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**STATEMENT
BY**

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**MINISTER FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SOUTH AFRICA**

TO THE

**54TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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Check against delivery

Chairperson

Allow me to congratulate you on your election as the chair of the 54th Session of the Commission on Status for Women. We are confident that under your leadership the Commission will successfully concludes its program. South Africa wishes to align itself with the Statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Equatorial Guinea and Yemen on behalf of the Africa Group and JCC of the Non Aligned Movement and G77+China respectively.

On behalf of the South African Government, allow me to convey our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to people of Haiti and Chile who have been recently devastated by natural disasters. We share your pain and trust that the resilience of the human spirit will enable you to overcome your ordeal.

Chairperson

The world has seen significant progress towards the realization of the advancement of women. Sadly, challenges persist. Hence, the Government of South Africa welcomes this important session which provides the opportunity to reflect and share best practices.

The Outcome Document of the 54th Session together with the Banjul Declaration endorsed by African Heads of States will enable us in the region to continue to exchange best practices. The seven areas of action contained in the Declaration provides for the acceleration of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and MDG's.

UN Gender Architecture

South Africa has just completed its own 15 year review of the implementation of its post apartheid transformation agenda.

This review and broader societal consultative process informed the establishment of a Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities. The Ministry will ensure that there is effective planning mechanisms as well as monitoring and evaluation of government programmes. It recognizes the need for enhancing the capacity of the state to mainstream gender in delivery against national policies.

Chairperson,

South Africa supports the consolidation of the four UN Gender entities into a single strengthened UN Gender Machinery. We believe that this will go a long way in strengthening the UN system's work on gender equality and empowerment of women at

International and National level. We, therefore, call for the speedy conclusion of the Intergovernmental negotiations on the other outstanding areas of the System Wide Coherence. The greatest gift the UN can give to the Women of the world on the 15th year anniversary of the BPFA is the strengthening of the UN Gender Architecture.

Economic Empowerment

South Africa is largely a rural country thus the government's focus is on ensuring that rural communities have access to economic opportunities and sustainable development. Agricultural support is provided to rural women to cultivate their land for subsistence and commercial purposes. Increased access to Early Childhood Development assists with child care, enabling women to access economic opportunities.

Additional impetus on improving the quality of life of women is realized through increased spending on:

1. Enhancing the quality of education;
2. Improving provision of health care including enhanced response to HIV and AIDS, infant and child mortality and maternal deaths;
3. Expanding universal access to basic services including water, sanitation, and electricity;
4. Fighting crime and improving access to justice for women and girls
5. Investing in development of human and physical infrastructure that creates job opportunities for women.

Alignment of International Instruments

South Africa is pleased to note that this conference is focused on aligning key gender related international instruments. Linking the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and the MDGs into government programmes of action is essential in order to provide greater coherence in our implementation. As a country, we acknowledge the pioneering work done by UNECA on the African Gender Index, which promoted such integration to effect greater efficiency, promote integrated delivery and minimize reporting fatigue.

South Africa has met the target for Millennium goal 2 on Universal Access to Primary Education as early as 2002. Currently data indicates that the gender parity index is consistently greater than one at secondary level. At tertiary level we are putting special measures to increase the number of young women in areas such as mathematics, science and technology.

Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls remain a major concern of government. There are some achievements of note over the past fifteen years. We are in an advanced stage of developing a comprehensive framework to address violence against women and girls. This includes, among others legislation on Sexual Offences; Trafficking in Persons; Domestic Violence Act and the Children's' Act.

We have put in place service delivery mechanisms such as: the 365 Day National Plan of Action on No Violence against women and children and Sexual Offences Courts.

Our Thuthuzela Care Centres, which are comprehensive one stop service centres for victims of domestic violence, rape and other sexual crimes is hailed as best practice in the 2007 UN Secretary General's report on violence against children. These are replicated and piloted in some countries at the global level.

In keeping with UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, South Africa has played a significant role in advancing the peace process on the African continent. South Africa is proud of the high number of women deployed in peace-keeping missions, averaging 40%.

Regarding the promotion and protection of human rights, our legislation and the Constitution have been tested through land mark court cases where the final rulings have been in favour of women's emancipation.

Finally, Chairperson, as you are aware, today marks the 100 days before South Africa hosts the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the first time ever for such an event to take place on the African soil.

On behalf of the women of SA, allow me to take this opportunity, to extend an invitation to all our sisters attending the 54th Session to the World Cup. We look forward to welcoming you to our shores within the next one hundred days.

I THANK YOU

