



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
866 SECOND AVENUE · NEW YORK, NY 10017-2905  
Tel: 212-888-6900 Fax: 212-888-4440  
e-mail: [grdel.un@mfa.gr](mailto:grdel.un@mfa.gr)

[www.greeceun.org](http://www.greeceun.org)

---

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**  
**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**  
**56<sup>th</sup> Session**

---

**Statement by**  
**H.E. Ambassador Anastassis Mitsialis**  
**Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations**

**NEW YORK**  
**Friday, March 2, 2012**

*Check against delivery*



Madam Chair / Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates

I am honoured to address the Commission on the Status of Women, the UN annual forum which tackles the most important issues on the gender equality agenda and focuses on promoting women empowerment around the world. My Delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of the European Union.

Madame Chair / Mr. Chairman,

This year's priority theme, the economic empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, is certainly linked with the Millennium Development Goals. Already in 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stressed the need for policies aiming at the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas.

However, today, seventeen years later, it is universally acknowledged that women and girls in rural areas remain largely disadvantaged and fare worse than rural men and urban women. Especially in poor and remote areas, they face structural constraints and suffer discrimination, conditions which put into question the realization, by 2015, of Millennium Development Goals 2, 3 and 5. To avert that, sustained efforts of Governments and relevant stakeholders are needed in order to ensure that rural women can have better access to productive resources and infrastructures, health and childcare services and facilities, training and education. If we want rural women to become agents of change and development, it is of paramount importance that they receive quality education at a young age and that women's participation in farmer associations and support for local business through innovative financing mechanisms be positively encouraged.

Greece remains committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPoA), as well as to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and, in particular, to the full implementation of Article 14 of this Convention which provides for the necessary measures to be taken for the elimination of discrimination of women in rural areas.

In this respect, the Greek Constitution (in Art. 116, par. 2) promotes substantive gender equality, by stipulating that the State adopts any measure to "remove existing inequalities to the detriment of women". In fact, gender mainstreaming in public policies and systematic gender impact assessment of new laws, constitute key aspects of the Greek national program for gender equality.

Regarding in particular rural women, the government encourages women to develop entrepreneurship initiatives, while at the same time steps have been taken to decrease the percentage of unemployed women and to guarantee the unhindered access of women into the labour market. All relevant efforts are currently challenged by the current financial and economic crisis that the Eurozone and in particular Greece face, and by the high unemployment which affects all layers of society. But, since women are more likely to be adversely affected than men, women's economic empowerment has become an imperative element in achieving sustainable economic growth.

The emerging theme of this session, namely engaging young women and men, girls and boys to advance gender equality, is of critical importance for the empowerment of women and girls. It is unfortunately common that de jure gender equality doesn't go hand in hand with de facto equal treatment of women. Gender stereotypes are regularly reproduced through the mass media and combating them should start at the youngest possible age as eliminating gender stereotypes.

In order to have tangible results, we need to support increased political participation of women in the political and economic decision-making process. Despite the fact that women are half of the world population, they remain largely underrepresented in national parliaments and within the public administration and only 1/5 of them are in governmental positions. Gender responsive policies should be adopted and implemented and this can be done more easily when women occupy positions of responsibility both in the public and private sectors.

Moreover, women's political participation can be a determining factor in addressing the challenges that women are facing today, among which is combating the scourge of violence against women. In this respect, I would like to reiterate my country's full support to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Ms Rashida Manjoo, as well as to the Special Representative of the Secretary General on sexual violence in armed conflict, Ms. Margot Wallstrom. Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls is an objective that all Governments should unremittingly strive to achieve.

Madam Chair / Mr. Chairman,

Greece has constantly and steadily strove to maintain the above issues at the forefront of the international interest and efforts. These issues, among others, will be on my country's agenda within the framework of the Human Rights Council, in the period 2013-2015, when my country intends to advocate for them, should member-states honour Greece in the upcoming elections, by supporting our candidature to the Human Rights Council.

Thank you.