



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

S T A T E M E N T

BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

ON

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON
WOMEN AND TO THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENTITLED
"WOMEN 2000:
GENDER EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"**

NEW YORK, MARCH 9, 2009

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Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Guyana aligns itself with the statements made by the Representatives of Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and is pleased to make some brief remarks of its own in respect of agenda item 3 and this year's priority theme in particular.

The Commission has aptly chosen the theme, "the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS" for there can be little doubt that the distribution of responsibilities between men and women has an important bearing on the attainment of the twin objectives of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Societal norms which rigidly define roles for women and men could pose a particular challenge for the sharing of responsibilities at different levels. It is in recognition of this challenge that a National Policy on Women in Guyana was approved in 2006, which has among its objectives the elimination of stereotypes with regard to the roles of women and men and relations between them within the home.

It is acknowledged that the mutual sharing of parenting and domestic responsibilities, for instance, can have a beneficial effect on the fulfilment by women of their potential in various domains, as mothers, workers, professionals, corporate and political leaders, and ultimately as human beings. For this reason, homes headed by single parents are often in special need of support. In this connection, a single parent programme is being implemented in Guyana to provide material aid both to women and men as well as to equip them with skills for personal development, thereby enabling them to more adequately care for their families in the face of current economic realities.

Mr. Chairman,

The growing toll of HIV/AIDS on societies and the feminization of this epidemic in some parts of the world have an impact on the balance of responsibilities between women and men, given the interplay of gender roles and relations linked to the spread of the disease. Women have generally borne the brunt of responsibility for caregiving in this context but now increasingly in many instances find themselves in need of care. The Government of Guyana is taking action to address the norms and gender stereotypes associated with sexual responsibility and decision-making. A Care and Support Programme has been operationalised to assist persons infected and families affected by HIV/AIDS, which involves material support as well as skills training. Furthermore, sustained and systematic interventions have helped to reduce mother to child transmission, sensitize women and girls on the means to prevent HIV transmission, and promote their access to healthcare, including reproductive health services. Both women and girls, and men and boys are targeted in prevention and care and support programmes given their shared role as agents of change.

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women including sexual violence is a stark and abominable assault on gender equality and must be eradicated. My Government pursues a national policy against this vice launched in 2008 under the theme "break the cycle ... take control". It aims to strengthen prevention mechanisms and increase protection

and service provision for those affected. Sensitization sessions have been held with sports groups, youths and religious and faith based organizations, which are crucial partners in this effort. As further step, Sexual Offences legislation is currently before Parliament with the intent to reform the law, strengthen protection and improve support and services for victims of sexual violence while ensuring the right of perpetrators to a fair trial. As a consequence of this legislation, the Government hopes to be better positioned to provide integrated services to victims of sexual violence.

Mr. Chairman,

Globally, progress has been made with respect to gender equality, but this progress is both insufficient and uneven. Women and girls still outnumber their male counterparts among the world's poorest and powerless, and girls more than boys are shut out of school for various reasons. These realities are overborne with the violence visited upon wives, mothers, sisters and daughters in the midst of armed conflict and in the presumed sanctuary of the home. It is clear therefore that the road to gender equality is fraught with challenge. It is a challenge that my Government is striving to meet at home and will contribute to meeting abroad.

We recognize that progress in these areas is crucial to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, but also that the goals themselves are a means to a greater end, the creation of a more just and equitable society with women and men as equal partners with equal opportunities for the realization of their potential. We therefore urge a renewed commitment to international cooperation to ensure the achievement of the MDGs by the agreed target date of 2015.

I thank you.