

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



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STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

OF

PAPUA NEW GUINEA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

NEW YORK
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Madame Chairperson,

- I. Papua New Guinea aligns herself with last week's constructive and forward-looking statements on gender-based violence prevention and elimination, made by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as that made by Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) and by the Prime Minister of Tuvalu on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), including for the Pacific region's representation in the next Bureau of the Commission of the Status of Women.
- II. We also value and appreciate the constructive proposals, shared best practices and note the sobering realities contained in the Secretary-General's respective reports on violence against women and girls and multisectoral services and responses for women and girls subjected to violence.
- III. My delegation is hopeful that under your leadership, Madam Chairperson, this CSW session will not merely be another talkfest but one that can deliver a strong final outcome document that catalyses the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and assist shape the future we all want for our women and girls. A future that is free from today's unacceptable vicious cycle of violence of all forms against women and girls.

Madame Chairperson,

- IV. This Session is also a stark reminder to us all that there is no city or country in the world, where women and girls live free from the fear of violence. No leader can claim: This is not happening in my backyard. None!
- V. Whether walking in the city streets, riding public transportation, going to school, selling goods at the marketplace or attending to gardens, tending the sick and suffering or the victims of conflicts, women and girls are subject to the threat of sexual harassment and violence of many forms. This shameful reality of daily life limits women and girl's freedom and right to get an education, to work, to participate in politics—or to simply enjoy their own neighbourhoods.
- VI. We commend the concerted actions around the world through the auspices of the United Nations under the Secretary-General's "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" campaign and civil society movement such as "One Billion Rising" and other similar actions at the national levels, decrying and demanding governments and the society at large to stop inhumane and terroristic acts perpetrated against women and girls.
- VII. These actions clearly attest to the serious growing concern internationally of the pressing need for bold, decisive and effective affirmative action against violence of all forms against women and girls that says loud and clear - Enough is enough!
- VIII. As we begin to focus our attention on the post-2015 development agenda, it is crucial that the international community must ensure that gender equality and empowerment remains a priority.

Madame Chairperson,

- IX. Women and girls make up half the population of over 7 million in Papua New Guinea. We are not a homogeneous society. We speak over 800 distinct languages and practice thousands of unique traditional cultures and traditions that also shape our diversity of life. The changing circumstances of being part of a globalizing community also impose various demands and pressures, which are often alien, on our people.
- X. These dynamics have impacted immensely and often in profoundly adverse ways, in recent years, on the way of life of our people, including particularly violation of women and girls human rights, hindrance to their socio-economic and political advancement and equality aspirations. This is clearly manifested in domestic violence, societal and institutional sexual harassment and violence, sorcery-related killings, denial of opportunities to advance women and girl's aspirations, violence and human rights violations perpetrated through customary practices such as polygamy and bride price payment for women and girls.
- XI. A recent survey conducted by our Constitutional and Law Reform Commission concluded that nearly two-thirds of Papua New Guinea's married women suffer violence inflicted by their husbands or partners. The recent gruesome sorcery-related murder of a 20-year-old mother burnt alive in my country, outraged the nation and the international community, where it was roundly condemned in the strongest terms by my Prime Minister. Our law enforcement authorities have arrested some of the perpetrators, who are waiting to be tried in the Court of Law for this heinous crime. This example, symbolizes the savagery of some of the forms of violence against women and girls face today.

Madame Chairperson,

- XII. The Government of Papua New Guinea acknowledges that violence against women and girls in the country is a serious cross-cutting development issue and human rights concern that must not be tolerated any more. We are therefore committed to combat gender-based violence and also entrench gender equality and empowerment in the country.
- XIII. We also recognize that elimination of these inhumane practices against women and girls will be a long-term challenge that requires sustained commitment, resources and concerted and coordinated efforts from all sectors of our society and most importantly Government leadership.
- XIV. We further recognize that it is not sufficient to sign onto international instruments and formalize domestic legislation promoting gender equality and empowerment, human rights and anti-gender-based violence. More importantly, all national stakeholders, including especially the National Government, must take ownership and be the primary drivers of combating, preventing and eliminating gender-based violence and fostering gender equality and empowerment for this to be successful and sustainable.
- XV. We acknowledge that many challenges remain for us to make our country a safer, secure and an equitable place for our women and girls to live with dignity and free from harassment and violence so that they can reach their full potential and enjoy a better life. But we are determined to do better by transforming attitudes, behaviour and institutions that sustain unequal power relations between men and women to bring about change.
- XVI. Key strategic domestic policy and legislative measures that have been set in place by my Government to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls in Papua New Guinea include:
- National Medium Term Development Plan 2011 – 2015 that sets a target of achieving by 2030 zero-tolerance against gender-based violence;
 - National Policy on Women and Gender Equality 2011 – 2015 that strategizes to increasing advocacy against violence against women and girls; service provision to affected victims; capacity building including research and legislation development to better address gender-based violence issues;
 - National Health Strategy 2011 – 2020 and HIV/AIDS Strategy 2011 – 2014 which addresses gender-based violence and to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girl victims of sexual violence;
 - Enactment of Sexual Offences Act, Crime Against Children Act, the Police Act and the Evidence Act which addresses deterrence measures, criminalizing gender-based violence and dispensing justice to affected victims;
 - The Judicial system is also working to make its services more accessible to victims of domestic violence by providing training and advocacy programs as well as legal services support;
 - Eleven Family and Sexual Violence (FSV) units have been set up around the country within the Police Force; and a Family and Sexual Offences (FASO) Unit established in the Public Prosecutors Office in the nation's capital, as a Pilot Program, which will gradually be rolled-out to other centers countrywide, aimed at adequately prosecuting and lawfully punishing perpetrators of violence against women and girls;
 - Gender-based violence education is now formalized in the national education curriculum and taught in secondary schools throughout the country;

Madame Chairperson,

- XVII. As national priority, Papua New Guinea is also now in the process of drafting a Family Protection Bill that will criminalize domestic violence. We are also working towards repealing the Sorcery Act 1971 in its entirety and make all sorcery related killings a criminal offense whilst working with all sectors of the community on raising advocacy and education against sorcery-related killing, and strengthen law enforcement capacity to adequately address this law and order concern.

- XVIII. A best practice on combating gender-based violence that is working well in Papua New Guinea is a multi-sectoral cooperation and partnership between the Government agencies, private sector, NGOs, civil society groups and development partners under the auspices of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) as a leading national intervention program that promotes public awareness campaigns and conducts training on various aspects of gender-based violence as well as prepares and distributes para-legal literacy material on violence against women and girls and on human rights protection.

Madame Chairperson,

- IX. We also value and appreciate the importance of partnership with our development partners, including the United Nations, Australia, New Zealand, US, EU, Japan, Asian Development Bank and others that support our national efforts to combat gender-based violence in the country, where positive outcomes are beginning to emerge and strengthen.
- XX. The UN Women “safe cities” pilot project in our capital city is empowering our people to take ownership of making our communities safer for our women and girls to enjoy their lives. Australia’s constructive bilateral “strongim gavman” initiative with Papua New Guinea, which is generously complemented at the multilateral level through the “Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Initiative” valued at A\$300 million for the next ten years, under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum 2012 Pacific Gender Equality Declaration, is helping us build our national capacities and capabilities to deal with our development challenges, including combating gender-based violence and consolidating our women and girls empowerment and equality.
- XXI. We are also working with the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls on gender based violence issues that were raised following her visit to Papua New Guinea in March 2012, at my Government’s invitation, to determine the extent of gender-based violence and its causes and consequences. The Special Rapporteur’s independent and frank assessment of gender-based violence and recommendations made to my Government further complements our intensifying efforts against this national scourge.

Madam Chairperson

- XXII. Papua New Guinea welcomes constructive criticism and is receptive to work with multilateral and bilateral development partners, the private sector, NGOs, faith-based organizations and civil society groups, who will add value to our national efforts to combat gender-based violence, empower women and girls and consolidate their equality.
- XXIII. The multi stakeholder spirit of cooperation on fostering gender issues in my country is exemplified by the recent milestone achievement of the launching of the 2011 – 2012 Papua New Guinea Country Gender Assessment (CGA) Report under the aegis of the Government of Papua New Guinea- Development Partners Gender Forum.
- XXIV. It provides a strategic analysis of the present gender equality and empowerment achievements including international commitments such as MDGs, CEDAW and Pacific Platform for Action; gaps and challenges and links it with our national development plans and priorities including Vision 2050, Development Strategic Plan 2010 – 2030 and 2011 – 2015 Medium Term Development Plan, which will provide gender-responsive interventions. We believe that this will further catalyse our national efforts with the support of our development partners to better address gender-based issues including equality, empowerment and combating violence.
- XXV. Areas that we require further support include strengthening and systematizing gender mainstreaming in all sectors; enhanced advocacy, education and training; analysis of gender-based threats and violence in the extractive industries to prevent exploitation of women and girls; and counseling and anger-management support services for men and women.
- XXVI. In conclusion, Madam Chair, Papua New Guinea invites and welcomes willing development partners in the public and private sectors, civil society and NGOs to work with us in consolidating the gains we have made in transforming Papua New Guinea into a gender-friendly nation, where our women and girls can live in dignity, peace and freedom.

I thank you.