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STATEMENT

BY

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DURING

THE

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)
2010 HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT**

ON

THE THEME:

***"GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES"***

Thursday, July 1, 2010
UN Headquarters, New York

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies & Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to address this High-Level Segment of the 2010 ECOSOC. Let me begin, **Mr. President**, by commending you and the ECOSOC Secretariat on your work in preparation of this important session and re-affirm our commitment to support you and the bureau towards the successful conclusion of our deliberations.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The overriding objective of Kenya's economic and social development is to improve the quality of lives of its people particularly women and children. Kenya believes that gender equality is an irreducible condition for inclusive, democratic, violence free and sustainable development. And as such, it has been articulated in Kenya's Vision 2030, a national blue print, whose objective is to transform Kenya into a prosperous country by 2030. We continually pay specific attention to women's needs and contributions in order to address the gender gaps, address unequal policies and eliminate discrimination that historically have disadvantaged women and distorted development.

Notwithstanding the global economic downturn fuelled by the ongoing crises, and natural disasters, I am pleased to report that Kenya is recovering from the shocks that hit the economy in the last two years. The post-election stalemate, incessant drought and crop failure saw a drastic contraction of the economy with real GDP declining from 7.0% in 2007 to 1.6% in 2008 and a weak improvement in 2009 of 2.6%. Current projections are that the economy will expand by 5% in 2010.

Mr. President,

The various reports of the Secretary-General have demonstrated the linkages between gender inequality and poverty and between poverty and discrimination and violence against women. It is pertinent, therefore, that breaking this vicious cycle becomes our priority. Any serious effort to eliminate bias against women must entail change in the attitude of society. We must all act to promote this change. Kenya has embarked on a

systematic process to re-engineer social attitudes to engender equality, equity and empowerment of women through political, legislative, administrative and policy measures and interventions aimed at mainstreaming gender perspectives in all aspects of Kenyan life. This change is aimed at integrating gender entity as an important component in Kenya's development agenda.

Mr. President,

The process to comprehensively review our Constitution has provided a unique opportunity to entrench gender equality in our basic law to facilitate more equitable and representative participation as full and equal members to all levels of Kenya's democratic national governance. The Referendum to decide on the Constitution shall be held in early August 2010. Once adopted, the benefits for women will be highly enhanced including in decision-making, mainstreaming gender and participation in the economy and politics.

Violence Against Women

Kenya abhors violence against women in all its manifestations. Violence not only abrogates the human rights of its victims but also robs them of their sense of dignity and self worth and circumscribes their capacity for self improvement and their participation in economic life. It is in this regard that Kenya supports, among others, all the initiatives aimed at combating this abhorrent behaviour. Further, Kenya supports the Secretary-General's initiative "UNiTe to End Violence Against Women". While we all have various initiatives aimed at combating violence, we must increase communication, co-ordination and collaboration to bring about coherence and take advantage of the synergies created. We must also aggressively engage men and boys in addressing violence within the family and community settings.

Women in Rural Areas

Women in rural areas face challenges and difficulties that stand in their way to empower themselves. They care for children and the elderly, while at the same time engaging in rudimentary economic activities including farming to help feed and generally take care of the family. Many women do not ordinarily get remunerated for their work. In this regard, we must continue implementing gender-responsive policies and programmes to

promote women's economic empowerment including through providing access to markets, participation in micro-enterprises and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value and also sharing the unpaid work. Further, we have to actively promote the participation of women in public life, economic empowerment and access micro-credit & finance and healthcare services.

Rain-fed agriculture has been a challenge to Kenya due to unpredictable and erratic weather patterns. This has caused untold suffering to rural populations particularly women. To attain national food security, the Government has developed strategies aimed at using farming and livestock keeping methods that use appropriate technology to improve yields. They include introduction of high yielding drought resistant crops, provisional of affordable fertilizers, promotion of irrigated agriculture and enhanced agricultural extension and research.

Mr. President,

Trafficking in Persons

I would like to turn to the crime of trafficking in persons. This is a problem that is increasingly defying our efforts to eradicate it. Kenya commends and supports the current efforts being undertaken by the General Assembly to put in place a Global Plan of Action to deal with trafficking in persons. Kenya shall continue to support this process including the efforts by the UN system particularly, UNODC and regional organizations, so that we can achieve a more co-ordinated and coherent system that prioritizes punishing the perpetrators and rehabilitating the survivors.

Mr. President,

In order to achieve most of the goals, we must demonstrate political goodwill. With so many competing priorities, the ongoing global crises, and the difficulty to secure funding, gender specific programmes run the risk of being put on a waiting list. Yet, we know that by investing in women, we will have a strong opportunity to limit the human impact on the crisis and reduce social costs. This is the reason why we must not relent. Indeed, we should collectively engage to foster women's entrepreneurial development, promote women's access to technology, acquire technical skills and encourage a shift to more marketable and

remunerative opportunities in order to increase the gains from those already made.

Mr. President,

This year has been particularly devastating as far as natural disasters are concerned. Whether it is the earthquakes, floods or even drought, the majority of those affected are women and children. While we commend and express gratitude to the UN system particularly OCHA, WFP, UNICEF and others, for the timely response to the disasters, we would like to address the significance of entrenching gender sensitivity in the response to natural disasters. We must not only provide protection, but should also increase quality interventions in order to hasten transition from relief dependency to development.

Millennium Development Goals and the High Level Summit

Some countries have registered tremendous progress in the same MDG targets since 2000. MDGs relating to education, HIV/AIDS, gender quality, hunger and even poverty, have vastly improved worldwide including the Sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya has however, consistently raised alarm as relates to the maternal health and child mortality MDGs. These MDGs are in danger of not being achieved and may even reverse the gains made in other areas. We must seize and utilize the unique opportunity that we will have in September 2010 to look anew at the strategies and collectively work towards supporting those countries such as Kenya that are on the threshold of making significant gains as relates to all MDGs. We believe that gender equality and empowerment of women, as a cross-cutting issue, is one of the most effective ways towards achieving the MDGs.

Finally, ***Mr. President,*** Kenya welcomes the process of establishment of the UN gender Entity and hopes that the adoption of the constitutive resolution will be done before the end of this week.

I conclude by acknowledging the invaluable work of UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNDP, and UNAIDS in providing support to Kenya. This continued-mutually-befitting partnership shall surely ensure that we make advances in our quest to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

I thank you!