

**STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. ZWELETHU MNISI
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

**BEFORE THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE
66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 28:
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

**NEW YORK
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**Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Since it is the first time I am taking the floor in my national capacity, allow me to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Third Committee for this 66th Session. My delegation is confident that you will steer this Committee through to a successful conclusion of its work.

I would also like to thank all the various speakers for their informative statements on this agenda item.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Kenya on behalf of the African Group and the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Chairperson,

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland recognizes women as equal citizens and is committed to the promotion and protection of their human rights, without undermining their role in the family. The Kingdom of Swaziland is born from a rich cultural heritage and valuable principles that hold women in high esteem and regard them as the basic pillar of strength in the building of our society.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a State Party to most international, regional and sub-regional protocols relating to the advancement of women. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland guarantees the rights and freedoms of women and it provides that women have the right to equal treatment and equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities.

Chairperson,

We have taken great strides in policy, legislation and programmatic interventions to improve the quality of life of our women. For example, in line with the provisions of our Constitution, the Deeds Registry Act was reviewed successfully and now allows women to register property in their own names even if married in community of property. The Act was passed by Parliament in July, 2011.

Furthermore, The National Gender Policy was adopted in October, 2010 and an implementation Plan has also been adopted by the relevant stakeholders. Both the National Gender Policy and Action Plan were developed through a participatory process. Since gender is cross-cutting, the responsibility to implement it lies with all stakeholders. The Gender and Family Issues Unit within the Deputy Prime Minister's Office will be responsible for coordinating, monitoring and evaluation.

Chairperson,

At regional level, the Kingdom of Swaziland is actively engaged in initiatives to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. To this end, in line with the African Union's Declaration of the years 2010 to 2020 as the African Women's Decade, we have launched the Swaziland Women's Decade Road Map in October, 2010.

The roadmap contains ten themes namely:

- Economic Empowerment; Agriculture; Health; Education; Environment; Peace and Security (which includes violence against women); Governance and Legal Protection; Financing and gender budgeting; Women in decision making positions; and energizing the young women's movement and mentoring young women.

This roadmap is a result of four dialogues held in all four regions of the country. The main objective of the dialogue was to ascertain priority programmes from the grass-root level in preparation for projects to be implemented during the decade to improve the lives of all women.

Chairperson,

Despite the progress that has been made, many challenges still exist. The prevailing economic and financial crises have impacted immensely on the Kingdom of Swaziland. Unemployment, poverty and hunger are at their worst level and women and girls are the most affected.

Also, the HIV and AIDS epidemic has compounded the responsibilities of our women as they bear the greater burden of care giving in the home.

The government of the Kingdom of Swaziland appreciates the assistance provided by our development partners in the field of technical co-operation and local capacity building and it is our hope that this co-operation will be further strengthened.

Chairperson,

We note that the Secretary-General's Report contained in document A/66/181 states that rural women continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged because of their limited access to economic resources and opportunities, their exclusion from planning and decision-making and their disproportionate burden of unpaid care work.

To this end, we are pleased to report that the Kingdom of Swaziland also recognizes the vital role played by rural women in society, in particular their contribution to development. A number of programmes to facilitate projects initiated by rural women are already in place including savings and credit co-operatives designed to cater for the financial needs of women.

In conclusion, Chairperson, allow me to reiterate our Government's commitment to the advancement of women.

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