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**STATEMENT  
BY**

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MINISTER FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND PEOPLE  
WITH DISABILITIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 57<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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**Madam Chair,**

South Africa congratulates you and Members of the Bureau for the sterling work done towards the success of the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSW. We align ourselves with the statements read on behalf of the G77+China, Africa Group and SADC.

The theme of this year's session is of great importance given the core challenges facing millions of women and girls across the globe. The debate also takes place in the context of the African Women Decade which seeks to advance gender equality in Africa.

We congratulate Madam Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women for her exemplary work in leading global efforts for the empowerment of women and gender equality.

Research shows that 1 in 3 women experience some form of abuse, violence and assault during their life time. Given the global nature of this problem, the UN has to continue to be a center of gravity for collective action to eradicate the scourge of violence against women and girls.

Our constitution, international instruments and legislative framework, including the Domestic Violence Act and Sexual Offences Act provide the most progressive platform for us to comprehensively deal with the challenge of violence against women and girls and to dismantle the patriarchal societal structure, which continues to be responsible for the high levels of violence in our country.

We are, however, mindful of the fact that laws and policies alone are not enough to address this scourge. Unity is therefore, required to eradicate this scourge by tackling the root causes of violence, which is a global phenomenon

transcending, regional, cultural, religious and racial boundaries.

South Africa has made great progress in representation of women in political leadership. To date, South Africa is amongst countries with the highest representation of women at 44% in Parliament and 43% in Cabinet. A Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill will be passed soon towards legislating 50/50 representation of women at all decision-making levels, including the private sector. This Bill explicitly criminalises cultural and social practices that adversely affect women and girls. The Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill will also be passed to address the issue of human trafficking.

**Madam Chair,**

In order to intensify efforts to eliminate this scourge, Government has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on causes of violence against women and children as well as the National Council against Gender Based Violence. We have reinstated the dedicated Sexual Offences Courts and the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offence Units within the Police Service. We have also set up victim friendly rooms in most police stations, Thuthuzela-Care Centres and One-Stop Centres under the Victim Empowerment Programme. As a result of all our concerted efforts the conviction rate for crimes against women and girls has increased.

Government has also imposed stricter controls on the use of fire arms through the Firearms Control Act. However, there is a need to intensify campaigns against proliferation of guns and the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Last month President Zuma launched the Stop Rape Campaign towards educating 10.2 million learners on

norms and values, rights and responsibilities, as part of the school curriculum.

We have also recorded an improved life expectancy as a result of the prevention of mother-to-child transmission under Government's Comprehensive Anti-Retroviral Treatment Programme.

The multi-sectoral strategy of the National Council against Gender Based Violence includes the five pillars of coordination, prevention, support, response and communication; working together with civil society including men and boys, NGOs, religious sector, traditional leaders and the private sector.

We continue to condemn in the strongest possible terms the targeting of the LGBTI community, including the so-called corrective rape, violence and killings. We deplore these inhumane acts that target people on the basis of their sexual orientation.

We are pleased that last year the General Assembly adopted a ground-breaking resolution on Female Genital Mutilation led by the Africa Group. FMG remains a worst form of violence against women across different regions of the world.

We underline the importance of vigorously addressing the issue of provision of access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health.

It will be a travesty and a betrayal of billions of women across the world, if again this year we fail to adopt the Agreed Conclusions because of divisions on these issues.

For the generations of women and girls to come, the collective efforts we make today must contribute to the

creation of a world that is better, fairer, more equitable, inclusive and safer than the one in which we live today.

Future generations of women and girls must be empowered to realise their full potential and to live free of violence, fear, repression and poverty.

I thank you.