

9 March 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of
Women**

**Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to join you today at the opening of this 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This session is of particular significance as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. This session also takes place in a year of historic significance, as we mark the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

I congratulate the Chairperson, Ms. Kanda Vajrabhaya of Thailand, the Permanent Representative of El Salvador and the other Bureau members from Sudan, Switzerland and Estonia on your election to lead this important session of the Commission.

Distinguished delegates,

Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment has been and remains one of my key priorities for this session. The anniversary of Beijing presents us with a historic opportunity to galvanise action and mobilise all actors to accelerate and effectively advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This past Friday, 6 March, I convened a High-level Thematic Debate on "Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls". For the first time, Heads of State and Government participated in a thematic debate of the General Assembly. Participants included the Presidents of Liberia and Croatia, the Prime Minister of Turkey, the Secretary-General of La Francophonie, and representatives from civil society and the business community.

They all delivered inspiring messages. They encouraged delegations and other participants to accelerate implementation of the commitments made at Beijing and the realisation of the gender-specific goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They also stressed the importance of investing ambitiously in education and training opportunities so that we will have achieved additional results by 2020.

I join them in this call to action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As this Commission session gets underway, we are afforded the opportunity to take stock of our achievements and challenges as we approach the target date for the realisation of the MDGs.

We should feel heartened by the progress that has been made in several critical areas, including; significant gains in girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education; increased participation of women in labour markets; better access to sexual and reproductive health-care; and increased participation and leadership of women in political life.

Nevertheless, many key challenges remain, including; persistent violence against women and girls; high levels of maternal mortality in some regions; the existence of discriminatory laws, customs and practices; the unequal distribution of resources within households, based on gender; the lack of access to technology and affordable credit by women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises; and the lack of access to political spheres and decision-making roles.

As we formulate the Post-2015 Development Agenda, we must reflect on these challenges and take concrete steps to integrate gender perspectives in the new framework, which Member States are expected to endorse later this year. This will strengthen accountability for the implementation of existing commitments and address many of the prevailing factors that contribute to the structural causes of gender-based inequalities.

If we are to embark on a truly transformative and inclusive future development framework, it is essential that we are all engaged in the process. I encourage men and boys to get increasingly involved to help break down gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms and practices.

Excellencies,

We must use the opportunity before us to advance these important discussions, follow-through on our decisions, and take the bold actions necessary to address the remaining issues that inhibit women and girls from realizing their complete potential, and being full and equal contributors to our future development aspirations.

I thank you for your attention.