

**EGYPT**



**مصر**

The Permanent Mission of Egypt  
to the United Nations  
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بعثة مصر الدائمة  
لدى الأمم المتحدة  
نيويورك

**Statement**

**By**

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**Secretary General of the National Council for Women**

**Before**

**The Commission on the Status of Women,**

**Fifty Fourth Sessions**

**On the Full Implementation of the Beijing Declaration  
And Platform for Action**

**the Relationship with the Achievement of the  
Millennium Development Goals**

**Check Against Delivery**

**New York - March 3, 2010**



Mr. Chair,

I would like to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on assuming responsibility of the Committee's work during this important session which commemorates fifteen years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action. Allow me to stress that Egyptian women have enjoyed unconditional constitutional rights to equality, in addition to a supportive political will at the highest level which is reflected in the constant presidential directives to all state institutions.

Significant progress has been achieved in efforts to empower women and enhance their ability to exercise their rights due to a comprehensive, integrated strategy with an ambitious work program, within a time-frame ending in 2015. This strategy reflects not only the BPA, the MDGs and CEDAW, but also articles relevant to the advancement of women in more than sixty of the UN's instruments.

The gender gap is declining at all levels of education, and is in favor of females at the levels of secondary and many higher education faculties. This is reflected by the participation of women in the public sectors, albeit concentrated in sectors such as education and health (60%); and decreasing in sectors such as transport and industry, leading to an average of 30%. However, women occupy about 36% of leadership and decision-making positions in the government. In addition, there is a continuous increase, reaching more than 50% in most junior faculty positions, and women occupy posts of Deans and University Presidents.

Moreover, the position of Deputy Minister, has been newly introduced and women hold this post in the Ministries of Finance and Investment, Industry, Commerce and Communications, in addition there are three women Ministers. In the diplomatic field, women constitute 20% of the ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions. In 2003, the first woman judge was appointed, and successive appointments led to a woman occupying the position of the Deputy Chair of the Supreme Constitutional Court. In 2008, a woman mayor and marriage registrar clerk were appointed. Women occupy the position of the deputy speaker of parliament, as well as chairs of parliamentary committees. The percentage of women in political parties has increased, and so has the percentage of registered female voters, reaching a total of 41%. Even though the level of women in parliament is still moderate, the constitutional amendments provided the opportunity for the passage of the quota law in 2009, guaranteeing 64 (12%) seats for women while reserving their rights to compete for the remaining seats.

In order to enhance political and parliamentary capacities of female parliamentarians, NCW, through the Civic Education Centre, trains women to run and manage election campaigns, with support from the Dutch government. NCW implements another program to enhance the legislative and oversight skills of women MPs is implemented with support from UNIFEM and the UNDP.

There is a gradual, yet noticeable improvement in the image of women in the Media which is monitored by NCW Media Watch project, with support from UNICEF, in addition to conducting gender sensitization training to people working in the media.

NCW implements an ambitious project to address violence against women in all its forms, including a component on women trafficking, with support of USAID. This is in addition to Egypt's efforts in promoting a culture of peace at the national, regional and international levels through the Suzanne Mubarak International Women for Peace Movement.

Mr. Chair,

The National Council for Women played an active and substantial role in amending several laws containing any form of discrimination against women. Other laws still need to be reviewed, some of which have already been submitted to Parliament. We rely on information gathered from women's complaints presented to the NCW's Ombudsman Office that is continually gaining popularity. The project was supported in an earlier stage by the United Kingdom, and is currently supported by the European Union.

Rural, poor, and unemployed women have a share in our efforts to implement the "poverty reduction strategy" in Egypt (PRS) with support from the World Bank, which includes a comprehensive program, tailored to the specific needs of women in each social category. With assistance from the Italian government, we focused on rural women and female heads of households in particular, providing micro credit without interest, with the provision that they enroll their children in schools, thereby reducing child labor, and that they themselves join literacy classes and get National Identification cards which allow them to enjoy the services offered by the State, and that they obtain voting cards to more effectively participate in the development of their society.

We cooperate with civil society in the implementation of all our projects, particularly NGOs working in the field of developing rural communities, to reach women all over the country.

Believing that cooperation with neighboring countries and countries all over the world is an important element that help to achieve designated objectives, we participate in international fora and focus on the regional activities, the most recent of which was two weeks ago, (February 2010) where the Cairo Conference brought together women parliamentarians from the Euro-Mediterranean region to provide mutual support in facing the negative impacts of climate change on women, in the areas of food security and poverty reduction.

Egypt's leap forward in the advancement of women was due to institutional development. The establishment of NCW as the national machinery for promoting the status of women had a major impact as the Council is directly under the presidency, placing it in a special position with a political force within the framework of the law. By virtue of its mandate NCW formulates policies and plans for the advancement of women, and monitors and evaluates such plans.

Chaired by H.E Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, the First Lady of Egypt, NCW has succeeded in establishing equal opportunity units in almost all ministries, as well as women's committees in all syndicates. These units have major impacts in addressing any form of discrimination against women. There are other mechanisms tackling women's issues in the ministries of Social Solidarity, Agriculture, and Environment which endeavor to raise women's awareness on the dangers of environmental pollution, the impacts of climate change and methods of environmental protection.

There is a gender unit at the National Council of Human Rights as well as one at the National Planning Institute at the Ministry of Economic Development which is responsible for planning in the country. It is worth mentioning that one of the main reasons for the advancement in the status of women is due to the participation of women themselves in the national planning processes. For the first time, women participated in the formulation of the national five-year plans for socio-economic development 2002/2007 and 2007/2012. Special programs addressing women's issues have been included through the adoption of participatory planning and gender budgeting processes, and in monitoring and evaluation implemented by the NCW, in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The situation required the development of innovative and unconventional indicators to assess gender equality, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Mr. Chair

Allow me to point out that despite the successes which we are happy with, there are challenges still ahead of us:

**First:** Illiteracy among women is still more than that of men.

**Second:** There is a gap, though receding, between laws and their applications.

**Third:** We still face a problem regarding women's work in the informal and private sectors, which refrain from hiring women due to rights granted to them such as maternity leave and family care. NCW started a pilot project with support from the Dutch government and UNIFEM, addressing equality in the private sector through the Gender Equity Seal. The experience was a success in several companies and is being expanded nation wide.

The biggest challenge is that there are still some customs and cultural misconceptions of the various religions in some rural communities.

Mr. Chair

I conclude by stressing that we are working hard so that the Egyptian women exercise their rights and we strive to achieve the international standards to which Egypt is committed, and have great hopes in the fulfillment of these commitments and the achievement of the third Millennium Development Goal, as we have a date with the world in 2015.

Thank you Mr. Chair

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