



*Permanent Mission  
of Barbados to  
the United Nations*



STATEMENT BY

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TO THE

55<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION  
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Barbados has prioritised five of the critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform of Action: Mainstreaming Gender, Women and Health, Violence against women, Women and Poverty, and Women in Decision making.

Barbados is a country in which there is no gender bias in access to education or training, and where women outnumber men in tertiary studies and in the professions.

The Bureau of Gender Affairs, and other strategic partners, both Ministries and NGOs, work on implementing the objectives of the Platform for Action.

Gender-sensitivity training, aimed at challenging stereotypes about gender-assigned roles and at mainstreaming awareness of practical and strategic gender needs, is a priority.

Training has begun in the public sector, and this will facilitate the establishment of a culture of mainstreaming gender, and assist Barbados in achieving the level of gender equality to which it is committed. The challenge remains, that gender issues are not given due weight by all parties.

Barbados is in the process of developing a National Plan on Gender which would set the framework for truly engendering policies and programmes, but this has also been facing its challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

It has long been recognized that unequal power relationships are an obstacle to safe sex, and thus, a powerful factor in the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Barbados has therefore placed much emphasis on heightening awareness of this in order to reduce transmission rates. The Bureau of Gender Affairs conducts outreach programmes with NGOs, church and community groups and private organizations which focus on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. We have received assistance from UNIFEM, now UN Women, to train persons in the health and education sectors on to include gender in their programming. The Inter-American Commission on the Status of Women of the OAS has provided funding for training and sensitization on the intersection of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. This programme, which began in 2010, is about to enter its second phase. For those already infected, anti-retroviral treatments are available at no cost. Post-exposure prophylaxis is also available free of cost.

Mr Chairman,

Domestic violence, and violence against women in general, remains a significant cause of concern in Barbados. The results of a national survey carried out in 2009 revealed that approximately 33% of Barbadian women had endured domestic abuse. Domestic violence legislation was enacted in 1992, but legislation cannot legislate behaviour. On the law enforcement side, one of the modules of the training course for police officers deals specifically with domestic violence. Government also collaborates with its strategic partners in the NGO community to address the issue. It has established a shelter for battered women and their



children, and provides an annual subvention to the NGO which manages it. NGOs also conduct public awareness programmes on domestic violence in the secondary schools, engage in support group activities, provide counselling services, and operate the domestic violence hotline which is funded by the Ministry of Family. To these national efforts has been added the vigorous campaign instituted in the Caribbean as part of the Secretary- General's UNiTE campaign against violence against Women, launched in Barbados in 2010.

Mr Chairman,

Poverty levels in Barbados are higher among women, particularly single parents and the elderly, and these groups have been more significantly impacted by the ongoing economic crisis. 44.4 % of all households are headed by women.

In addition to the existing safety net provided by the Welfare Department, a number of new, anti-poverty strategies have been put in place. Barbados is implementing a comprehensive approach adapted from the Chilean Puente Programme, which takes a holistic approach to poverty reduction. In its Barbadian incarnation, this initiative is called the ISEE Bridge Programme.

Mr. Chairman,

In relation to the participation of women in politics, it can be said that Barbados has made some progress, yet women remain under-represented at the highest levels of political office. Two of eighteen Cabinet Ministers are women, as are six of twenty-one Senators, and four of the thirty members of Parliament. In the last general election of 2008, only 9 of the 67 candidates were women. Yet the majority of persons who voted in the 2008 election were women. These statistics reflect a cultural view of politics as largely a masculine arena.

Since 2003 a series of training sessions and workshops, which aim to give prospective candidates the tools to prepare them for elective politics, have been held. Women from Barbados have benefited from exposure to these programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite a record of admirable economic advancement and a progressive Social Policy agenda, it is evident that Barbados needs to focus not only on women's empowerment but on changing a cultural paradigm of masculinity which will enable change and advancement.