



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**Statement**

**By**

**Mrs. Atsede Kidanu**

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**Ethiopia**

**On**

**Agenda Item 62: "Advancement of Women  
Implementation of the Outcome of the Fourth World  
Conference on Women and of the 23rd Special Session  
of the General Assembly"**

**At the Third Committee of the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the**

**United Nations General Assembly**

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**New York**

**Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor.**

**My delegation associates itself with the statement of the distinguished representative of the Sudan on behalf of the group of 77 and China.**

**My delegation would also like to thank the Secretariat for its comprehensive and informative report on the Agenda Item.**

**Mr. Chairman,**

It is a well documented fact that women account for 50% of the world population. The exclusion of women from participation in the economic development and political process would not only be unjust but also tantamount to squandering half of the human potential in a society. It is in recognition of this fact that the Government of Ethiopia has committed itself not only to establish justice as a fundamental right but also to establish gender equality as sine qua non for economic and social development. My delegation would like to highlight the endeavors, achievements and commitments of the Government of Ethiopia for the advancement of women vis-à-vis the fulfillment of the millennium development goals.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In Ethiopia, despite the multifaceted and significant role of women in the society, their contribution lagged behind that of men due to past political, economic, social and cultural bias against them. In order to rectify this unacceptable state of affairs the Government of Ethiopia demonstrated its commitments with the issuance of specific policies and strategies. The national policy on women, the national action plan on gender equality and the women's development packages, just to mention a few, are some of these instruments.

A significant change has also taken place in the legal framework. Ranging from the Family to Criminal codes, law of succession to nationality rights have been subjected to a massive revision to making the legal system and its instruments gender sensitive. Changes in the federal and regional family laws have ensured equal rights for women in marriage, divorce, custody of children and rights to matrimonial properties. The family law has revised age at marriage, divorce procedures and equality during and after marriage. The penal code has made female genital mutilation (FGM), rape and trafficking to be treated as punishable crimes. Protective

legislations have passed in terms of women's access to land, credit facilities and productive resources.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In order to realize the economic empowerment of women, the focus of the Government has been on the agricultural sector which constitutes the locomotive of the national economy. In this context the measures taken and the results achieved in the framework of the women's package for change and development are as follows:-:

- Administrative Regions have taken initiatives to register the names of both spouses for land certification in order to ensure the rights of women to own and administer economic assets.
- Food security program of the country has given more attention to women, particularly for female headed households;
- Agricultural credit services have been expanded throughout the country & women have an opportunity to get better access to credit than before. This by itself has helped women to engage in Micro & Small scale enterprises such as *fattening, poultry, dairy farming and so on.*
- In terms of reducing the burden of work-load to women, the development programmes of the Ministry of Mines & Energy have given due emphasis to introduction appropriate technology, such as *biogas, energy-saving stoves and so on.*
- The Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development has given special attention towards increasing the participation of women. In this regard, women headed house-holds, and married women in rural areas are supported under the agricultural extension program. Gender mainstreaming guideline has also been developed in order to mainstream women's needs in different development programs & projects in the agricultural sector.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The 1993 national health policy, too, has given special attention and priority to women's health issues. This policy has taken *Primary Health Care (PHC)* as its priority to provide decentralized and equitable services, focusing on *communicable diseases, nutrition, maternal and child health care & environmental health.* It has accorded special attention to health needs of the family, particularly women & children in the most underserved regions of the country. Since 1997 the

government has developed and implemented gender oriented health development programs. The Ministry of Health has trained and assigned 30,000 health extension agents (most of whom are young women) at the grassroots level to raise awareness in health, prevention of HIV/AIDS, family planning and so on all of which are crucial to mainstream gender issues.

In the area of education, specific policies, strategies and plan of action have been issued to increase the enrollment rate of women and to decrease the gender gap. Some of the measures taken are worth mentioning. In this regard,

- *Parents Teachers Association (PTA)* has been established at community level with the objective of monitoring girls' education progress in schools. Women's Associations and Women Affairs bureaus have become members of PTA in order to mobilize the community;
- *Educational Management Board* has also been established from the lower to the higher administration unit of the school. Women teachers at various levels are members of the board for the purpose of monitoring the progress in girls education;
- *Gender Sensitive Education Package* has been developed & is being implemented in pastoral areas of the country to increase the participation of the pastoralist girls and women in different educational program, and
- *Gender Focal point* has been institutionalized in higher educational institutes in order to address women problems and enhance their assertiveness through conducting different capacity building programs.

## **Mr. Chairman**

There is a firm conviction at all levels of the government that merely having gender sensitive laws and policies by itself cannot bring about change towards equality. The practice of violence against women is intertwined in individual cultural belief that is prevalent widely. The female genital mutilation, abduction, domestic violence, and rape are the most common forms of violence against women in the country. To eliminate these harmful practices, a lot of awareness creation programs have been undertaken at community level. Community Conversation Dialogue has been considered as a key strategy to bring about behavioral change in the community. The women's institutional machinery has conducted discussion forums at all levels in collaboration with various donors and NGOs through tripartite project financed by UNICEF. Consequently, the acceptance rate of FGM by the community has now dropped from 60% to 30%.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In order to promote equal opportunity for women in decision making, a lot of awareness creation, advocacy and lobbying activities have been undertaken across the country. For instance the number of women in the parliament as well as regional councils has increased over time. There was an encouraging step in women's representation in parliament in the 2005 election when women won close to 22% of the seats. Women's roles in parliament have also gained importance. The Women's standing committee was created during the 1<sup>st</sup> parliament and it's one of the 13<sup>th</sup> parliamentary committees. In the 1<sup>st</sup> two parliaments, only women committee had female members, whereas in the current third parliament, women represent 27% of all parliamentary committees.

The Civil Service Reform programme and the Civil Servants Proclamation also contributed significantly to women's participation in decision making, encouraging them to participate in civil service while discharging responsibilities.

The Government institutions from the federal level down to the District level are obliged to establish women affairs departments within their structure. Apart from that the Ministry of Women's Affairs at Federal level is the member of the executive council that allows the latter the opportunity to bring any issue that concerns women. Parallel to this, Regional states also have women affairs offices that are member of the Regional Council at every level.

**Mr. Chairman,**

To conclude, though still much remains to be done, Ethiopia has made a significant progress in advancing the issues of women in different sectors. Given the firm commitment of the Government, the determination of most Ethiopian women for change, the laws, and the institutional mechanisms in place, it's the belief of my delegation, that the objectives of the millennium developmental goals vis-à-vis the advancement of women may be attained earlier than anticipated.