



PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Third Committee of the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly

Agenda item 56: Advancement of Women

**Statement
by**

**HE Mrs Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations**

Please check against delivery

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations

250 EAST 51ST STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10022
TEL: (917) 369-1025 • FAX (917) 369-1024
EMAIL: tongaunmission@aol.com

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

I would like to also take this opportunity to congratulate you for your appointment as the Chairman of the Third Committee.

The advancement of women is crucial to the achievement of MDGs by 2015. Research demonstrates that progress in the advancement of women in education stimulates a nation's economic growth, poverty reduction, as well as reducing malnutrition and child mortality. It also shows that although the agenda is unfinished, progress has been made in each of the targets set under MDG 3.

The targeting of the goal to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger is important in this respect since women account for two-thirds of the world's 1.2 billion people who live in extreme poverty. And almost two thirds of the employed women in the developing world work in the informal job sector or work as unpaid care-takers. Women in the developing world have limited access to credit, land ownership and professional skills and vocational training to secure economic opportunities and jobs in the formal sector.

Education is the key to the advancement of women; we must also work hard to overcome the traditional gender-based division of labor in the domestic setting. The work of child-care and care-taking of the elderly often leaves women with limited time to participate in further training or income-generating activities. It is therefore vital that women be given the equal opportunity and access to education and vocational training to ensure that future generations have a chance in breaking the vicious cycle of extreme poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

We must also be vigilant in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, as globally, the percentage of women and girls living with HIV and AIDS have increased from 41% in 1997 to almost 50% after a decade. The loss of productivity and the additional medical expenses put women living with HIV and AIDS and their families in a vicious cycle of extreme poverty. We need to continue to take proactive approach towards the prevention and the public education on HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Chairman,

Environmental sustainability is strongly linked with gender empowerment. Food and water security is crucial to the prosperity of women. Since women in the developing countries are the predominant force behind agricultural production and the procurement of drinking water for domestic use, the rapid increases in the price in basic commodities threatens food security for women and their households.

The increasing scarcity of water places tremendous pressure upon women and young girls in the procurement of water. On average, women in developing regions of the world, walk up to six kilometers daily to procure water. It is time consuming for mothers, and

many young girls may need to sacrifice their education in order to assist their families in the procurement of water.

Mr. Chairman,

Throughout the debate on system-wide coherence this year, we have given special attention to gender equality. We believe the UN reform process should also incorporate the gender perspective. In order to support the achievement of MDG3, we need a functional and responsive structure in place to oversee the implementation of the goal. We would like to reiterate our position that gender perspective must be integrated and mainstreamed within the UN agencies, particularly UN agencies that are fundamental to development and sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to commend UNIFEM for promoting programme-based aid delivery modalities. The new modalities emphasize ownership of the country in the development policy and coordination action. The modalities also encourage the alignment and the harmonization of the funding from donor countries and national initiatives. The emphasis on results and mutual accountability between donor countries and that of the developing countries steer the efforts toward a partnership.

The benefits of the new modalities are that they ensure more predictable aid flows, encourage greater national ownership and determination, lower transaction costs and they increase the accountability of the programme. We are encouraged to see that the new modalities also include issues such as sustainable development in the programme assessment. It is crucial for the programmes to include sustainable development because the environment is a main source of women's livelihood and food security in many of the developing regions around the world.

Mr. Chairman,

The achievement of MDG3 is closely related to how well we implement MDG8. The estimated cost of the resources needed to achieve MDG3 prepared by the World Bank comes to US\$13 billion per year. Currently MDG programmes related to the advancement of women are mostly implemented through sectoral initiatives such as agriculture, infrastructure building, employment, education and health, thus leaving a small budgetary allocation towards a direct contribution of gender empowerment related activities.

Financing for development and the achievement of MDG8 are intrinsically linked to the success of MDG3. The MDG Gap Task Force Report pointed out that donor countries need to increase aid flow by \$18 billion per year between 2008 and 2010 to support core development programmes. Without the additional aid, the set targets will not be met by 2015. The current global financial crisis is an added challenge in that there is the risk that the financing of core development programmes may be downgraded as a priority and

it is suggested that donor countries should be urged to refrain from taking short term actions which will undermine the achievement of long term benefits.

Thank you.