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Statement by

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Republic of Seychelles

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SALUTATION

1. The Republic of Seychelles welcomes the important dialogue on the theme under review, and acknowledges that the lives of the women of Seychelles have improved considerably but at the same time recognizes that gaps still exist, and as such my presentation will focus primarily on the sub-themes relating to the empowering of women in our continued effort to conquer MDG1, thus reducing inequities through financing processes but also to concentrate on nurturing our young men and women, girls and boys so that gender equality can gather momentum and move from the realms of dreams into the reality of our everyday existence.
2. Total abject poverty does not exist in Seychelles and when one considers social indicators, it can be seen that the trends of progress is more on the positive rather than the negative side and comparable to many developed countries.
3. The concept of the empowerment of rural women is one which, I would say, is unheard of in the Republic of Seychelles. This, as a result of the fact that we are a small island developing state, where one can drive from the North to the South of the main island is just over one hour, and travel through the mountains from the East to the West again in a similar time frame. Distinguished colleagues, rural women do not exist in Seychelles, because whether you live by the seaside, in or near town, in the mountain sides, the women of Seychelles carry out multiple roles, and everyone has access to services. There is no official distinction between the concept of rural and urban, we are merely an urban population.
4. Agriculture is the mainstay of every human society – we have to eat to survive. In developing countries, the practice of subsistence farming is still to replace mechanized and industrialized farming in many of our developing nations and in many of these societies YES, it is the women who bear the burden of tilling the soil and growing the wheat, yam, corn for their families and many of them reside in villages with inadequate health care, coupled with few opportunities for education, let alone higher education and other advantages.

Chairperson and distinguished colleagues

5. In the Seychelles, we import more than 70% of the food that we consume. No crop or livestock products are exported. Our agriculturalists can attest to the fact that over 33% of households do some sort of farming which is important for reducing household expenditure and/or improving food security at the household level and this is the nearest thing that could be described as the Seychellois creole's definition of rural economy.
6. There are only 545 farmers registered with the Seychelles Agricultural Agency (SAA) farming on both private and state land. The registered farmers benefit from a range of services and concessions offered by government. Some 8641 (34.8%) of all households are involved in some form of small-scale agricultural practices such as backyard farming according to the 2010 National Population Census. BUT It is to be noted that all ingredients for formulating livestock feed is imported as are all inputs to crop production (...seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, equipment, machinery, construction material for shade houses and livestock facilities).
7. The 2006/2007 household expenditure survey (which was published in 2010 for Seychelles show that 18% of Seychellois households are not able to meet basic caloric requirements on average and that 21% of household income is spent on food as compared to 10.8% in USA and 11.5% in Canada. This is an issue that will need deeper analysis and monitoring as it will provide greater insight on the nutritional as well as poverty factor in our country.
8. Food security is new terminology for Seychelles and does not feature in the Constitution of Seychelles drafted in 1993. It is however being taken into consideration in the national gender policy which is in the drafting process.

9. When we speak about empowerment in Seychelles, we speak of empowering our women, our men, our boys and our girls on their individual responsibility towards poverty eradication. We speak about their individual and collective responsibility which will help our country to prosper. Indeed this way of being has been emphasized by the President of the Republic in the choosing of a national theme this year which guides our thinking, and has called on each individual Seychellois to “strive hard for our Seychelles” that in every corner of our being, in every piece of work that we do, in every challenge that we face, let us work towards contributing to the overall and positive development of our country in this time of major financial, economic and social challenges.

10. One of the targets of MDG Goal 1 is the need to achieve decent employment for women, men, and young people and it is precisely through such channels that we fight against poverty, hunger, gender inequality and this is being achieved in Seychelles through the continued access to education, so that coupled with the almost 100% intake at primary level schooling at the very least, the road of opportunity continues to be fruitful for our young people. The provision of free access to at least primary health care at the point of use continues to be a major priority receiving the lion’s share of the national budget, followed closely by the education sector. Provision of potable water is further guaranteed with the acquisition of more desalination plants in the past year.

11. Additional forms of anticipatory and gender-responsive social protection measures (rather than reactive programmes) including: skills development to lead to employment rather than rely on welfare benefits will be the way of the future. The societal successes that we have managed to attain will only be sustainable with a long term vision to continue to develop a resilient people which, in turn, will sustain the Seychelles of tomorrow

Chair, I thank the floor for its attention

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