



## Republic of Nicaragua

*Statement by*

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**Minister of Family**

### **55th Session of Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **ECOSOC**

*“Review of the implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly - sharing of experiences and good practices on implementation of the Platform for Action, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges”.*

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*(Check against delivery)*

## National Reconciliation and Unity Government (GRUN, by its Spanish acronym)

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM

With the rise to power of the National Reconciliation and Unity Government (GRUN) on 10 January 2007, Nicaragua initiated a process of political and institutional reforms with the purpose of reinstating the rights of all Nicaraguan women and men which had been reduced to a minimum expression during the sixteen years of ineffective neo liberal government.

Our Government has upheld all national juridical norms and all international human rights instruments generally, and, in particular, the rights of women and girls, including, of course, the Beijing Declaration and Program of Action adopted in the IV World Conference on Women held in 1995, which is one of the most important programmatic instruments in the field of the protection of the individual and collective rights of women.

Our Government's commitment to implementing the Beijing Program is reflected in the following programmatic, political, juridical, economic and social advances.

- 1- **First Beijing Strategic Policy: Women and Poverty:** Especially because of their multiplying effect, programs being implemented by the Government have had a decisive economic impact on Nicaragua's most impoverished, particularly on its women and girls.

**Zero Hunger:** This social program addresses the need, as stated in Beijing, of increasing women access to land, commodities and production resources. Up until the present a total of 46,248 women have benefited. We were able to establish 119 new women's PPA units which group 6,448 organized women who have saved 19,911,253.11 córdovas. In terms of organization 798 units have been organized which integrate 63 per cent women, (26,150).

**Zero profiteering:** The immediate objective of the Zero Profiteering Program is to make low interest credit accessible to women's in order to help them improve their businesses. Since it was established, this program has extended 592 million córdovas to 77,364 women organized in 16,840 collectives in 2,748 communities in 140 of the country's municipalities.

**Project LOVE:** This GRUN Program guarantees that girls and boys regain their right to remain with their families, which is the primary child protection environment. Through this program the GRUN has been able to rescue 10,670 girls, boys and adolescents from the street, and 6,976 of them have begun to go to school.

Also through this program 2,773 childcare centers have been set up (including Child Development Centers, CICOs, and foster homes,) 90,025 rural and urban area children have been serviced. This allows many women the possibility of employment because

they can be sure of their children's safety while generating their own income and improving family finances.

#### **Access to land and credit**

The Government has also promoted women's rights to land and land titles which facilitate access to credit in private institutions. Between 2007 and 2009, 50,000 land titles were given, thus restoring land ownership rights to more than 200,000 Nicaraguans. Those most benefiting are the peasants that had historically been deprived of the right to own land. The women who have benefited can now access credit.

As a result of these poverty eradication programs, Nicaragua has been designated by the FAO as one of the 16 countries of the world that have been able to reduce their poverty rates during the last two years.

- 2. Second Beijing Strategic Policy: Education and Training:** Education was declared free of cost. As a result of this measure in 2008, 94 per cent of students stayed in school; this had not been the case in Nicaragua during the last 50 years. Further, through the National Literacy Campaign nearly 400,000 citizens learned to read and write which brought the illiteracy rate to 3.3 per cent, the lowest rate in the history of Nicaragua. In August 2009 the UNESCO declared Nicaragua "A Land Free of Illiteracy."

The Comprehensive School Nutrition Program distributed 120 million meals in 153 municipalities. This made it possible for 90 per cent of students to stay in school and for 80 per cent of the girls and boys to go to school.

A process has been carried out for the development of a new curriculum which includes gender equality practices and contents.

It should also be emphasized that Nicaragua has fulfilled MDG 3, related to the elimination of inequalities in primary and secondary education.

- 3. Third Beijing Strategic Policy: Women and Health:** In the area of health the policy of declaring all health services free and the effective implementation of a Community Family Care Model has brought healthcare to women's homes in every corner of the country. Some of the main results of this new healthcare policy have been: reduction of the maternal mortality rate from 212 deaths registered in 2006 to 90 registered in 2009; this represents a 25.6 per cent reduction. Also, the neo natal mortality rate was reduced by 17 per cent.

Other advances toward guaranteeing women's health are the maternal homes, a rural shelter where women can go before going into labor and where they are guaranteed medical attention, shelter and meals until they return to their communities.

- 4. Fourth Beijing Strategic Policy: Violence against women:** A Protocol for Attention to Family Abuse and Sexual Aggression Crimes was developed, and

there are many laws for the prevention and punishment of gender violence crimes. All GRUN institutions have developed processes for consciousness development that will contribute to the prevention and attention to violence against women, the promotion and respect of their human rights and the promotion of values toward a culture of peace and family harmony.

We have implemented innovative strategies, including the creation of specialized offices to assist women that have suffered any violence as well as shelters for victims of domestic violence. We currently have 32 offices and 9 shelters.

- 5. Fifth Beijing Strategic Policy: Women and armed conflict.** Although there is no armed conflict in our country, we do have a policy of service to the women and men who have been demobilized from the armed conflict of the 1980s. There is Verification, Reconciliation, Peace and Justice Commission which deals with negotiations between government institutions and plaintiffs. This contributes to peace and reconciliation within the Nicaraguan family.

We have distributed 4,138 Certificates of Service to the Demobilized (from armed conflict, and to peasants who were plaintiffs lawsuits regarding rural land).

- 6. Sixth Beijing Strategic Policy: Women and the economy: Proactive job creation policies:** A basic principle of labor policy is: "The promotion, protection and reinstatement of the right to employment and dignified work," which can be in the form of self employment or women's benefits.

Through the labor intervention of the public sector 5,058 posts have been created, which is 139 per cent more than the previous government created. Women occupy 34.3 per cent of the new posts. Women constitute 52 per cent of those benefiting from the project entitled "My First Job."

Within the Ministry of Labor, the Office for Job Equality and Non Discrimination was created. Other institutions created include the Inter-Institutional Network for Job Equality and Non Discrimination. Further, the Ministry of Labor issued a decree prohibiting that pregnancy and HIV/AIDS tests be a precondition for applying for a job.

**Small and Medium size businesses:** Another sector in which women have played a fundamental role is in small and medium size individual and collective (cooperative) businesses, primarily in the needle industry, arts and crafts and bread baking. In these spheres women have received technical assistance regarding manufacturing processes, accounting, self-esteem, marketing and leadership, brands and patents, trade fairs, and other areas.

Businesswomen represent approximately one half of the beneficiaries of the support extended by the INPYME and the Infocoop. Up to 2009 almost 35,000 small and medium size businesspeople benefited, 52 per cent of them women.

The GRUN is working on addressing the main demands of businesswomen by adopting economic laws that favor women, by having created the Development Bank for the urban and rural MIPYME. The Zero Hunger and Zero Profitteering Programs have been the underpinnings of this bank.

**7. Seventh Beijing Strategic Policy: Women's exercise of power and decision making.**

The government promotes citizenship participation in general and women's participation in particular. Women's fundamental role in the community, in local government and in the Citizenship Power Committees is recognized in order to empower them and that women have an impact in the decision making spheres, thus also enabling them to fulfill their own demands and to better their lives.

The Government of Nicaragua promotes the policy that women should occupy 50 per cent of the public office positions in all state entities. It also promotes women bidding for government contracts, and the development and promotion of public offices with the same opportunities for women as for men in order to ensure that women and men receive equal pay for equal work.

**8- Eighth Beijing Strategic Policy: Institutional mechanisms for the promotion of women**

The GRUN's National Human Development Plan, Social Welfare System, gender policy and its twelve strategic policies for the integration of gender practices, Law 648 regarding Equal Rights and Opportunities, and the 2009 Statement on the Equality between Women and Men, are its tools for promoting the participation of women in all spheres of Nicaraguan society. The Nicaraguan Women's Institute is the institution in charge of promoting equal rights and duties between women and men for the full exercise of their citizenship in order to improve the quality of life. The Ministry of the Family, Adolescents and Children is responsible for promoting and reinstating the rights of girls, boys and adolescents through a model that offers comprehensive attention to the family and the community.

**9- Ninth Beijing Strategic Policy: Women's Human Rights:** Law 648 Regarding Equal Rights and Opportunities is part of the legal framework that permanently promotes and protects women's human rights by improving their situation as regards equality between men and women.

This law establishes the measures necessary for the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women while bearing in mind the objective of closing the gaps regarding inequality which persists in the economic, social and sexual spheres by reasons of gender.

One of the main commitments of the GRUN Government Plan is the design and implementation of a gender policy for the struggle for equality between women

and men as a human right which would guarantee non discrimination by reason of gender, and to broaden representational and participatory democracy.

We also have a 2009-2011 National Human Development Plan which entails a development strategy and a human rights perspective allowing no discrimination whatsoever and which integrates a national welfare and social equality system.

**10- Tenth Beijing Strategic Policy: Women and the mass media of communication:** The policy of the National Reconciliation and Unity Government is total rejection of publicity messages and announcements that represent people as sexual objects or that justify or incite violence against women.

**11- Eleventh Beijing Strategic Policy: Girls**

Within our legal system of social protection, girls, boys and adolescents enjoy all the rights their status requires. In that context the State promoted the Children's and Adolescents' Legal Code, which implements a new criminal justice model for adolescents which guarantees due process of law and is oriented to the integration of adolescents into the family and the society.

There are 17 Adolescent Courts each with a team of social workers and psychologists that follow up on measures for adolescents that do not contemplate incarceration. When the new Penal Code went into effect, Nicaragua went from a justice system which paternalistically punished, to a juvenile penal justice system with a focus on rehabilitation and which reaffirms that adolescents should be penalized based on the fault and not as a result of the reasons that led to violation of the law.

All this demonstrates that we have advanced. But we still have a long way to go and we will not rest until we achieve full and absolute equality between men and women, and between the adult generations and the new generations.

Thank you!