



MALAWI

**STATEMENT BY
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OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 56: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
TO THE THIRD COMMITTEE, 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK, 14 OCTOBER 2008 -

(Check against delivery)

Chairperson,

Let me begin by congratulating you and your bureau for your election to steer the proceedings of this Committee. You can be assured of my delegation's cooperation during your tenure of office.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G77 and China and the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the SADC on this agenda item. Allow me to make a few comments from the national perspective.

Chairperson,

In the recently concluded High Level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs, the Heads of State and Government adopted a Declaration which among other things, reaffirmed the universal commitment to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and recognized women as key actors in development. Yesterday, the Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Gender Issues asserted that promoting gender equality and empowering women is key to achieving all the other Millennium Development Goals, and that, greater resources and attention must be devoted to the empowerment of women and gender equality. My delegation fully endorses this assertion. That is why the Government of Malawi has been focussing its efforts on placing gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre stage of the development process. Gender equality and women's empowerment is a vital goal and a path towards achieving the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy.

Chairperson,

The majority of women in Malawi live in rural areas. Over 70% of agriculture work is done by women and they produce 80% of food for home consumption. The empowerment of women, particularly those living in rural areas, is therefore, a strong factor in Malawi's poverty reduction processes. These facts have been recognized at the highest political level. During the Africa Green Revolution Conference held in Oslo, Norway, the efforts and commitments of the Government of Malawi to promote the welfare of women, most notably in the agriculture sector were recognized and the President of the Republic of Malawi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika became one of the 100 Torch Bearers of the Global MDG 3 Campaign. The campaign is aimed at mobilizing leaders to do something extra for the attainment of the MDG 3 on the advancement of women and gender equality.

The national MDG 3 Torch Campaign will be launched tomorrow on Malawi's Mother's Day by government in collaboration with partners in order to inspire genuine commitments to go the extra mile for gender equality and women empowerment across levels of political and social leadership. The launch coincides with the first commemoration of the first International Day of Rural Women which will be held on 15 October 2008.

The government is committed to promoting the strengthening of credit mechanisms to enable women to improve both on farm and off farm activities. Attention is given to women's access to land, extension services as well as farm inputs.

Chairperson,

As a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Malawi has just fulfilled its reporting obligation by submitted its sixth periodic report to the Committee. The report recognizes that there are many obstacles and challenges to the full attainment of gender equality. One challenge is to raise the awareness of the stipulations of the Convention to women at all levels as well as other regional and sub-regional instruments

for the empowerment of women. In this regard, the government established the Department of Civic Education under the Ministry of Information which will undertake to simplify and promulgate the Convention, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocol on the Rights of Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the recently adopted SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

Government continues to engage the media in conducting various campaigns through which issues of women's rights and provisions of CEDAW are discussed.

Chairperson,

Gender based violence is a persistent problem for women and girls in Malawi. It reinforces subordination of women and further promotes sexual abuse which leads to injury, HIV infection and unwanted pregnancies. Malawi is fully committed to ending violence against women. Beyond signing the SADC declaration on gender and development on violence against women, the Government of Malawi has in place numerous strategies, laws and programmes to end all forms of violence against women. Prominent among all was the enactment of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act in April, 2006. Although the law is effectively in force, there are a number of areas that need further development before the law is made fully operational.

In July 2008, government adopted the National Response to Gender Based Violence to be implemented from 2008- 2011 with the aim of enhancing Malawi's commitment to CEDAW and other human rights instruments and supporting government in preventing and addressing incidents of gender based violence.

Other instruments in the pipeline include the Gender Equity Statute, review of Inheritance Laws, bills on marriage, divorce and family relations, national registration, child care, protection and justice, HIV/AIDS prevention and management and trafficking of persons.

Chairperson

On the political and corporate fronts representation of women remain low, while high levels of poverty among women and girls on the socio-economic fronts continue to be major obstacles for gender equality. The country is also weighed down by gaps between commitment and implementation coupled with continuing contradictions between customary laws, national laws and international commitments.

In order to address the low representation of women in politics, the government has put in place a programme aimed at achieving fifty percent representation of women in Parliament during the 2009 Parliamentary elections. The national programme was launched on 18 July, 2008 and it is supported by civil society and development partners.

Let me conclude by reiterating Malawi commitment to the full implementation of all internationally agreed goals and objectives on women and look forward to increased international cooperation.

I thank you