



*The  
Bahamas*

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION**

**STATEMENT**

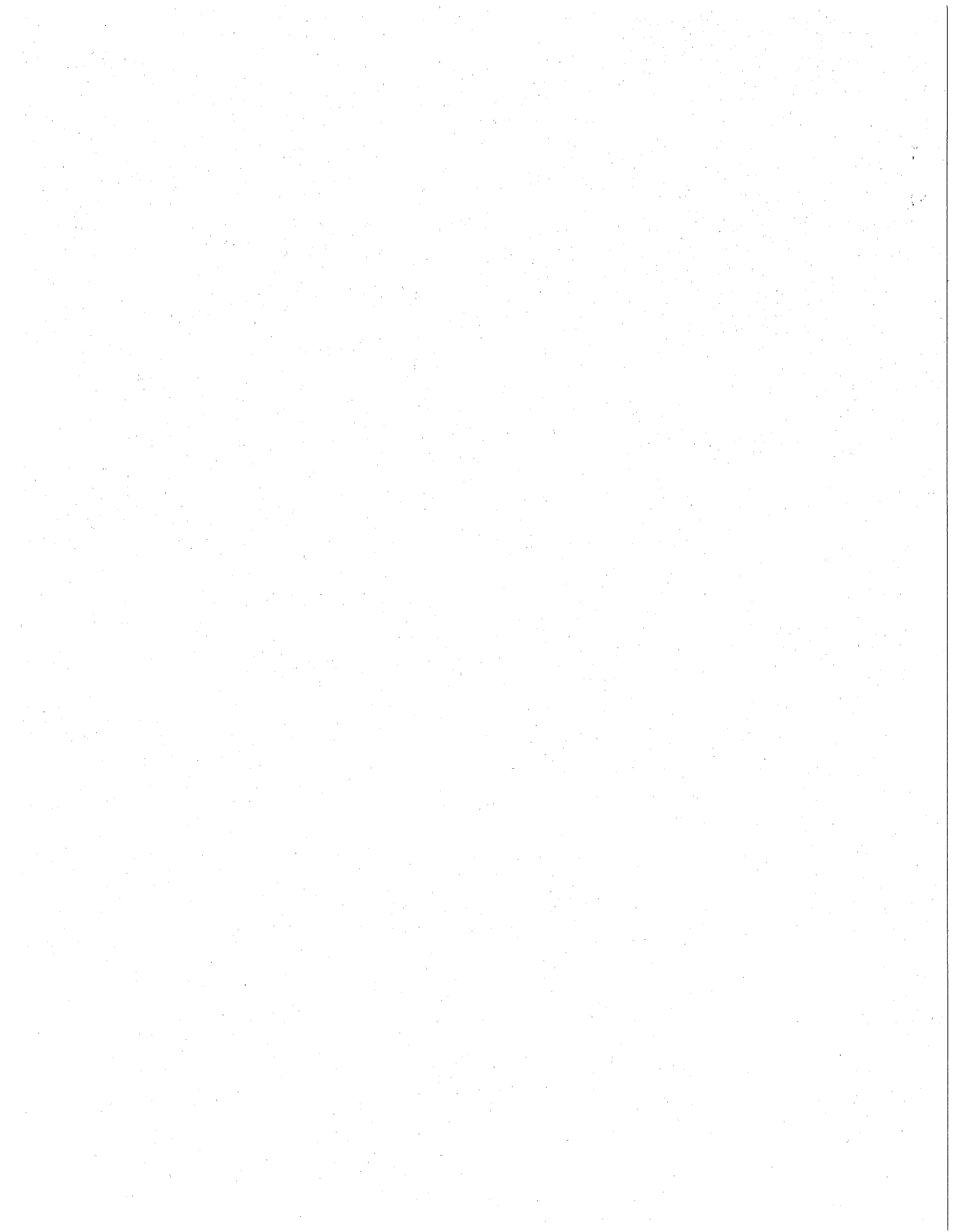
**by**

**The Honourable Melanie Griffin, M.P.  
Minister of Social Services and Community Development**

**5 March, 2013**

**New York**

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Madam Chair,

The Bahamas congratulates you and the Members of the Bureau on your election to this 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I assure you of my Delegation's full cooperation and support.

The Bahamas aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Madam Chair,

Last year, The Bahamas commemorated 50 years of the enfranchisement of women. Having been empowered in 1962, women in The Bahamas have consistently outnumbered their male counterparts in exercising their right to vote. As part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this celebration, leading women of the Suffrage Movement and trailblazers in politics were featured on the covers of the nation's 2012 telephone directories. The celebrations also included the premier showing of an acclaimed documentary by a local poet, writer and attorney. This commemoration sparked a renewed resolve in my Government to take the necessary steps to remove all forms of discrimination against women in The Bahamas Constitution, through due process, by the end of this year.

Madam Chair,

In fulfillment of her commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly, The Bahamas is currently in the final stages of reviewing a Draft National Gender Policy. I extend thanks to the Regional Office of UNFPA and to national public and private stakeholders, for their invaluable assistance with this project.

Madam Chair,

My Government commends the Commission for the priority theme for this session and also the Secretary-General for the reports submitted thereon. Violence against women and girls is a global phenomenon which threatens their survival, economic empowerment and social development. The Bahamas is committed to eliminating this scourge by educating her entire population, in particular young women and girls on healthy relationships and to the fact that no form of violence perpetrated against them is acceptable. To this end, my Government is working with local non-governmental organizations, representatives of whom make up a significant number of my delegation to this Session.

Madam Chair,

The Bahamas' socio-economic and political advances over the years are rendered meaningless if we cannot ensure the safety and protection of our women and girls from violence and sexual abuse. The enactment of the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act of 2007 and The

Bahamas Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2008 underscore our commitment to the protection of women and girls and to the elimination of all forms of violence against them.

In addition, a draft National Five Year Strategic Plan for Domestic Violence is currently being reviewed by a team of experts. Further, cognizant of the critical role of men and boys in the prevention of violence against women and girls, the Bureau of Women's Affairs is partnering with the local chapter of the Caribbean Male Action Network (CariMAN) to create a network of men who will become advocates for change in our prevention efforts.

Further, with the financial support of the Caribbean Regional Office of UN Women, the Bureau of Women's Affairs will this year implement the UN Women Project on "Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for Ending Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean". I extend thanks also to UN Women for its continued support.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, we all recognize that the world's development and prosperity depends on the development and empowerment of one half of humanity – women. With ongoing debates about the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda and the establishment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is time now for the international community to implement a development agenda which would drive change and bring about full gender equality and the empowerment of women, thus, transforming the lives of women and girls throughout the world.

The Bahamas is committed to doing her part. As a part of our local observance of International Women's Day, we will convene a Forum on Gender-Based Violence by bringing together women, men and young people to dialogue and make recommendations in furtherance of ending gender-based violence in our country.

Let us renew our commitments made in Beijing almost 20 years ago - a promise is a promise. Now is the time to fulfill the promise and to end the violence.

Thank you.