



Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland
to the United Nations

STATEMENT BY

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**PRINCIPAL SECRETARY AT THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
AS HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE
KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

**AT THE 57TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

NEW YORK

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**Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Allow me first to congratulate you and the bureau upon your election to steer this important Commission. Your extraordinary skills will no doubt see us through.

My delegation aligns itself fully with the statements delivered by Fiji on behalf of the G77 & China, Chad on behalf of the African group and Malawi on behalf of SADC.

Madam Chairperson,

Swaziland is pleased to address this honourable gathering at the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The priority theme for this year which is **“the Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls;** is indeed challenging and the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland is working tirelessly to implement a multi – pronged approach to deal with the scourge. This meeting therefore gives us an opportunity to review progress made on the implementation of national, regional and international instruments on gender based violence and to strengthen our policies and strategies where they are found to be weak. It also allows us an opportunity to share our experiences and interact with member states represented here today.

Madam Chairperson,

In Swaziland, gender based violence is one of the social challenges that affect women and girls disproportionately. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2010) findings show that among women age 15 to 49 years, 1 in 5 is beaten by her husband or partner; whilst among men of the same age, 1 in 200 is beaten by his partner or wife.

This violence is manifested in all forms whether physical, emotional, verbal, financial and/or sexual. As a country, we are more concerned about the increase in domestic violence which occurs largely around the home and is mostly

perpetrated by male relatives. This is of great concern because the home has been considered a safe space, and this is changing over time.

Madam Chairperson,

Swaziland recognizes that violence against women and girls is a human rights issue. As a country, we further recognize the link between gender based violence, unequal power relations, sexual and reproductive health, HIV transmission and poverty. We are fully cognisant of the fact that the decision making power of women who are in abusive relationships is curtailed, resulting to dire demographic, social and economic consequences.

Madam Chairperson,

It has been observed that some women continue to stay in abusive relationships because of their economic dependence on men. On the other hand sexual violence of women infringes on their right to dignity, their right to health including sexual and reproductive health, and increases their vulnerability to HIV infection. Consequently, the Swaziland Government has put in place appropriate interventions to address these challenges which we will share with you.

Madam Chairperson,

The Government of Swaziland is pleased to share with you the major strides that have been taken in policy, legislative and programmatic interventions aimed at the prevention and elimination of gender based violence.

Madam Chairperson,

There are a number of legal, legislative and policy initiatives that Swaziland has put in place to prevent and eliminate gender based violence. The recently enacted Child Protection and Welfare Act seeks to deal with issues relating to children and ensuring that they are protected as a vulnerable group in society. The bill affirms their protection against early marriage and betrothal marriages among other things. The draft Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill that is currently before Parliament for approval will definitely provide weight in dealing with issues of sexual and domestic violence. Another legal instrument is the draft Marriage

Bill that seeks to address 'marital power' within the marriage regime which often results in conflict manifested in different forms of violence. The bill is also before Parliament for consideration. Other pieces of legislation include the Girls and Women's Protection Act which seeks to protect women and girls from any form of violence in cognizance of their vulnerability status in society.

Madam Chairperson,

Institutional reforms towards combating violence include: the establishment of the Child Protection Unit within the Department of Police as well as provision of specialized training for some police officers on issues of violence and how to handle such cases when reported; establishment of a child friendly court to provide specialized trial of children's cases within the judiciary system; and the formation of a police gender network that will add value to the work of stakeholders in the fight against gender based violence.

A number of NGOs such as the Council of Swaziland Churches, Save the Children Swaziland, Women in Law in Southern Africa and Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse offer services such as sensitization and education of the public on issues of gender-based violence, counseling for survivors of gender based violence, and assistance on the legal aspects of gender based violence.

Madam Chairperson,

In order to address gender based violence holistically; Swaziland is piloting an age appropriate and culturally sensitive programme on sexuality education for adolescents and youth. The programme is aimed at empowering young people in all areas of their lives, including in identifying and reporting violations perpetrated against them. It equips them with full understanding of the linkages between HIV transmission and gender based violence, and imparts negotiation skills to assist them in their lifelong endeavours. The overall expected impact of this programme are the prevention of early and unplanned pregnancies, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV, and violence against women and children.

Madam Chairperson,

As I conclude, I wish to reiterate that the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland recognises women as equal citizens and has committed herself to the promotion and protection of their rights. Apart from the Beijing Platform for Action which has gender based violence as one of its themes, Swaziland is also party to several critical human rights instruments, all of which promote gender equality and respect for the rights of women.

Finally, Madam Chairperson, let me point out that the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland would like to recognise the immense contributions of all our development partners working on gender equality and the empowerment of women for their efforts in ensuring the full recognition and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women in Swaziland.

We remain committed and confident that moving forward together, we can improve the quality of life, and prevent and eliminate gender based violence, particularly, violence against women and girls. We commit to strengthening our data and management systems for accurate capturing of GBV statistics, and also improving our GBV case management processes.

I thank you!