



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations

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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE

53RD SESSION
OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)

ON

THE THEME:

**"THE EQUAL SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN
WOMEN AND MEN, INCLUDING CARE-GIVING IN
THE CONTEXT OF HIV/AIDS"**

Wednesday, March 4, 2009
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Chairperson,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as chairperson of this important Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Allow me also to convey my delegation's congratulations to your Bureau. We have confidence that under your able leadership the Commission will achieve the set objectives of this year's session. May I also add that my delegation and I are proud to be associated with the deliberations of this meeting and we assure you of our full support and participation. I align this statement to that made by the Representative of Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Chairperson,

It is my great pleasure to present on behalf of my Government, key features of Kenya's report on the thematic area being deliberated on during this session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The detailed report is available at the secretariat.

Chairperson,

The Government of Kenya remains committed to the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. This commitment is reflected in the various policy initiatives and programmes that ensure both women and men share responsibilities.

Efforts have been made to change the perception of women's and men's traditional roles through a number of policy initiatives and legislation. The National Policy on Gender and Development recognizes the need for women, men, girls and boys to share responsibilities equitably. The policy asserts the need to focus on empowerment strategies that not only demonstrate understanding of the essential linkages between the productive and reproductive roles of women, but also recognizes the need to adopt equity as a goal and its achievement through the removal of any existing disparities between women and men. Kenya has established a National machinery to support gender mainstreaming in all sectors and at all levels to ensure that gender issues are integrated into national development processes at all levels. This will enable the general populace to understand the roles of women and men, their impact and the complementary role they play in the development processes. The government is in the process of enacting gender bills, that is the Domestic Violence Bill, which seeks to address domestic violence, and the effect it has on the victims majority of whom are women and children, the Marriage Bill, Matrimonial Property Bill and Equal Opportunities Bill.

Chairperson,

Water collection for household use is traditionally the responsibility of women and girls, and in recognition of this, the government of Kenya has enacted policies to reduce the number of hours women and girls spend looking for water. The government has developed a National Water Services Strategy (NWSS) 2007 – 2015. The strategy recognizes that water collection and sanitation is predominantly a women and girls

responsibility. It also recognizes the role women play in conservation and management of water. In order to mainstream gender issues in the water sector, the Strategy provides for 50% representation of women in the management structures of both rural and urban water services. The government has also drilled 500 boreholes in arid and semi arid areas and rehabilitated 210 rural water supply schemes.

According to the economic blue print for Kenya, - "The Kenya Vision 2030", the government commits itself to encourage formation of water resources users association by communities to assist in self-regulation and to develop innovative community based methods and technology for water harvesting.

Chairperson,

The government of Kenya is aware of unequal sharing of responsibilities at household level. Attempts have been made to encourage men to take more active roles in their home by enacting the Employment Act, 2007. The Act entitles men to two weeks paternity leave with full pay. This encourages fathers to create a bond with their new born babies as well as to change the gender stereotype about child care responsibilities.

In the National census to be carried out in August 2009, the government has introduced a module on time use within the questionnaire. This will provide a comprehensive sex disaggregated database to inform development planning and programming.

Chairperson,

The Government of Kenya recognizes the critical role of education in promoting equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in national development. The government is therefore committed to the achievement of gender equality in education and training at all levels and to the policy goal of achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015. As a result, Education continues to get the largest share of Government expenditure at Kshs. 125.7 billion (approx \$168m) in the current financial year (2008/09).

Kenya has, in collaboration with its development partners, taken several steps to address gender inequality in education. Some of the initiatives include: development of the Gender in Education Policy, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 and Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) 2005-2010. Other strategies which are being used to bridge the gender gap in education include the expansion of boarding facilities for girls, mobile schools and school feeding programme for children in standard 1-4 in the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL). In addition, affirmative action in bursary allocation, university admission and in appointment of qualified female education managers, re-admission of school girls who become pregnant, engendering the curriculum and gender capacity building for school teachers, inspectors and managers.

In order to achieve the targets for gender equality and women's empowerment in education, the Kenya Government has taken concrete steps to mainstream the MDGs into the policy, planning and budgeting processes. The MDGs are further reinforced in Vision 2030. In the vision document the Government of Kenya commits itself to

mainstream gender in all aspects of society by making fundamental changes in four key areas, namely: opportunity; empowerment; capabilities; and vulnerabilities.

Kenya introduced the Free Primary Education programme in 2003. This has increased primary school enrolment by 2.7% from 7.4 million in 2004 to 7.6 million in 2005. The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) increased from 82.1% to 83.2% during the same period.

The government of Kenya continues to make concerted effort to include women in leadership and governance of education at national and grassroots level. In 2008 the current Government appointed a woman Minister in charge of Higher Education, Science and Technology, one Chancellor and two Vice-Chancellors in Public Universities. This effort is reflected at the provincial and district levels with the aim of achieving 30% women's representation.

Chairperson,

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Kenyan economy and constitutes the main source of livelihood for an estimated 80% of the population which lives and works in the rural areas. Women in Kenya provide over 70% of the agricultural labour and are the majority of the smallholder farmers who produce most of the food using mainly traditional technology in smallholder agriculture. They are also involved in marketing of farm produce. On the other hand, male labour contribution is disproportionately concentrated in the production of cash crops. In recognition of the role that women play in agriculture, the government is working towards introduction of gender responsive policies and practices.

Priority areas of these policies and practices aim to address the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on agricultural development.

Chairperson,

In October 2006, as a demonstration of its commitment to gender equality, women empowerment and good governance, the President issued a directive requiring 30% representation of women in all public appointments. Of the total 222 MPs, 22 are women, an increase from 18 in the previous parliament. Kenya will continue to formulate policies and legislation that ensure equal representation between men and women in all decision-making levels including politics.

The Kenyan parliament enacted the Political Parties Act, 2007 which provides that one-third (1/3) of the National Executive Committee of each political party must be women for a party to receive Government funding.

Chairperson,

Women in Kenya play a key role in the management and provision of health care services at family and community level. A study by the National AIDS Control Council estimates that up to 90 per cent of the care due to illness on HIV/AIDS is provided in the home by women and girls in Kenya.

In order to increase male participation and equal sharing of responsibilities in the provision of health care services, the Vision 2030 has integrated behavioral change programs in schools.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) and harmful cultural practices impact negatively on women's health and their ability to effectively participate in the development processes. The government is committed to promoting the abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation and is in the process of developing a policy and legislative framework to address these issues. For instance, the Kenya National Population Policy for Sustainable Development addresses the issues of environment, gender and poverty.

Chairperson,

The informal sector in Kenya plays a major role in job creation for those who are unable to get into formal employment. Women make up 48% of micro, small and medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kenya. To enhance women's economic empowerment and community participation in the development process, the government has established the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) and other grants. These Funds have enhanced women's access to financial and credit facilities from non-formal banking institutions. A recent study indicates that 65% of young women and 35% of young men have already accessed the loans.

Chairperson,

As I conclude allow me to reaffirm my Government's commitment to the promotion of equal sharing of responsibilities in all sectors of the economy and in the development processes to reduce the burden women face as a result of their triple roles. Sharing of responsibilities will reduce the number of hours that women work to enable them to among others to participate in public life and governance processes. In implementation of the MDGs and the "Vision 2030", the economic blue print for Kenya, the government will ensure gender parity in all the priority areas namely agriculture, education, health, informal sector and the environment.

The government of Kenya also recognizes that both the Civil Society organizations and development partners have a role to play in promoting equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men and will continue creating a conducive environment to enable them advance the theme of this year's session.

I Thank You!