

# GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU



## TUVALU STATEMENT

BY

MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, HON WILLY  
TELAVI

ON THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR  
ACTION AND THE OUTCOMES OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> SPECIAL SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AT THE

54<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

1 – 12 MARCH 2010 HELD AT THE

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

NEW YORK

USA



**Tuvalu Country Statement**  
**Commission on the Status of Women**  
**54<sup>th</sup> Session by the Minister of Home Affairs & Rural Development**  
**Hon. Willy Telavi.**

**Chair**

**Distinguished Delegates**

**Ladies and Gentleman**

As a country most vulnerable to adverse impact of climate Change, my delegation would like to join other delegations in expressing its deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to the Government and People of Chile in the wake of the devastating earthquake.

My delegation also wishes to support and align itself to the statement delivered by the Hon Minister from Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Countries.

Mr Chair, Tuvalu welcomes the opportunity to participate with other member states at this year's session of the Commission as this provides important opportunities to learn from each other and makes constructive contributions possible for gender equality including the advancement of women. Please allow me to report on the achievements we had made on the status of women in Tuvalu.

The Government of Tuvalu reaffirms its commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and also notes the important links between the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs). However, the full realization of this commitment and its implementation is severely challenged by the many constraints commonly presented by the unique situation of our small island developing state, particularly by our economic and social vulnerability and lack of natural resources.

**Legal Framework**

Tuvalu laws do not allow discriminatory nor specifically prohibit women's participation in decision making both at local and national levels but because of cultural and traditional practices, men has always been the main decision makers. However, this practice has changed since the realization of CEDAW and other international conventions when the involvement of women in meetings and decision makings, not only began but growing also.

**Gender Mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming has been an important thrust which the Government has embraced towards the achievement of gender equality goals. To this end, the Women's Department was established to oversee the development and empowerment of women nationwide and until now it has gained momentum through the collaborative and tireless work of the women's



department, non-governmental organizations and the National Council of Women. A new position of Country Focal Officer, funded by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community has been established in the Ministry of Home Affairs to provide assistance to the Government and NGOs in ensuring gender is integrated into policies, plans and programmes. All stakeholders in the Government and NGOs including communities with the assistance of regional partners have developed concrete processes for working together on programmes and activities to address gaps, and centered on the aim of achieving real progress against the MGDs

### **Violence Against Women**

In terms of Violence against Women, Tuvalu has made significant progress following the passing of one of its national law, "Police Powers and Duties Act" by Parliament in November 2009 which specifically provide the powers of the police to intervene in domestic violence cases. This law will provide greater protection of women who are victims of domestic violence.

### **Health**

There are no grounds of discrimination relative to gender in our health system. Ever since Tuvalu's independence in 1978, we have had a free public health service which is accessible to all. Women and girls are given more health attention than men are and as such, maternal and child health facilities are available for all women. Delivery of first time pregnancies from all the islands are done at the national hospital under the expense of the government thus the maternal mortality and child mortality ratios are very positive compared to the other countries. Women's maternity leave policy has been changed to enhance their entitlements and allow women receive full pay throughout their entire leave period. National cervical cancer survey had also been done with positive women been given free treatment. HIV and AIDS preventative and control programmes had also been operationalized and continuously conducted for all women and girls nationwide.

### **Education**

The education system in Tuvalu is compulsory to all and free up to primary school level whereas entry to secondary school level is through sitting of entrance examinations. Government Scholarship Awards to Tertiary education is awarded on merit and out of the total number of in-service and pre-service awards, 65% are girls and 35% boys. This shows a significant progress in the number of girls attending schools as opposed to the number prior the ratification of CEDAW. The drop outs from secondary school entrance examination have to repeat their primary form 2 education until they pass the entrance examination to secondary school. School leavers from secondary school who could not get government scholarship awards have to attend vocational education to enable them meet labour market requirements.

## **Employment and Politics**

Despite the involvement of women in decision making at local government, there has not been much progress in the political level. Historically, only one woman had ever made a one four year term in Parliament in the last 15 years and since then no one has ever made it to parliament again. In the employment sector on the other hand, there is a significant increase in the number of women who had gained employment and are holding very senior positions both at the public and private sectors. In the public sector 46.3% of workers are women and the rest are men but there is a tendency that the number of women will soon increase given the many women undergoing tertiary education.

## **Climate Change**

Climate change has become an emerging critical issue and its significant adverse impacts on the people whose lives are intrinsically interwoven and dependent on the ocean, their lands, food and water as their only means of survival is at greater risk. However, Tuvalu's campaign against impact of climate change remains our priority and we urge UN member states to consider our vulnerable status relative to this phenomenon. My delegation would also like to emphasize the importance of streamlining climate change as a cross cutting issue into all women's platform.

## **Women and Poverty**

The most notable and progress activity recently awarded to unemployment women was the implementation of the women's micro-financing and credit scheme whereby women were granted small loans to generate income revenue. The scheme is still in its early days of implementation thus we have yet to see its outcomes.

Mr Chairman, you will note that although Tuvalu is making progress in women and gender development, it is worth remembering that this progress would not have been possible without the support of our development partners and civil society organizations. More work is required to accelerate and strengthen the existing mechanisms and we call on their continued support for the betterment of the lives of women.

Fakafetai Lasi,

TUVALU MO TE ATUA

