



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT
BY**

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**ON
AGENDA ITEM 28: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

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Chairperson,

South Africa is honoured to deliver this statement on the advancement of women and aligns itself with the statements read by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Kenya on behalf of the Africa Group and the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the SADC Group.

South Africa wishes to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Third Committee and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of the full cooperation and support of my delegation in ensuring that we have a successful session.

Chairperson,

South Africa believes that gender equality and equity are fundamental human rights and prerequisites for sustainable development. Our country is party to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and continues to be resolute in its commitment to the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other international, regional and sub-regional instruments pertaining to the advancement of women. Without women's empowerment and gender equality, societies will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and their full development potential.

South Africa welcomes the establishment of the UN Entity for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (UN-Women), and believes that its close collaboration with the UN Commission on the Status of Women will bring about greater visibility, better coordination and enhanced mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the UN system.

Chairperson,

Women play a significant and positive role as change agents in societies, especially those emerging from conflict. In this regard they have demonstrated greater resolve for reconciliation in national cohesion during peace building processes. The needs and priorities of women continue to be overlooked in peace agreements, at donor conferences and in post-conflict legal reform. This situation needs to be rectified as a matter of necessity.

We need to encourage the involvement and active participation of women as key stakeholders in all stages of peace process, including as mediators and equal participants in conflict resolution, peace-building and post-conflict development. Good practices for increasing women's representation in local, national and international conflict-resolution and peace-building bodies should be more widely disseminated and consistently implemented.

Furthermore, women need to play an active role in the discussions on climate change. They are at the receiving end of the challenges posed by poverty and underdevelopment in these areas. They are the ones who fetch water from the streams, collect wood for cooking and toil the land to support families through subsistence farming. It is therefore logical that they play an active role in this regard, for the reasons that they are the best care-givers who ensure the daily welfare of

children, grand-children and the aged. To this end the United Nations system is urged to enhance the quality of its programs aimed the advancement of rural women, women living with disabilities and indigenous women. These are the severely vulnerable women who continue to struggle for survival on the margins of their mainstream societies and are victims of social exclusion and economic marginalization.

Chairperson,

It should be emphasised that South Africa endorses the current international debates that draw attention to the full spectrum of human vulnerabilities as they relate to women's lack of access to and control of resources, continued food insecurity, climate change, the current energy, food and financial crisis, and the threat of conflict to the building of sustainable peace on the Continent and beyond. Within this context it remains important to highlight the plight of women and other vulnerable groups, as they remain disproportionately affected.

The current global financial crisis highlights in particular, the need for greater participation of women in financial decision-making, recognising that the gender dimensions of the consequences of the global financial crisis on women and girls in particular have not received enough attention. The South African Government has initiated engagements with business and social partners to design mechanisms to retain jobs and mitigate the impact of the downturn. The challenge, however, remains the effective involvement of and tangible benefits derived for women.

Chairperson,

The South African Government accords the highest priority to poverty eradication, the creation of decent work, investment attraction and the promotion of a more inclusive economy. In 2009, my Government created a new Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities to emphasise the need for equity and access to development opportunities for the vulnerable groups in our society.

South Africa is cognizant of the fact that the advancement and development of women is not the responsibility of Government alone but that all stakeholders including the private sector and civil society have a role to play in this regard. Furthermore, the South African Government has mainstreamed a gender perspective into its main priorities. These include:

- Economic transformation;
- Job creation;
- Access to quality health care and education;
- Crime prevention and response; as well as
- Rural development

Chairperson,

The South African Government has since 1994 endeavored to build an inclusive and socially cohesive, democratic society through a process of socio-economic and political transformation. Women in South Africa are still facing major challenges of

underdevelopment and are subjected to various forms of discrimination, abuse and gender-based violence. Many women remain on the margins of our economy because of disempowerment and limited access to education and skills development.

Despite these challenges, much progress has been made in the emancipation of women through various initiatives, including legislative reforms. Compared to 1994, more women now have access to basic services such as housing, education, health, free basic water and electricity. South Africa continues in its employment and other sectors to develop policies and programmes that address the emergent needs of women.

The South African Government is currently working on a Gender Equality Bill which will provide the necessary legislative authority to hasten the empowerment of women and address issues of enforcement and compliance towards the attainment of the target of 50/50 gender parity. The process of consultation with civil society and other stakeholders on the Bill is underway and the final Draft Bill will thereafter be submitted to Cabinet for approval by early 2012.

In conclusion,

My delegation commends the establishment of the United Nations-Women as among the key achievement in advancing the rights of women. Office to the African Union and the United Nations Partnership with the Southern African Development Community in conflict prevention, mediation and elections, aimed at addressing issues affecting women.

I thank you

