



THE GAMBIA

Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

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The Republic of The Gambia

AT THE

52nd Session
of the
Commission on the Status of Women

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**Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,**

Let me begin by congratulating, the Bureau of the 52nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. My delegation wishes to align itself with earlier statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the Gambia, The 1980 National Women's Council Act set up the National Women's Council as an advisory body to government with an executive arm, the Women's Bureau, charged with the responsibility to assist Council in the monitoring, evaluation and reviewing of policies, programmes, projects, bills, legislation, and internationally agreed treaties/conventions.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs was created in 1996 and placed under the office of the Vice President. Gender focal points were institutionalized in all sectors with the objective of ensuring sustained and effective gender mainstreaming. A cabinet sub-committee on gender and a national assembly select committee on women and children do exist in light of the above.

Mr. Chairperson

The Government of The Gambia recognises the importance of NGOs, CSOs, UN agencies and other development partners and appreciates the role they play in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Furthermore, in realizing women's rights as human rights, Government, is cognizant of its obligations as signatory to both the CEDAW and the African Protocol to the Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the rights of Women in Africa as well as the Beijing Platform for Action and remains committed to its effective implementation and the realization of the set objectives.

Regarding policies, we are implementing the first Policy for the Advancement of Women and girls 1999-2009 which incorporates all the twelve critical areas of concerns of the Beijing Platform for action, CEDAW and other national priorities. However, in order to align national strategies and efforts to internationally recognized strategies and concepts, a Gender Policy will be finalized this year with funding from the EC, ADB and The Gambia Government.

The Gender Policy will serve as a point of reference for effective mainstreaming of gender perspectives at all levels. Within the context of this policy, strategies will be identified for gender financing, provision of adequate gender disaggregated data including an effective and well coordinated monitoring and evaluation framework.

Mr. Chairperson,

I am pleased to inform the commission, that, a situational analysis on gender responsive budgeting in key sectors is being conducted by the Women's Affairs ministry through Women's Bureau in collaboration with ProPAG, supported by UNICEF. The outcome of this assessment will inform the proposed gender policy and re-direct national intervention for gender financing.

As already highlighted by other delegates and experts, sustained gender responsive budgeting requires the full and continued commitment of all policy makers, budget managers, legislatures and donor partners. In this regard, sensitization and training programmes for all stakeholders will be ensured. UNFPA is supporting the production of gender mainstreaming training and reference manual.

May I also seize this opportunity to put on record our profound appreciation to the UN agencies in The Gambia for their continued support to the government. In 2007, the UNDP supported a project aimed at contributing to women's effective participation in decision making at all levels.

In the area of legislation, in 2007 we carried out a comprehensive review of national laws that relates to gender and women, with a view to determining how far they conform to CEDAW and The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The outcome of the review formed the basis for the drafting of a comprehensive legislation that seeks to implement and make applicable the provisions of these instruments on women's rights, titled Women's Bill 2007, to be presented to the National Assembly very soon for enactment.

The report of the review also highlighted the gaps on existing laws and made proposals for future legislation and sector policy review. In this regard a separate legislation on Gender based Violence is proposed, Therefore, my delegation, would like put on record our appreciation to the UN Secretary General's campaign to end violence against women, which is a problem for all countries.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the social sectors, the education policy provides for free basic education for all and promotes quality and access to education for girls at higher levels. In the area of health, Maternal and child mortality are reducing through improved prenatal and antenatal health care services although a lot still needs to be done.

In pursuit of economic empowerment of women and in a bid to uplift the socio-economic situation of women, Government together with NGOs and other development partners initiated a number of poverty reduction intervention programmes and projects focusing on livelihood skills, entrepreneurial and business development training as well as provision of financial services and market opportunities. We recognize that many daunting challenges would have to be overcome in the execution of these initiatives.

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Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, I would like to inform the commission of The Gambia's unflinching commitment to the empowerment of women and girls. Under the new PRSPII and the Joint Assistance Strategy (JAS), the Government of The Gambia demonstrated its fully commitment to gender empowerment and poverty reduction. All the above positive accomplishments were possible due to the political will and leadership of H. E. The President of the republic of the Gambia Dr. Alhaji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh.

I THANK YOU

