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# MAURITIUS

## STATEMENT

by

**Hon. Mrs. Indranee Seebun  
Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development,  
Family Welfare & Consumer Protection  
of the Republic of Mauritius**

at the

**52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)  
on Agenda: Item 3 "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on  
Women and to the twenty-third special session of the  
General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality,  
development and peace for the twenty-first century"**

**27 February 2008  
New York**

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**Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
My dear Sisters and Brothers**

Please allow me to join previous speakers in thanking the ECOSOC and the CSW for offering us the opportunity to exchange experiences.

Chair,

Our National Gender Machinery has gained strength and momentum through its increased recognition towards women's empowerment and gender equality. Today, Mauritius offers the example of a society where women enjoy a good health status, have access to free education, are economically empowered thanks to the ideals of equality, good governance, respect for human rights and social justice.

In line with the outcomes of the Landmark International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, a Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians was set up with a view to accelerating Women's empowerment to address issues of sustained development. To that end, my Ministry hosted in October last the 8<sup>th</sup> regional workshop of the Network. The Forum enabled Parliamentarians to pledge for mobilizing political support and resources from government in partnership with development agencies, regional bodies, private sector, civil societies with a view to building on our achievements in relation to women's sexual and reproductive health. Concurrently, my Ministry has intensified its campaigns related to breast and cervical cancer.

As a woman parliamentarian I have the responsibility to bring a gender perspective in the work of politics and decision making. I, therefore, stress upon the need to bring the concept of gender mainstreaming into the work of various sectors. My Ministry has, to that effect, revisited the National Gender Policy of 2005 into an overarching framework which sets the guidelines for other Ministries to develop their **own** gender policies. This framework is also compatible with our Government's Programme Based Budgeting (PBB) initiative and the Performance Management System. The PBB will enable the different Ministries to look at the different needs of men and women and the gender impact assessment will be realized through sex disaggregated data to demystify apparent gender neutrality of budgets. Furthermore each Ministry has a focal point to promote gender equality.

Chair,

At this juncture, I would like to share a saying which goes like this “ a budget is a financial instrument which clearly indicates the kind of consideration given to women in a country”, I am pleased to inform you that the 2006-2007 budget of Mauritius includes several measures geared towards women’s empowerment, more precisely the creation of an Empowerment Fund of **Rs 5 billion** for the next five years in order to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship among women by giving women access to Land, Training, Leadership Skills and Finance.

On the legislation side, further amendments have been brought to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act in November last with a view to providing better services to victims of domestic violence and strengthening the enforcement mechanism of the Act. However, legislation does not suffice to combat violence. We need the commitment of all stakeholders. On 27 December last, my Ministry launched a campaign against violence taking on board NGOs and proclaim “2008-a year of non-violence”. To this end, women are called upon to be agents of peace. Let me reiterate my firm belief that Peace starts in the womb.

Chair,

Women are also key engines to economic growth and social progress for the achievement of the MDGs. Our Prime Minister believes in the potentials of women and we have been creating the necessary climate for women to flourish right from grassroot. Only this year, a sum of Rs25 Million has been allocated towards empowering women in distress such as alcoholics, sex workers, drug addicts, victims of domestic violence and women in prison. We should all agree that poverty has a woman face and is the root cause of family conflicts and societal problems; and hence a substantial share of the budget should go towards the economic empowerment of women. My appeal for today is: all Heads of States should work towards gender equality and make positive discrimination where the need is felt. Women have been discriminated for too long- NOW is the time for healing wounds, time for action and NO more rhetoric! Sisters you are putting your heart and soul in this venture for gender equality- so let your convictions guide you. The world is watching you. Let resolutions speak. Let us be strong to shape our own destiny and the destiny of our nation where there is bound to be Equality, Peace and Freedom in real terms.

God Bless You  
Thank you.

27 February 2008