

GHANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF GHANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
19 EAST 47TH STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
TEL. 212-832-1300 • FAX 212-751-6743



Please check against delivery

STATEMENT

BY

HON. NANA OYE LITHUR
MINISTER FOR GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL
PROTECTION

AT THE

**57TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 3: FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON
WOMEN AND TO THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY, ENTITLED "WOMEN 2000: GENDER EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT
AND PEACE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"**

NEW YORK, 4-15 MARCH, 2013

Madame Chairperson,

It is my pleasure to address the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. My Delegation aligns itself with the statements by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Chad on behalf of the African Group, as well as the recent Addis Ababa Declaration of the Africa Ministerial Preparatory Meeting, adopted on 16th January, 2013. We also welcome the Secretary General's Report on the priority theme, "Prevention of violence against women and girls".

In February 2013, I was sworn in as Ghana's Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection. Our Ministry is newly created, and committed to ensure gender equality, promote the welfare and protection of children and empower the vulnerable through social protection interventions.

As noted in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, violence against women and girls impedes gender equality and impairs or nullifies enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights.

Madame Chairperson,

Ghana has enacted legislation to criminalise violence against women and girls. These laws include the Children's Act, Domestic Violence Act, Human Trafficking Act, and amendments of the Criminal Offences Act. Customary servitude has been criminalised and the sentences for FGM have been increased. Our Ministry implements and enforces these laws through the Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Secretariats.

Despite these laws and institutional frameworks, women and girls in Ghana are still adversely affected by sexual abuse, physical violence, some harmful traditional practices, child labour and socio-economic violence. In 2011, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service recorded 12,906 cases of various forms of violence against women nationwide.

Research by the Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC) has demonstrated a high prevalence of gender based violence in schools with 52 % of the girls in the study being victims of fighting in school and 14% experiencing sexual abuse, increasingly, more children are being exposed to pornography through Information Communication Technology. The HRAC also launched a report on spousal murders in Ghana in November 2012, which found that an average of two spousal murders are reported every month in Ghana. The Ghana Police received 117 cases of suspected trafficking in 2012, and is investigating 91 such cases nationwide.

Madame Chairperson,

Measures taken by Government to prevent and respond to gender based violence against women and girls include the setting up of the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service which has 97 offices nationwide. The Judiciary and Government have also inaugurated two specialist gender based violence courts in Accra and Kumasi.

Other initiatives include shelters for survivors of domestic violence in Accra, the creation of anti-domestic violence clubs, training of police, healthcare providers and social welfare officers.

A lot of credit should go to our vibrant civil society groups for the invaluable work they have done in Ghana to address and prevent gender based violence. They effectively complement the work of Government by conducting advocacy, awareness creation, monitoring through the Domestic Violence Coalition, providing free legal services and support and rehabilitation of survivors and court monitoring.

Madame Chairperson

Some challenges have hampered our progress; these include services stipulated under the Domestic Violence Act including free medical services, shelters and care administered by clinical psychologists. Very significantly, post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is still not universally available for survivors of sexual assault. The persistence of some harmful traditional practices is problematic and overall prevalence of female genital cutting is 3.5 percent. Child marriages are still an issue in Ghana.

We acknowledge these challenges as a Government, and work to surmount them. Interventions include increased provision of facilities and support for survivors, expansion of the cash transfer programme to include survivors, enhanced anti-human trafficking mechanisms to protect children, scaling up involvement of men and boys in programmes, empowering girls, and utilising data and research to target causes of gender based violence.

We are working on enhanced technical support and forensic capacity to improve investigations and prosecution, and the adoption of a policy framework to address gender based violence in the healthcare sector.

As the Secretary-General's Report on the priority theme clearly states, when women and girls are afforded their rights, given equal opportunities, and protected from violence, they drive economic and social progress.

THANK YOU