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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement
by
the Ethiopian Delegation
at
the 54th Session of the Commission on
the Status of Women

New York

March 2010

Mr. Chairman,

Since my delegation takes the floor for the first time, it is my pleasure to join previous speakers in expressing our congratulations to you on your election as Chair of the 54th Session of the Commission.

We wish to express our solidarity and deep condolences to the Governments and Peoples of Haiti and Chile for the devastating earthquakes that affected lives and properties.

Mr. Chairman,

It is my great pleasure to make this statement on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As we are reviewing the **platform** as well as the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and emerging challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals, my delegation is confident that our deliberation will contribute considerably by providing us the opportunity in terms of sharing the best practices and identifying possible solutions as to how to meet the enormous challenges in ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women in our respective countries.

My Delegation attaches itself with the statements made by the Distinguished Permanent Representatives of the Republic of Yemen and Equatorial Guinea on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as the African Group respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Ethiopia strongly believes that without equal participation of women in the political, social and economic areas of our Country, sustainable development and social justice would not be achieved. When sound policies and strategies are put in place to bring about economic growth, it would be important to mainstream gender in all sectors. It is with this basic consideration that Ethiopia has been fully committed to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in all areas of concern as it, we believe, is the right policy framework to advance the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels.

In order to address the multifaceted problems that women had been experiencing for long time in Ethiopia, the FDRE Constitution enshrines equal rights for women in all political, social and economic spheres. In this regard, the Constitution has brought an end to all discriminatory laws, regulations and practices that had long prevailed in the Country. The major international instruments such as Universal declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) have been made integral part of our Constitution.

The Government has promulgated **National Policy on women** and has also taken various steps to improve the conditions of women in the country through formulating policies and strategies to mainstream gender dimensions in all development programmes. Accordingly, progress has been made in the adoption of the revised penal code that contains provisions with strong penalties so as to protect women. This penal code clearly stipulates that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), rape and women trafficking are crimes punishable with rigorous imprisonment. Other protective legislations have also been enacted that guarantee women's access to land, credit facilities, and productive

resources. It is also worth mentioning that the new family law has amended to ensure equality of women in marriage.

In order to promote equal opportunity for women in decision making position, significant awareness creation, advocacy and lobbying activities have been accomplished across the country. As a result, the number of women in political leadership has increased substantially. For instance, the number of women representatives at the federal parliament, from both the ruling and opposition parties, has reached 117 (21%). Moreover, the representation of elected women at regional level has increased to 40%.

Mr. Chairman,

The sectoral institutions of the Government from the Federal down to the Woreda [District] level have established women affairs departments in their domains. The Ministry of Women Affairs is part of the executive branch which enabled it to bring any issue of significance with regard to women directly to the cabinet. Parallel to this, the regional states also have women affairs offices which are part of the regional and district administrative councils. Furthermore, appropriate mechanisms have been put in place at all levels of the Government organs for gender mainstreaming and integrating all women's needs in development programmes.

On the other hand, in order to enhance equity in the main economic sector of Ethiopia, which is agriculture, the following results have been achieved in the frame work of the Women's Package for Change and Development:

- Regions have registered the names of both spouses for land certification in order to ensure the rights of women to own and administer their economic asset;

- The Food security program of the country has given due attention to women, particularly for female headed households;
- Agricultural credit services have been expanded through out the country and women have got the opportunity to get better access to credit than before. This by itself has enabled women to engage in Micro and Small scale enterprise sectors, such as fattening, poultry, dairy... etc.;
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has given special attention towards increasing the participation of women headed households, and married women in rural society to be supported under the agricultural extension program.

Mr. Chairman,

The gender gap is almost closed at primary and secondary education levels, and with the introduction of affirmative action in educational sectors, girls are enrolling at higher institutions in unprecedented numbers. **Educational Management Board** has also been established from the lower to the higher administration units of the school. Women teachers at various levels are members of the board for the purpose of monitoring the progress in girls' education. To increase the participation of the pastoralist girls and women in different educational program, gender sensitive education package has been developed and being implemented in pastoral areas of the country; and **Gender Focal point** has been institutionalized in higher educational institutes in order to address girls' problems and enhance their assertiveness through conducting different capacity building programs.

Ethiopia's national health policy has taken Primary Health Care (PHC) as its priority area to provide decentralized and equitable services by focusing on **communicable diseases, nutrition, maternal and child health care as well as**

environmental health. This policy has accorded special attention to health needs of the family, particularly women and children in the most disadvantaged regions of the country. Since 1997 the government has been implementing gender oriented health development programs. The Ministry of Health trained and assigned 30,000 health extension workers (most of whom are young women) to teach the community at each kebele, which is the lower administration unit in Ethiopia.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate Ethiopia's commitment to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in all areas of concern and meet the Millennium Development Goals, particularly on the advancement of Women.

Mr. Chairman,

In the exercise of the right to reply my delegation would like to make the following statement.

Even though this 54 Session of the Commission on the Status of Women is devoted to review the Beijing Platform of Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly, it is unfortunate that this much anticipated meeting is used by the Eritrean Delegation to mislead the participants by bringing an issue which is handled by appropriate UN Organ, which is the Security Council.

As it is well known, the Security Council imposed sanction on Eritrea because of its continued support to extremist groups in Somalia, and its failure to comply with Security Council Resolution 1862 to stop illegal actions against Djibouti. The African Union Summit last June in Sirte, Libya, unanimously endorsed the call of

the African Union Peace and Security Council for sanctions on Eritrea as it has been working with terrorists and extremists in their efforts to destabilize our sub-region. This resolution is a response to those activities. It has nothing to do with any bilateral relationships but with the persistent difficult behavior of Eritrea and its aggressive attitude towards all its neighbors. This resolution adopted, specifically to persuade Eritrea to mend its ways, to behave in a peaceful and civilized manner in the future. So, my delegation wishes to put this on record.

I thank you!