



*TUVALU*

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**Statement**

**Delivered by**

**Dr. Stephen Homasi**

**at the**

**53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**New York, 2-13 March 2009**

**(Check Against Delivery)**

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Chair  
Excellencies  
Distinguished Delegates

1. Let me first convey our Honourable Minister's sincere apologies and regrets for not being able to participate in this 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women as originally arranged due to unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, I am honoured to have this opportunity to address this session on his behalf.
2. Chair, my delegation wishes to join previous distinguished speakers in congratulating you for your election as Chair to preside over this session. With your able leadership we are confident that you will be able to bring this session to a successful conclusion.
3. My delegation also wishes to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the Honourable Minister of Women's Affairs from Niue on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Countries.
4. Chair, at the outset, Tuvalu welcomes the opportunity to discuss the theme for this session, *'the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS'*. We believe the need to focus on this theme at this stage is timely in view of the adverse impacts of the current global financial and economic crisis to our economy.
5. Tuvalu continues its full support and commitment to intensify its efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcomes of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Millennium Developmental Goals, the Revised Pacific Platform for Action, and the Pacific Plan.
6. Chair, in Tuvalu the share of women in paid work has grown significantly over the last 20 years. Women's participation and involvement in HIV/AIDS decision-making processes and programs at both national and community levels has increased, however political representation remains very low. Tuvalu is committed to scale up its efforts in the context of HIV, towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support, ensuring the promotion of gender equality and taking into account the caregiving responsibilities of both men and women. HIV/AIDS pandemic has brought greater urgency to the issue of caregiving, particularly the division of labour between women and men. Home-based caregiving for HIV/AIDS patients is a full time occupation. However, fear of stigma and discrimination causes many to provide care in secrecy leading to further isolation for the caregiver and care for those who need it.

7. Chair, women are often recognized as the principal caregivers in our society especially to people living with HIV. Women also continue to have disproportionate responsibilities for unpaid household work. In addition work that remains invisible and unmeasured and its contribution to economic and social development has not been adequately recognized and valued in economic terms. There is a need for further research and analysis in this area.

8. Gender inequality remains one of the key drivers of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Women and adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS owing to their biological conditions, economic and social inequalities, and culturally accepted gender roles which place them in subordinate positions in relation to men regarding sexual decision-making. Therefore we welcome any assistance from the United Nations and our development partners to address the delicate issues surrounding gender, HIV/AIDS, and culture.

9. Chair, whilst Tuvalu recognizes the importance and continues to support the theme for this session, climate change is undoubtedly the most serious threat to the global security and survival of mankind. It is an issue of enormous concern to a highly vulnerable small island State like Tuvalu. In this context it is crucial that we integrate and mainstream climate change as a cross-cutting and emerging issue in the existing international platforms for women especially in the framework of Gender and HIV/AIDS, as part of our ongoing global advocacy.

10. Chair, in conclusion, let me reaffirm my Government's full commitment to take all necessary measures to create an enabling environment to empower women and girls to reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, including the strengthening of their economic independence and ensuring their full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The need to share equal responsibilities between women and men in the well being and welfare of our families, communities and societies, especially as caregivers for HIV/AIDS cannot be over-emphasised. We need to seize every opportunity to fulfill our shared responsibilities and obligations.

I thank you