



The
Bahamas

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

FIFTY-SECOND SESSION

STATEMENT

by

**The Honourable Loretta Butler-Turner, M.P.
Minister of State for Social Development**

27 February 2008

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 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I assure you of our full cooperation and support as we work towards a fruitful outcome of this year's session.

I also take this opportunity to reaffirm my Government's full commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

The Bahamas also fully aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action underscores the need for financial assistance from all sources and from across every sector. We commend the Commission for its focus on the important issue of 'financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women' and thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of the comprehensive reports on this year's theme.

'Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women' is critical in addressing the myriad challenges facing women throughout the world. The Bahamas has made every effort to pledge resources to further promote gender equality and empower its women through, *inter alia*, increase human and financial resource allocation to the National Women's Machinery. The Bureau of Women's Affairs, of which I have direct responsibility, has progressed from not having a specific allocation in the country's national budget to now having a line item. This will enable the Bureau to continue to play a critical role in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. Additionally, the Government has established a \$2 million Poverty Alleviation Fund which will also benefit our women. Other line ministries and departments continue to make provisions for programmes and services that directly benefit women. It is my goal to increase dialogue and to actively promote the involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Finance and Planning, to ensure that we move closer to our goal of producing a truly gender responsive budget.

Mr. Chairman,

Noting the important role of microfinance and credit for enterprises, permit me to share with you an important domestic initiative. In January of 2006, The Bahamas Development Bank, unveiled *The Micro Loan Programme*. The target market is owners of labour-intensive small and medium-sized enterprises who are eligible to borrow a maximum of \$10,000 to purchase raw materials, supplies and equipment. The majority of persons taking advantage of it are women, thus enhancing their entry into the work force, and ultimately their socio-economic status.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of all our achievements and efforts since Beijing, we are ever mindful of the fact that much more is required for Member States to achieve sustained results. National capacity-building is equally important as financial commitment and mobilization of resources.

In efforts to enhance its capacity-building to provide greater opportunities for women, my Government has engaged in discussions with several UN agencies – UNFPA, ECLAC and UNIFEM - to assist with the development of a gender policy and a new structure for our National Women’s Machinery, as well as to provide much needed technical assistance to enable The Bahamas to meet its reporting obligations to CEDAW. We are confident that these discussions will produce positive results and I take this opportunity to thank them for their assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

The link of this year’s priority theme to the current global economic climate highlights an issue of critical importance to developing countries, particularly small developing countries like The Bahamas. It would be remiss of me if I did not take this opportunity to address briefly the matter of development cooperation in the context of the current financial global system. The Bahamas cannot sufficiently underscore how vitally important a fair and equitable global trade and economic system is to what we are trying to achieve. We too often hear calls by major financial institutions and donors for financial reforms at the national level. Reforms at the national level, Mr. Chairman, must go hand-in-hand with those at the international level. We must correct the economic and financial systemic imbalances which continue to plague us in our fight to compete in the global economy and achieve sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

The Bahamas is a small developing country which is attempting to meet the challenges posed by globalization. However, we are continually constrained by global governance and systemic imbalances. Our “graduated” status has hindered our efforts to access resources, particularly concessionary funding necessary for sustained growth and development. Several countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region are also facing similar situations to the detriment of programmes designed to better the lives of not only women, but children as well. The selective allocation of resources to certain countries based on several factors, which include (1) relying solely on economic indicators that may prove to be misleading, (2) not giving adequate consideration to social indicators, which in many cases are lacking, and (3) disparities in the level of development, must be addressed if we are to attain our goals. The women of the world can no longer afford to suffer continued marginalization, victimization, and violence arguably exacerbated by an inequitable global financial system.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, The Bahamas reiterates the need for further consideration of this critical issue for all developing countries, particularly small developing countries, within the framework of the Monterrey process, and calls on all stakeholders to recommit themselves to providing a fair, equitable, open and inclusive process to the benefit of all.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

