convinced that the 53rd CSW will come out with forward looking strategies to accelerate the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Thank you.