



**56<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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CUBAN WOMEN.**

**DELEGATION OF CUBA.**

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Madam Chair,

I would like to convey my country's warm greetings to the distinguished personalities attending this 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), where we associate ourselves with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China.

Once more we meet in this framework of debate, dialogue and consensus, in an effort to ensure the continuity of and follow-up to the agreements emanated from the Fourth World Conference on Women, show national experiences, and assess the commitments of our Governments to the advancement of women. We are certain that the progress in the UN-Women's endeavor will result in increased benefits for women, for they are its purpose.

This Commission holds its session in times when humankind faces an unprecedented global crisis of unpredictable consequences for millions of people on the Planet. This is a critical epoch in which wars, many of them waged in the disguise of security missions, threaten the human survival. Unavoidable conditions for the development of the peoples, such as peace and stability, remain precarious.

Today, there are more than 150 million hungry people worldwide, being women and girls among the most affected. They also suffer more severely the harmful effects of conflicts, the imposition of unilateral coercive measures, labor and sexual exploitation, inequalities, social exclusion, and violence, which is even worse in rural areas.

In this context, "*The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges*", as the priority theme of this 56<sup>th</sup> Session is of crucial importance for our Governments, in seeking viable alternatives that contribute to transforming the reality and giving rural women their rightful place.

International instruments, such as the FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action, the CEDAW, especially its Article 14, the Beijing Platform for Action, among others, have included in their content the need to work thereupon.

Thirty years after the CEDAW was adopted and open for signature, ratification and/or accession, and over fifteen years after the holding of the Beijing Conference, it would be worthwhile to wonder whether we have been able to find solutions to the issues of inequality and exclusion that called for and led to the adoption of such important instruments. How far have we advanced since then? How much remains to be done?

According to the *Rural Poverty Report 2011*, progress has been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Nonetheless, the same source stresses that there are still 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty, more than 70% of them live in rural areas of developing countries, while recent measurements highlight that 925 million of them are undernourished.

Rural women account for over one fourth of the world population; hence, development cannot do without that labor force. Their role in the economy of each country as food producers and cattle herders, as well as in agricultural and non-agricultural activities, is essential and so they contribute to the subsistence of their families.

However, objective and subjective conditions for them to participate on an equal footing with men in these and other activities are not always guaranteed. In general, they are at disadvantage due to their gender status, and most of them continue to play their traditional roles in looking after the children, the elderly, the sick, and in the household chores. This situation is much more complex today, in a world doomed to disappear, unless urgent measures are taken to prevent it.

Although achievements has been made, mainly in the enactment of a special legal and institutional framework to protect the rights of women in all fields, there is still much to be done to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which has absolute validity. International instruments so providing are not enough, nor is the adoption of legislation, if each and every State lacks a genuine political will to implement them.

A disadvantaged area, which is decisive in this endeavor, is the issue of commitments on resources and the compliance with the Official Development Assistance, which can contribute to implementing plans and programmes in favor of gender equality. We call once more to comply with this objective established by the United Nations themselves, and to allocate funds to the preservation of peace and development. Development cannot be achieved without peace, and it is necessary that the resources destined to the destruction of the humankind are invested in building a better society, where the human rights of all people are equally respected.



Precisely, paragraph 131 of the Beijing Platform for Action states: *"an environment that maintains world peace and promotes and protects human rights, (...) is an important factor for the advancement of women"*.

It is unquestionable that there is an increasing rejection of the crisis affecting multiple sectors of various countries. In our region of Latin America and the Caribbean, there are new trends of integration in favor of development, based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit. Initiatives like the Bolivarian Alternatives for the Americas (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and the recently created Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) can serve as points of reference in minimizing the effects of the crisis.

Madam Chair,

Cuba has continued to arduously combating terrorism, thus showing its will to cooperate thereupon. In this respect, it denounces once more the fact that the US Government holds five anti-terrorist Cuban fighters as prisoners, and continues to restrict their right to communicate with their relatives, especially with two of the wives, thus violating its own Constitution.

My country is also involved in a process to update its economic model, whereby the necessary transformations are made in order to improve the social system chosen by our people. Of course, like the rest of the countries, Cuba has not escaped the impact of the multiple crises and the effects of environmental phenomena resulting from climate change. Another negative factor is the sustained and ever more intense economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed unilaterally by the US Government, which causes resource scarcity and damages exceeding 975 billion dollars. This demands huge efforts to ensure food, education, health care, and to continue improving the quality of life of Cuban women and men. Even though, for the twentieth consecutive time, the United Nations General Assembly adopted last year, with the support of an overwhelming majority, the Resolution *"Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba"*, its restrictions and adverse effects persist.

Despite this panorama we denounce in every scenario, we Cuban women can show substantive achievements resulting from the Cuban social project of justice and equality, aimed at paving the way for sustainable development. We play important roles in the economy; women's employment in the civil-State sector has risen to 47.3%; and women account for 65.6% of the technical and professional force of the country. There are eight women ministers and 42 deputy ministers.

As to decision-making, 43.3% of the members of the National Assembly of the People's Power are women, ranking fifth worldwide according to a publication by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In the State Council, women represent 40% of its membership and one of its vice-presidents is a woman.

In rural areas, even though cultural changes are still harder to assimilate and barriers persist which must be overcome in order to change old traditional patterns, rural women enjoy the same rights as those living in urban areas, show unquestionable progress in education and health care, and even when it comes to sexual and reproductive rights as well as family planning. They have as well an advanced Maternity Leave policy that grants postpartum paternal leave to both parties of the couple. The Millennium Development Goal 3 has been fully achieved.

In the agro-food sector, there are over 200 thousand women. Some of them are peasants, agricultural workers and technicians who make their contribution day by day to food production, improvement of species, and to creating food security and sovereignty, protecting the environment. Women also hold some of the managerial positions in this sector, and stand out as directors of scientific research centers with excellent and recognized results.

In Cuba, collective ownership prevails over the individual; therefore land ownership is inherited. Today, 10,916 women are landowners. Based on said principle of favoring food production, over 12 thousand women have been granted ownership of the land and full access to credits, technical assistance and other opportunities, for the sake of land management and the development of environmental principles.

It should be likewise indicated that in order to guarantee chlorinated drinking water, more than two thousand piped water systems have been installed. There is an increased use of ceramic water filters to improve water quality, so as to put rural and urban services on the same level.

The electric power system covers almost 98% of dwellings. In addition to the national grid, other energy sources are used, including water, diesel power generating sets, and photovoltaic energy, among others.



In spite of existing limitations, the attention to rural areas is one of the priorities of the Cuban Government and State. It is also among the primary concerns of international cooperation, and has been especially included in the comprehensive development plans at the national level. In our legal framework, there is no gender discrimination of any sort preventing Cuban rural women from empowerment as human beings with equal rights as men.

Madam Chair,

We reiterate again that this forum and the General Assembly are the competent bodies of the United Nations system to follow up the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We support the regional processes joining these efforts for the common commitment to the advancement of women.

As has been repeatedly expressed, Cuba maintains its political will and commits itself to continue working to comply with international human rights agreements. We pin all our hopes in the joint action and collective effort of the international community, Governments, civil organizations, and women's movements, for rural women to benefit from development; for the realization of genuine gender equality; and for Beijing agreements not to become dead letter, but an effective programme.

It is necessary to strengthen alliances, promote cooperation, and build a more just and equitable society, without exclusion, discrimination and violence, in order to achieve the full integration of women into development.

The Cuba Government reaffirms once more its commitment to continuing to work and strengthen its bonds with other countries in order to comply with international and regional agreements in favor of women, and to achieve such a noble and just endeavor.

It calls for unity and international solidarity, as well as to uphold the right of our peoples to sovereignty and self-determination, without interference in their internal affairs, and to respect the precepts enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It advocates the prevalence of good sense and wisdom, and calls upon all States to help guarantee a world free of war; a peaceful and safe world for the present and future generations.

Thank you.