

# **PORTUGAL**

**Statement by**

**H.E. Ambassador José Filipe Moraes Cabral**

**Permanent Representative of Portugal**

**To the United Nations**

**to 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the**

**Commission on the Status of Women**

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**(Check against delivery)**



Mr. Chairperson,

Portugal naturally aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Czech Republic on behalf of the EU.

Over the last years, Portugal has been strongly investing in the promotion of gender equality policies that are reflected in our budget for 2007-2013. 83 million Euros are now allocated to these policies, which represents an increase of almost 65% compared to previous years.

Among the numerous projects approved so far in this area, let me highlight the Gender Equality Plans in Local and Central Administration as well as in public and private enterprises in order to ensure the reconciliation of work with family and private life; the support to women's entrepreneurship as well as technical and financial support to NGO's and other civil society organizations working in this field.

Mr. Chairperson,

Violence against women remains a major concern for the Portuguese Government, and in that regard policies having a strong impact on women's rights and gender equality have been adopted.

In response to the challenge launched by the Secretary General at the last Session of this Commission, Portugal started in November a nationwide campaign targeted at teenagers and young adults focusing on the "prevention of violence on dating relationships". The awareness-raising materials are having a strong success and already producing changes of values and attitudes in young people.

Recent data on violence against women revealed an important increase in complaints regarding domestic violence aggressions to the police authorities, which corresponds to a growth of confidence in the existent mechanisms to protect victims and punish the perpetrators.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done in order to combat the devastating impact of domestic violence in our society. A new law regarding the prevention, protection and assistance to victims of domestic violence is currently under discussion in Parliament with the purpose of enhancing the judiciary measures needed to provide the best possible protection.

Another area of concern to us is the trafficking of human beings. Last November Portugal established an observatory for monitoring trafficking in human beings, and we ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Let me also underline that a Programme of Action for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation was launched last month. Furthermore, the new Penal Code criminalises this form of violence against women.

Mr. Chairperson,

In order to promote an equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, Portugal has been fighting gender stereotypes including in the areas of education and the media, which in our view are key areas to promote change in cultural and social behaviours.

Apart from these efforts, Portugal recognises the need to create incentives aimed at extending the period of maternity/paternity leave and at encouraging and enabling men to take responsibility for their social and family roles.

The New Labour Code, put into force in 2009, created several innovative measures increasing the length of parental leave for fathers, encouraging them to take parental and paternity leaves and to share them with women such as:

- The increase from 5 to 10 working days of mandatory paternity leave around the day of birth of the child, half of it to be used immediately after the birth and
- 100% remunerated leave of 10 working days to be used by the father simultaneously with the maternity leave after the 10 initial days of mandatory paternity leave.

The Portuguese Government also approved the *Programme to Enlarge the Network of Services and Social Structures* (PARES) that has achieved in 2 years an increase of 11,4% in the coverage rate of kindergarten structures in Portugal.

In order to create an enabling environment for equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, the Portuguese Government approved a Resolution on the Principles of Good Governance of Public Sector Companies. This resolution determines that all Companies held by the State have to adopt Equality Plans towards equal opportunities for women and men namely by fostering the reconciliation between professional, family and private life. Simultaneously,

specific funding was created to stimulate and support the implementation of Equality Plans in Local and Central Administration as well as Public and Private sector Companies.

In the area of HIV/AIDS it is well known that existent gender inequalities in the relationships are a common trait by diminishing the power of women and girls to negotiate safe sex and putting mainly on them the responsibility for caregiving in this context. It is therefore our strong belief that the adoption of a gender dimension in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights is needed in order to increase the empowerment of women and girls. Along this line, during the last summit of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), held in Lisbon in July 2008, this principle was recognised and will result in campaign in all the CPLP countries aimed at promoting the use of feminine condom as a means to empower women in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Portugal will launch a pilot campaign already this month.

Finally, I wish to stress that equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in the private life is deeply interlinked with the equal sharing of responsibilities in the political sphere. The Law adopted in 2006 established that the lists of candidates for local, national and European Parliament elections must ensure a minimum representation of 33% of each sex in eligible positions. The Law will be fully applied for the first time in the elections which are taking place this year. Accordingly, in this International Women's day, we will launch a national wide campaign on women and decision-making.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Portugal's commitment to SC resolutions 1325 and 1820, and in this regard I would like to inform this Commission that Portugal is finalising its national plan to foster the implementation of this landmark resolutions.

Another matter that is of high importance to us is the System-wide Coherence process and we look forward to the Secretary General's report on the new gender architecture. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to the Permanent Representatives of Namibia and Spain for their appointment to facilitate this process. We are confident that under their leadership we will reach a successful outcome during the current session of the General Assembly.

I thank you Mr. Chairperson.