



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations

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STATEMENT

BY

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HEAD OF DELEGATION**

AT THE

**55TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**

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Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We also congratulate other members of the bureau on their election. My delegation conveys its utmost confidence in your able leadership and assures you of its unequivocal support during this Session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement by the distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as the statement by the distinguished representative of Mozambique on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson,

Kenya welcomes the recent establishment of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, to consolidate and accelerate efforts geared towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. We pledge our full support to the new Under-Secretary General/Executive Director and the entire organization. We are confident that this session and the new gender entity will forge a coherent working partnership in formulating global standards and policies and carrying out programming activities that will fast track the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide.

Chairperson,

Education is both a tool of social justice as well as a fundamental driver of economic development. Indeed, it is a means of unlocking the economic potential of women and facilitating access to employment and decent work. Kenya, therefore, welcomes deliberations on this session's priority theme. **We believe that access and active participation of women in education and engaging particularly in science and technology will generate more employment opportunities for women and girls.**

Chairperson,

The connection between women's human rights, gender equality and socio-economic development is increasingly apparent. It is with this hindsight that Kenyans overwhelmingly voted in favour of a new Constitution that comprehensively addresses this reality. It captures the Government's commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women as envisioned in international and regional instruments on human rights and other standards. It **recognizes the aspirations of all Kenyans based on the essential values of** human rights, equality, freedom, democracy, social justice, development and rule of law.

Chairperson,

Free primary education, which is now guaranteed under our new Constitution, will complement the Government's effort to meet MDG 2 by 2015. Indeed, gender parity has already been achieved nationally at the primary school level, where enrolment of girls increased from 80% in 2003 to 90.5% in 2008.

This increase has been attributed to the Government's strategic actions which include lobbying communities in support of girls' education, enhancing programmes for the prevention of child labour, enforcing rules and regulations to curb sexual harassment, the provision of adequate and quality gender responsive education materials and promoting re-entry to school irrespective of age. Similarly, the **implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2003; which** specifies that all learning institutions must take into account the special needs of persons with disabilities has ensured that the interests of these children are protected and promoted.

With regard to **Early Childhood Development and Education**, the Kenya Government is taking steps to expand and enhance comprehensive programmes that are essential for basic education. More specifically, the emphasis has been laid on the girl child and in particular girls with special needs to ensure they enrol in school at the correct age of 3-6 years. This initiative has contributed to the increase of girl's enrolment from 49% in 2003 to 58.7% in 2008.

Chairperson,

Subsidized secondary education has seen the rate of transition of girls from primary to secondary schools increase from 43.3% in 2003 to 64.1% in 2008. Indeed the Government of Kenya recognizes that in order to realize the Millennium Development Goals as well as our Vision 2030, which is the blue print for Kenya's road to prosperity, maximum exploitation of science, technology and innovation is crucial. The Government continues to put mechanisms in place to encourage the girl child to take up and put more effort in science, and technology subjects. In this regard, we have embarked on Affirmative Action in science based courses for female students in the major training institutions by providing full sponsorship and bursaries.

At the university level, there has been a modest increase in women's enrolment but gender parity is yet to be achieved. Although there are more women joining schools at the primary level, the number drastically reduces during transition to high school and even further at the university level. In the Public Universities, the enrolment of female students increased from 34.7% in 2002/3 to 37.7% in 2008/9. In addition, Female enrolment in public Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TIVET) institutions has steadily increased and currently stands at 48%. The relatively lower admissions of female students into universities reflect the cumulative effects of the factors that hinder girls' participation, good performance and progress at lower levels. As an affirmative action, the Government put the university admission's cut-off points for females at two points lower than that of males to help bridge this gap.

Girls continue to face a number of obstacles which include preference of parents for boys to transition to high school, pregnancy of girls in primary school leading to school dropout, forced early marriages, and increasing rate of premature death of parents that forces many girls to take over responsibilities to bring up their siblings.

Chairperson,

I'm pleased to state that some positive results have been recorded in the employment sector as a result of Kenya's growing economy which has been on the recovery path after a decline in 2008. Kenya's economic growth is expected to be 6% during this financial year ending June 2011.

Affirmative Action has been entrenched in the new constitution and compliance to it being closely monitored to ensure that the situation of women in the public sector improves.

Chairperson,

The Government of Kenya recognizes the benefits of creating a gender friendly environment in the employment sector. This is being achieved through the implementation of the Employment Act of 2007 which entitles women *to three months maternity leave with full pay in addition to the annual leave*'. In addition, men are currently entitled to two weeks paternity leave. The new Constitution further requires Parliament to establish a court with the status of the High Court to hear employment and labour disputes. To increase access to financial capita the Government has established the Women Enterprise Fund as well as the Youth Enterprise Fund.

Chairperson,

As I conclude, I wish to state that besides education, Kenya has made other progress in other critical areas such as decision making, health, response to and prevention of gender based violence and legal reforms.

The developments I have shared with you are as a result of the Government's commitment to the promotion of gender equality. I wish to re-affirm this commitment and to assure you that Kenya will continue to work collectively with other partners to ensure that the rights of women and girls are mainstreamed in all spheres of development.

Finally, Madam Chairperson, during the last session, Kenya requested the Commission to hold its session outside of the International Women's Day to enable delegations celebrate the day with fellow country women. We are grateful that this request was received favourably and that after we finish our deliberations in New York, we will be able to celebrate this important day with our fellow women in our countries on March 8th 2011.

Thank you.

