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STATEMENT BY

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AT

**THE 53RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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New York, March 4, 2009

Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Uganda, I wish to add my voice to those who have spoken before me to congratulate you, Chair and members of your bureau for your able leadership in steering this Commission. The delegation of the Republic of Uganda aligns itself with the statement by the distinguished delegate of Sudan on behalf of G77. My delegation looks forward to a fruitful session with practical resolutions that will help us to make a difference in the lives of those many women, who are not privileged to be here with us today. We are optimistic that the outcomes of the 53rd Session of the Commission will provide realistic strategies for achieving equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women.

Chairperson, the priority theme of this Session of the Commission focusing on “The Equal Sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including care-giving in context of HIV/AIDS” is very pertinent. Uganda has addressed the HIV/AIDS epidemic for more than two decades.

In this regard, Uganda put in place a comprehensive national response, which included community mobilization, strong political leadership and commitment, a multi-sectoral strategy and the dissemination of messages about behavioral change, including primary and secondary abstinence, mutual faithfulness, sexual partner reduction and condom use especially in higher-risk communities. The approach to prevention known as the ABC Strategy (**A**bstinence, **B**eing faithful, and **C**ondom use) has formed the backbone of HIV prevention in the country. The ABC strategy has since been expanded to ABC+ to include Voluntary Counseling and Testing, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the virus, control of sexually transmitted infections, Anti Retroviral Treatment and HIV/AIDS care and support services. This national response championed by H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of the Republic of Uganda, led to the decline in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Uganda from a peak of 18% in 1992 to 6.4% in 2006

Regarding care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS, the Government of Uganda, has in place an extensive system of community and home based care for HIV/ AIDS patients, orphans, and other people made vulnerable by

the epidemic. However, women because of the stereotype gender roles in our society, shoulder the burden of care giving. Women are the major providers of care in homes and the brunt of HIV/AIDS has added more responsibilities to them. In caring for the HIV/AIDS patients, women provide moral and spiritual support, basic nursing care, administration and monitoring of drug use among other services. .

Chairperson, distinguished delegations, as we discuss the priority theme of equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women in care giving in the context HIV/AIDS, it is a important to focus on challenges faced by certain women who have to provide care and yet, they need special care themselves. These include older women, women in Internally Displaced Peoples camps and women with disabilities. We also need to analyse the cause and effect relationship between violence against women and HIV/AIDS and its impact on the care giving capacity of women. Equally important is the need to reflect on other gender related challenges that exacerbate HIV infection, such as the rampant gender based violence, increasing drop out rates of the girl child from formal education system, inadequate adolescent reproductive health services and facilities, persistent poverty levels and limited enforcement of existing legal frame works.

In conclusion, Chairperson, experience shows that men especially the progressive men are capable of sharing responsibilities in the context of HIV/AIDS. There is, however, need to encourage change of mindset of both women and men, through behavioral change communication strategies. Most importantly, it is vital to promote appropriate technologies to ease the burden of care for both women and men.

I thank you.