

***The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women,  
Members of the Committee,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

**Madam Chairperson,** before my presentation I wish to take this opportunity to render an apology for the late submission of our reports. The preparation and collaboration of data with and from relevant stakeholders, for the report can be cumbersome and expensive and this sometimes delays the completion of the report within record time. Indeed this was occasioned by circumstances beyond our control.

I thank you for offering me the opportunity to make a statement on behalf of my country and also congratulate you for the able manner in which you have steered affairs of this important Committee.

I wish to thank the Pre-session working committee and the Secretariat for the excellent arrangement made for this meeting.

Ghana has before you a 10 member delegation who are directors from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

**Madam Chairperson,** I bring you and through you to this meeting warm greetings from the Government and People of Ghana.

**Madam Chairperson,** Ghana ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1986 and as a country we have made progress in creating awareness on gender issues and the societal perception and concept for women and girls and development is changing.

The Government and people of Ghana have demonstrated their commitment to the tenets of the Convention by ensuring that the Constitution, new legislation and policies are consistent with CEDAW. Fundamentally, the Constitution of Ghana commits the country to the elimination of gender discrimination. It also provides the constitutional basis for gender mainstreaming and equality.

The government of Ghana has continued to vigorously pursue institutional, administrative and legal reforms as well as formulated and implemented various policies to address issues of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

**Madam Chairperson,** Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) has been reviewed and we now have in place the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS2). Vulnerability and exclusion is one of the key themes, and social protection programmes are within the framework of this document. Furthermore gender perspectives have been incorporated into all the themes.

Ghana has reached the HIPC completion point and savings from the HIPC initiative has been directed at education and training, health, potable water, sanitation and other facilities – all critical areas for child development and empowerment of the vulnerable. Women Development Fund, a micro credit initiative for women was established with funds allocated from the HIPC savings.

The creation of a Cabinet-level Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in 2001 was a demonstration of political will to address the problem of women's marginalization and raise the issues of women's rights and empowerment to a higher national level.

**The mandate of MOWAC** is to initiate/formulate policies and promote gender mainstreaming across all sectors that will lead to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, survival, development and growth of children as well as ensuring the protection of the rights of women and children. The designation of MOWAC as a Central Management Agency (CMA) with Cabinet status provides it with a comparative advantage with the role and responsibility to monitor policy implementation and programmes in the sector areas, coordinate cross sector issues and evaluate the impact of sector policies on women and children.

MOWAC brings together the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) and the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) under one coordinated national institutional framework to coordinate national efforts in promoting and advancing the rights of women and children in Ghana. The laws governing NCWD and the GNCC have been repealed. The two entities now operate as decentralized departments of women and children under the Ministry, and thus derive their orientation and guiding principles of operation from MOWAC.

The establishment of MOWAC is therefore a holistic response to the many and varying challenges of empowering women and highlighting Children concerns, protecting their rights, advocating for change in traditional practices and attitudes which deny them equality and equity in accessing national opportunities to facilitate the attainment of their potential and aspirations.

The Ministry is undertaking its onerous tasks through 4 main strategies:

- **Advocacy** with Cabinet, Parliament, Policymakers, Chiefs and Traditional and Religious Authorities for enactment of gender responsive laws and adoption of gender sensitive policies Successful outcomes of joint advocacy work has been:
  - Mainstreaming gender aspects into all the thematic focus areas of GPRS II.
  - Passage of laws that enhance Women Human rights.
  - Sensitizing Queen mothers to support and monitor Women Human Rights compliance at the community level as well organizing support for Orphans and Vulnerable children.
  - Mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS in reproductive health, education and support for vulnerable groups and we are glad to inform you that HIV/AIDS prevalence rate has consistently been reducing and now stands at 2.7%.
  
- **Broad-based Consultations and Partnerships** with Civil Society, NGOs and other Stakeholders for advocacy, gender training and sensitization and programme implementation:
  - Sensitization on the Domestic Violence Bill and Human Trafficking Act before and after its passage.
  - Creation of the required momentum for change in favour of women's empowerment, gender equity and equality.
  
- **Collaboration** with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) for gender sensitive policy development, mainstreaming and programme implementation:
  - MDAs Policy frameworks for women's empowerment through effective targeting and improved service delivery e.g. – health care, skills training especially for the young girls.
  - Regional and District Women Durbars held for Directors of Key MDAs to explain their policies and programmes to the women and to listen to their concerns. This has assisted MOWAC in assessing impact of policies on women and to make the necessary recommendation for review.
  - MOWAC in collaboration with its stakeholders formulated the National Gender and Children Policy and a Strategic Implementation Plan to operationalize the Policy.

- **Support to Women's Economic and Political Empowerment:**

- Operation of government and donor funded Women's Development Fund.
- The Fund covers women in small scale farming. Agro Processing and Micro Enterprises. Since its inception in 2002 to-date, an amount of ₵96 billion cedis (about US\$10m) has been disbursed to 177,000 women throughout the country. The Fund has impacted significantly on the lives of about 708,000 families in the country and has also promoted micro enterprises development among women in the country. Women's groups have also been supported with Agro Processing Equipment to reduce post harvest loses, add value and increase their income.
- Establishment of Women in Local Governance Fund for Women's Participation in Local Government (District Assembly) Elections through innovative mobilization of resources from women with means and male supporters. This fund has been established to enhance women's participation in the District levels election in September 2006.
- A training manual has been developed. Capacities of women are being built to participate in Public life effectively.

### **Other Achievements**

Other pro women's empowerment and gender equality institutional arrangements are:

- the establishment of the Girl Child Education Directorate in Ministry of Education, Women in Agriculture Development (WIAD) in Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Maternal and Public Health Units of Ghana Health Service.
- Gender Desk Officers in all the 138 District Assemblies and Gender Focal Persons in MDAs.

- **Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ):** constitutional body monitoring human rights, dealing with violations and educating the public on human rights; Also the establishment of Legal Aid Boards are further acting to promote human rights.

- **Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DVVSU):** of the Ghana Police Service: to promote protection of women and children from domestic violence, abuse and neglect;
- **Legislation:** Amended Criminal Code Act of 1998 (Act 554) criminalizing harmful widowhood rites, ritual servitude and FGM; Children's Act (Act 560) including focus on the girl child; Human Trafficking Act; Disability Act; and the Domestic Violence Bill now in Parliament is expected to be passed this year. The Labour Law has been reviewed and the new law provides equal opportunity for training and working in the mining industry. It also for the first time criminalizes harassment at the work place.
- **Policies:** Affirmative Action Policy 1998; National Gender and Children's Policy 2004; Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, 2004. There are also various gender policies and strategies of sector MDAs.

The sectors of Health and Education are making strenuous efforts to improve coverage of basic services to children and women. Free ante-natal and delivery services (through the exemption programme) have been extended to cover the whole country. The Accelerated Child Survival Development (ACSD) programme now referred to as High Impact Rapid Delivery reduced infant child mortality by 50% in the Upper East Region and also with strong positive impact on maternal mortality has demonstrated yet another effective approach for tackling MDGs 4 and 5. The National Health Insurance Scheme covers children under 18 years automatically once their parents register. Sensitization and Public educational awareness programmes on the Abortion Law, condition under which abortion could be undertaken legally as well as on prevention of unwanted pregnancy through family planning, and on dangers of unsafe abortion have been intensified. Sensitization on gender issues in health is on going. Men as partners in Reproductive Health and Family Planning, and safe motherhood programmes are being promoted.

The introduction of the capitation grant has given great impetus to school enrolment and attendance. An increase of 16.67% enrolment for 2005/2006 has been recorded with 18.31% increase for girls and 15.18% for boys. Indeed the Capitation Grant is girl child and vulnerable friendly. The introduction of two year kindergarten (4&5 years old) as part of the basic education system has been a welcome relief for women.

Other achievements in the Education Sector include:

- a) Organization of access courses for female students who could not make the mark to enter teacher training college as a means of encouraging more females into the teaching profession,
  - b) Provision of on-site school feeding and food ration for girls towards the attainment of gender parity and
  - c) Provision of bicycles for girls in rural communities who commute long distances between home and school.
- **Measures under Affirmative Action Policy:**
    - Commitment to provide 30% women representation in decision-making and executive positions at all levels of government;
    - Allocation of 50% female quota of the 30% government appointees to the District Assemblies;
    - Establishment of Gender Focal Point in all MDAs;
    - Promotion of gender parity as part of Free Compulsory Basic Education – including incentive schemes to increase girls’ enrolment and retention in school.
    - Increased enrolment of girls at tertiary education level and we have 40% enrolment in females in the University of Ghana.

Various policies have been formulated and are being implemented to redress social, economic or educational imbalance in the Ghanaian Society. Examples are a Gender and Children Policy, Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, HIV/AIDS Policy, Gender Policy in Agriculture, National Health Insurance Policy, Reproductive and Health Policy, Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy, Educational Reform Policy, Growth and Poverty Reduction Policy and ICT Policy for Accelerated Socio-Economic Development, and the establishment of Educational Trust Fund among others.

Sensitization of women groups such as; community meetings, school visits, talks in churches, mosques, and market places as well as radio talk shows on community FM stations all directed at creating awareness on girls’ education and empowerment of women; promotion of income earning activities, participation in functional literacy etc are on-going.

In the area of women’s participation in political decision-making, there has been some improvement since 1996. Ghanaian women are now more politically aware of their civic rights and responsibilities, however women’s representation in Parliament and at District levels and in public life is still low compared to male participation. Over the years, the

National Machinery has worked with NGOs to raise the consciousness of women to their political potential through educational programmes on political and legal literacy and economic empowerment projects.

A directory on eminent women is being updated to provide and ensure relevant and timely availability of information on eligible women for appointment.

An advocacy strategy for sensitizing appointing authorities on implementation of affirmative Action for women has been developed. We see however the appointment of 14 Deputy Ministers and 11 District Chief Executives (Mayors) including the one for the second biggest metropolis by the President of the Republic as a landmark achievement. Other key institutions headed by females are CHRAJ, NDPC, Government Statistical Service, Immigration, National Population Council, Chamber of Mines, Chair of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Finance and Chair of the Committee on Energy and Mines.

### **Peer Review**

- Ghana achieved an important milestone on 22 January 2006 when the country submitted itself to a thorough peer review of its democratic and political governance and socio-economic development by Heads of State and Government of the African Union.
- The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) shows Africa's determination and commitment to change the status quo for the better. It was designed to enable African countries to monitor each other and promote better standards of governance, which includes respect for human rights and the rule of law, and equitable socio-economic development.
- Ghana was the first to sign up for the review after the APRM was launched in March 2003. The country worked diligently in highly participatory manner to complete the detailed processes and stages to become the first country in Africa to undergo the landmark peer review.

The Peer Review noted important constraints in the country one of them being problems of achieving gender equity and equality.

- Government has responded to these challenges by preparing a fully costed (at \$2.85 billion) and time-bound Programme of Action (POA) to deal with all the issues raised with appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes. The Independent APRM Governing Council is to be turned into a permanent body to continue to monitor the Programme of Action. Government has further demonstrated its firm

commitment by making significant allocations of budget funds to some of the activities in the POA. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, other MDAs, NGOs and Development Partners have to position ourselves to use this framework as another opening for enhancing women's empowerment, gender equity and equality.

**Madam Chairperson,** Ghana recently completed and signed the Compact of the Millennium Challenge Account sponsored by the Government of United States of America and will have access to US\$547m over 5 years for modernizing Agriculture, Transportation and Rural Development. Promoting and ensuring women's effective participation is captured expressly in the Compact and therefore enhances opportunities for empowerment of women in rural areas.

### **Challenges**

**Madam Chairperson,** there are challenges of financial, human and material resources constraints as well as structural limitations still to be addressed.

*Some specific challenges are:*

- Under-resourcing of the Ministry and Women's Desk (Gender Focal Points) in MDAs;
- Low representation of women in political and decision making structures;
- Low enforcement of laws and implementation of policies;
- Inadequate gender disaggregated data and benchmarks of progress in achieving gender equality and mainstreaming;
- The challenge of institution coordination mechanisms;
- Inadequate research to assess laws, policies and programmes;
- Sociocultural attitudes, biases and impediments from family and community levels to national context.

Through collaborative effort of key sectors and with an injection of more resources and support from our development partners we hope to overcome these obstacles and achieve more in the years ahead.

**In conclusion,** I wish to reiterate the determination and commitment of the Government of Ghana to continue to adopt measures and initiatives that progressively propel us towards achievement of women's empowerment, gender equity and equality thereby fully implementing CEDAW in Ghana specifically, and the rest of the international community generally.



We are proud of our achievements, attaining a gender parity index of 0.97 %, in basic school enrolment, the girl child-friendly Capitation Grant Programme, the development of policy initiatives and legislations, dissemination of information to women at all levels, support for women economic activities especially at the micro level, focus on and improvement in health of women and children, collaboration with all stakeholders including NGOs etc.

**Madam Chairperson,** The progress made so far would not have been possible without the political commitment, support from all stakeholders, including Civil Society Organizations and our Development Partners.

May I use this occasion to express Ghana's sincere appreciation for the support we have received from our partners especially, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, DANIDA, CIDA, other bilateral and multilateral organizations as well as our local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations for their support which has brought us this far in our efforts to implement the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

**Madam Chairperson,** Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you all for your attention.