



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
United Nations Member States

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Commission on the Status of Women
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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marlene Moses
Permanent Representative of Nauru
on behalf of the

Pacific Small Island Developing States

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) represented at the United Nations, namely Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Vanuatu, and my own country, Nauru.

Let me first congratulate you and members of the Bureau on your election. We assure you of our support in the work of this Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

As we meet at this 55th Session of the Commission to deliberate on its very important theme, we are reminded of the different challenges we face today, particularly the global economic crisis that has affected our economies and more significantly our livelihood and the very fabric of our societies. The Beijing Platform for Action is clear and so are our responsibilities as Member States to fulfill the standards contained therein. However, it is important to emphasize that the challenges each of our societies face in fulfilling these obligations differ to various extent.

The PSIDS is a vibrant and pluralistic society that is full of diverse cultural and traditional values. Not only have these traditions and cultures been a part of our lives, they are sacred and define us as a people. The roles of our men, women and children have their genesis in those value systems. As in many of our societies, the role of women is still closely associated with the care of the family and supports the economic activity of men. That role is also reflected in the type of work women do in the formal sector. Despite the fact that there is an increase in the number of educated women, we find most women employed in the hospitality, teaching, nursing and other support services sector. Education and awareness has however facilitated the shift in this view.

Mr. Chairman,

The geography of the PSIDS is unique. We are challenged by our isolation, our smallness, population size, lack of resources, high frequency of natural disasters and vulnerability to rising sea-levels. These challenges are further exacerbated by global shocks. The limited size of most of our economies affects the range of our opportunities as well. Education and training in the field of science and technology are therefore vital means of elevating our women and children

above those challenges and will undoubtedly generate more opportunities for them in the workforce. In that regard, it is encouraging to note that in our regional university, the University of the South Pacific, female enrolment in science and technology programmes has increased steadily in the last 3 years, and in one programme exceeded the male enrolment. We also recognise that NGOs and intergovernmental organisations play a complimentary role in these efforts. Several initiatives by NGOs and academic institutions in the region, in partnership with other local and overseas NGOs, have enabled young female students to be more informed about future education opportunities and career choices.

The issue of climate change and natural disasters is an ongoing challenge for our peoples and our land. Natural disasters have displaced communities. Aside from the emotional trauma these have caused, their adverse impacts affect food security, tension over land resources, access to land and increased violence against women. Moreover, climate change has increased challenges for women's rights and access to land and property.

The need for international support for programmes that provide access to education for women's economic empowerment is more crucial today than ever before due to the multifaceted nature of the global crisis we face. In our experience, it is critical to have a coordinated approach by all stakeholders to ensure that women and girls benefit by accessing education, training, technology and ensuring women have the same right and opportunities to full employment and decent work.

Mr. Chairman,

There is still a lot to be done to support and strengthen gender mainstreaming efforts and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other policy and administrative frameworks on the advancement and empowerment of women, particularly for many of the disadvantaged communities. Overcoming such challenges is not easy but with the continued support of our development partners, we can make a difference. We welcome the policy recommendations stipulated in the Secretary General's report. However, we acknowledge that such recommendations can only be practical if resources are targeted for investment in the economic transformation of rural economies. It is here that the majority of poor women and children live who are yet to access basic education and appropriate, affordable technology to start a decent livelihood for themselves.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, we count on the support of our development partners to support our efforts for gender mainstreaming, establish monitoring and assessment mechanisms, develop indicators to measure progress in gender equality and continue to address practical tasks that exist between the national and regional organizations. The strategies we create for the future must be sustainable and have minimal conflicting interests in the implementation of this very important global agenda.

Thank you.