



*The  
Bahamas*

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION**

**STATEMENT**

**by**

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Minister of State for Social Development**

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**New York**

Please check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my delegation, I congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election to this 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I assure you of our full cooperation and support. In addition, The Bahamas aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Before proceeding, I express my Government's sincere condolences to the Government and people of Chile for the destruction to property and loss of lives resulting from last Saturday's devastating earthquake. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this difficult time.

Mr. Chairman,

I am especially pleased to present this statement today as we commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. I reaffirm my Government's full commitment to its implementation and to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

The Bahamas has consistently undertaken initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. A review of the country's labor laws was conducted and they have been brought in line with international standards; creative approaches have also been utilized to address poverty and social ills through the enhancement of the country's social safety nets.

Further, Child Protection and Trafficking in Persons Legislation was enacted. The Bahamas also ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. Specialized training on counter-trafficking was also made available to representatives from relevant agencies and key stakeholders.

The Bahamas is grateful to International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners, for their invaluable assistance in providing counter-trafficking training and for building much needed capacity to enable us to sustain such efforts to which my Government is fully committed.

Mr. Chairman,

In the area of HIV/AIDS, The Bahamas has made significant progress in addressing the challenges associated with the pandemic, particularly in the prevention of mother to child transmission, which remains a best practice in the region at 3%.

As a further commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, my Government has continued its efforts to clearly condemn and outlaw domestic and sexual violence in all their manifestations. Our 1991 legislation has been amended to allow for stiffer penalties for sexual offences such as rape, with up to life imprisonment for a first offence and also broadened the scope of the offence through procurement by electronic means. Additionally, it also established new offences of voyeurism and child pornography.

Similarly, the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act was enforced in 2008 and includes the expanded definitions of domestic violence of spouse to “partner” and also of harassment and stalking.

Public discussions continue on the introduction of legislation to address marital rape. The Bahamas intends to send a clear message that violence against women is unacceptable under any circumstance and **will not** be tolerated.

The Bahamas conducted a Gender Assessment with the assistance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The assessment, which was completed in 2009, will significantly contribute

to the development of a Gender Policy for the country and will enhance our efforts to further promote gender mainstreaming in our various policy programs.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to inform that The Bahamas has submitted its previously outstanding periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which will be reviewed by the committee this fall. We thank the United Nations Population Fund's Regional Office for their support in this endeavour. The exercise has served to strengthen the local capacity of the National Women's Machinery to meet further reporting obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

Reflecting on Beijing to where we are today, some may be proud of what we have achieved for women's advancement and empowerment, while others may be skeptical. Nevertheless, we are mindful of the alarming inequities and problems still faced by women throughout the world.

It is the hope of my delegation in assessing our progress and confronting the obstacles and challenges to the realization of our dreams of 15 years ago, that we will effectively devise a more strategic approach and policy initiatives to ensure gender equality and equity for all deprived and oppressed women and girls throughout the world.

Thank you.