



Please Check Against Delivery

**STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. ROBERT G. AISI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
09 MARCH 2009, NEW YORK**

Chair

Papua New Guinea re-iterates the Statement delivered on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum countries. In this intervention we will limit ourselves to sharing our experiences on the topic of "**women in decision-making**" and in the area of '**Equal Sharing of Responsibilities between Women and Men including Care-Giving in the context of HIV/AIDS**'.

Chair

Papua New Guinea, like many other countries, has made strong progress in the past few years in this area. More can be done but we have seen an increase in the number of women appointed to the Senior Executive and Management positions in both the Public and Private sectors.

In the Law and Justice sector, more women are being appointed to magisterial positions with the highest being in the Village Courts System of magisterial services. The Law and Justice Sector's adoption of an Equal Employment Opportunity Policy has boosted promotional opportunities for Female Police Officers in the rank and file throughout the entire force.

Chair

In the area of good governance and political participation, the Law allows for women representation in the Local Level Governments and Provincial Governments. The Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government stipulates that there be equitable representation in the three tier governments (the Ward Level which comprises of several villages, the Local Level Government made up of a number of Council Wards and the District level government made up of several constituencies).

Currently, in the National Parliament there is only one (1) woman Member of Parliament (out of 109) who is serving her third term and is also the Minister responsible for women.

Noting that, my Delegation is pleased to report that efforts are being made to improve in this area. Jointly with the women's movement, the National Council of Women & Women in Politics Association, the Government through the Minister responsible Honorable Dame Carol Kidu, a '*Special , Temporary Measure*' was adopted in the last few months to redress this issue of imbalance. To increase the number of women MPs in the National Parliament, the women, through the Minister successfully pressured the Government to utilize Section 101 of the Constitution to nominate three (3) women to become members of Parliament.

If our National Parliament passes by absolute majority the proposal on Tuesday, the number of Women Parliamentarians will rise to four (4).

The process for selecting the final three (3) women for seats has been through a very transparent and strict screening process. In response to an advertisement in the local daily newspapers by the Prime Minister, Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, seventy-eight (78) women expressed their interest to be nominated for the three seats.

It is expected that the three (3) women MPs will have the same privileges as all the other 109 elected MPs. However, they will NOT be able to block the National Budget and/or take part in a 'vote of no confidence' motion.

Chair

The next major step forward in this area will be the “Reserve Seats” for Women only. These seats will be contested in 2010 General Elections. We have successfully trialed the ‘reserve seats’ concept in two Provinces.

Therefore we believe that for the interim period, while working towards establishing an appropriate legal framework to legitimize the process, this will be the way forward for Papua New Guinea to implement gender equality in political participation.

The Government has directed the Ministry responsible for women to work on a “Gender Equity in Political Governance” Policy framework aimed at advancing the agenda. Currently, a bi-partisan political committee assisted by two independent lawyers and the State Solicitor’s Office backed up by a Gender technical Team is working on the draft policy framework.

Let me take this opportunity to offer my delegation’s appreciation in acknowledging the technical and financial support that have been offered by the Country Offices of UNDP, UNIFEM, UNFPA, Aus AID and NZAID to facilitate the work progressed in this positive effort that has attracted the whole nation’s attention and interest including the full backing of the Opposition Leader and his caucus. The government has realized the importance of women’s participation in decision making and so is fully committed to changing existing policies and laws that do not create an enabling environment to enhance effective participation by women.

Chair

The issue of **‘Equal Sharing of Responsibilities’ in the context of Care-giving for Persons Living With HIV/AIDS**, is an issue very close to the heart of my Delegation. We support innovative ways and means that enhances the care giving work that has been carried out in many of our countries.

In the case of Papua New Guinea an impact assessment of a pilot project titled **‘Community and Home-based Care’** support services has been trialed in 23 locations in two (2) Provinces. The program underscored the fact that ‘caregivers’ require specialized training to enhance the good work they are doing. Of the total respondents interviewed, 93% of the care givers and 95% of the people living with HIV/AIDS preferred home-base Care Support Service rather than hospital care. There is a demand to replicate this program in other parts of our country. In this respect we would strongly support the provisions in the **Agreed Conclusions** which encourage this concept an the training.

Given the vulnerable position of women due to the threat posed by the high infection rate of the spread of HIV/AIDS, the government has recognized the need to incorporate gender issues in the mainstream policies and legislations such as the 2004 Gender and HIV/AIDS Policy and the 2003 HIV/AIDS Management and Prevention Act.

Finally, we will support the provisions in the Agreed Outcomes referring to the need to “... **to establish central gender disaggregated data base within the national women’s machineries or gender focal points (whichever the case maybe) with periodic updates, particularly in countries where census data is not easily /readily accessible and strengthen their capacities to ...**”

Thank you