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STATEMENT

BY

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TO

THE

**56TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)**

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**Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. My delegation wishes to assure you of our support during this Session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement by the distinguished representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as the statement by the distinguished representative of Tunisia on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson,

Allow me to highlight some of the significant achievements as well as challenges faced in our efforts to transform the lives of rural women in respect to the priority theme.

Gender equality, non discrimination, protection of the marginalised including persons living with disabilities and sustainable development are key principles of the Kenya Constitution 2010. The Constitution has ushered in a new era for the empowerment of women and the fight against poverty and hunger. The Bill of Rights provides for the right to equal treatment of women and men - in economic, social and political spheres. The devolution strategy as espoused in our Constitution aims at promoting socio and economic development and the provision of proximate, easily accessible services throughout Kenya. This strategy will not only guarantee rural women's access to critical services but also promote equitable sharing of resources throughout Kenya.

Chairperson,

Kenya has progressively enacted and is enforcing relevant laws which explicitly protect the rights of women and contribute to women's empowerment. The Employment Act, of 2007 prohibits discrimination and harassment of employees on the basis of sex. Further, Kenya is formulating new laws that will significantly transform women's access to and control over land use. These include Land reform bills; The Marriage Bill, 2012; Matrimonial Property Bill, 2012. In order to address the intersection of HIV/AIDS and gender based violence and its devastating impact of rural women's health, Kenya has enacted the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2011 and Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Act 2006 and is currently reviewing the Family Protection Bill 2012.

Chairperson,

The legal and policy frameworks have been further strengthened with the establishment of new and independent Constitutional institutions. These are:

- The **Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution**; to oversee the implementation of the new constitution
- the **National Gender and Equality Commission**: the oversight body monitoring gender mainstreaming in the country,
- the **Kenya National Human Rights Commission**: the entity addressing all areas of human rights and;
- the **Commission on Administrative Justice**; whose mandate is to investigate maladministration.

The Government is also implementing a number of policies which include:

- **Vision 2030, Kenya's development blueprint** which aims at transforming Kenya into a middle income country with equitable distribution of resources by 2030 at the ratio of 10 per cent per annum.
- **National Land Policy 2009** which protects women's land rights
- **National Reproductive Health Policy 2007**
- **Maternal and New born health Roadmap 2010** to accelerate the reduction of maternal and new born morbidity and mortality
- **Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture 2004-2014** – to contribute to improved agricultural productivity and food security at household level for the poor

Chairperson,

Kenya's Constitution provides for a minimum threshold of not more than 2/3 of either gender in all decision making organs thus ensuring sustainable development. The Political Parties Act 2011 and the Elections Act 2011 ensure conformity to this principle.

The Government has created affirmative action funds to address the needs of women, the youth, persons with disabilities, orphans and other vulnerable groups. Further women have access to devolved funds such as the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATIF). More importantly, the Constitution provides that at least 15 per cent of the national budget will be allocated to the county government where the participation of women on the management of funds is assured.

The Government has created an enabling environment that has led to an increase in activity within the financial sector. This has tremendously increased the productivity of rural women in business enterprise. Further, women in the

rural areas are enjoying the benefits of efficient technological advancements in Kenya – particularly in the communication sector, mobile phone sector, money transfer and e-banking.

Chairperson,

In 2010/2011 financial year, the Government increased allocation to the education sector by 80.0 per cent. This has led to an increase in the number of educational institutions, improved facilities in the rural areas and enhanced enrolment of girls and boys. Further, the Government allocated **USD3.65 million** in the current financial year 2011/2012 for the provision of sanitary towels in a bid to curb absenteeism of girls from school especially those in the rural areas. We expect this to grow in future.

Chairperson,

The National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP) where women constitute 46 per cent of the beneficiaries has significantly contributed to improvement of food security and increased household incomes. The Government has also been supporting women small scale holder farmers through the provision of **subsidized fertilizer and certified seeds** as well as **reviving irrigation schemes** aimed at boosting production levels and assuring food security. To boost agricultural productivity the Government has in the last two years increased its budgetary allocation to the sector in order to scale up irrigation in dry areas and marshy underutilised lands.

Chairperson,

Despite the gains and efforts made, climate change remains one of the greatest challenges to food security in Kenya. The effects of unpredictable weather patterns compromise production, distribution and accessibility thereby elevating poverty and poor health. Despite the Constitutional bar against negative cultural practices these practices are still a challenge to women's accessing productive resources, employment and property ownership thus hindering their empowerment.

The Government is alive to these challenges and will remain steadfast in its quest to empower rural women by safeguarding the gains under the Constitution. As I conclude, I wish to re-affirm and assure you of Kenya's commitment to the empowerment of women in all spheres of life.

I thank you.

