



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

828 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017 • TEL. (212) 953-9130 • FAX (212) 697-1970

Please check against delivery

STATEMENT

BY

HAJIYA ZAINAB MAINA, FCIA, MFR

**HONOURABLE MINISTER
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT,**

AT THE

**FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW 57)**

NEW YORK, 4 MARCH, 2013

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation congratulates the Bureau on the successful organization of the 57th Session of the CSW. Nigeria aligns herself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of Chad on behalf of the African Group, and Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China respectively. We welcome the reports of the Secretary-General and commend UN Women for all its endeavours towards improving the lives of women. Nigeria continues to reaffirm her commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly that adopted concrete international actions for the advancement of women.

Madam Chairperson,

2. This year's CSW is a very critical one for all who believe in women empowerment, equality and zero tolerance for violence against women and girls. The priority theme of this session appropriately captures the challenge being faced with regard to gender based violence all over the world. The widespread existence and apparent tolerance of various forms of violence against women is a stark indication of the deviation from the rule of law, human rights and equality. It reflects the extent to which women's rights are threatened and are sustained by certain socio-cultural practices.

3. Rigidly held age-old beliefs and gender biases, have negatively impacted on the family institution and its socialization process. Violence against women has proved to be the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights violation in the world. Violence between intimate partners and especially sexual harassment are the most common forms of violence against women and young girls today.

4. This phenomenon knows no boundaries, as it affects all categories of women and young girls, rich and poor, old and young, literate and illiterate. It is a negation of the principles of equity, equality and justice. Much of the violence perpetrated against women and young girls, are by people they know, love and trust – boyfriends, husbands, other relatives, friends, neighbours, school mates, and colleagues in work places.

5. As a result of certain misplaced beliefs and practices, violence against women and other abusive practices are condoned and reinforced under the pretext that they are private affairs, which suggests the existence of an underlying normalization of such violence. The prevalent culture of silence and stigmatization of victims has also not helped the lot of women and girls suffering from such abuses.

Madam Chairperson,

6. While violence against women is the most acute form of gender inequality that exists today, other common harmful traditional practices against women in our communities are also worrisome. Female genital mutilation, child marriage, ritualistic widowhood practices, nutritional taboos and domestic servitude etc, can be categorized as forms of denial of rights for women and girls.

7. Institutionalized discrimination against women also needs to be highlighted. Traditional land tenure systems and patterns of inheritance, lack of access to credit, family preference for sons, lack of participation in public decision-making, discrimination in housing and employment, discriminatory legislation, and discriminatory religious practices, as well as rape, battery, trafficking in women, and kidnapping are all part of the collective assault on the dignity and the rights of women.

8. We have identified, defined and even analyzed what constitutes violence against women. What we should now do is to pay more attention to prevention and support for victims. The Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls, held in Bangkok, Thailand in September 2012 identified a series of actions needed to redress the situation. Importantly, the report called for the move away from short-term, ad hoc sensitization and awareness raising activities, towards more comprehensive, longer-term prevention efforts.

9. In this regard, we are of the view that violence against women and girls should be categorized as a pervasive, institutionalized and insidious form of discrimination, human rights violation as well as criminal acts. In this way, actions needed to counter such acts should form part of global best practices for

States in the same category with good governance, transparency, observance of the rule of law, accountability, and other mandatory requirements for States.

10. We believe that States should primarily be responsible for the prevention of violence against women and girls. As such legislation towards ending all practices that are classified as violence against women in the Beijing Platform of Action, CEDAW, the Secretary-General's reports, the reports of the experts group meeting in Bangkok, and other international instruments. A commitment should be entered into by all States in this regard, and an international action on ending violence against women and girls should be initiated immediately.

Madam Chairperson,

11. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the Law Reform Commission and the Federal Ministry of Justice, has initiated reforms in the criminal justice system to ensure delivery gender justice in law and in practice. Bills towards addressing gender equality and all forms of violence against women and girls, and specific forms of violence have been sponsored at both the Federal and state levels. In some States of the Federation, laws domesticating CEDAW provisions, gender based violence, domestic violence, early marriage, widowhood practices and FGM have been adopted.

12. At the Federal level, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Bill is at an advanced staged of adoption in the National Assembly. Likewise, the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill which seeks to domesticate CEDAW, the National Gender Policy and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, are all being prepared for passage into law. The Child Rights Act of 2003 which is the domesticated version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) protects the girl-child against forced marriages, trafficking and other acts of sexual exploitation. It has been passed into law in twenty-three of the thirty six States of the Federation.

13. The Freedom of Information Bill, which guarantees the rights of access to information held by public institutions, was passed into law by President Goodluck Jonathan in June 2010. It enables the increased reportage on the issues of violence against women, thereby creating further sensitization and awareness to break the culture of silence and stigma for the victims of domestic

violence and challenge the social prejudices and institutional structures in order to protect its women, not just from danger, but also from ridicule, fear and isolation.

14. To enable the Government receive, document and respond to reported cases of violence against women, we have established Human Rights and Gender Desks including Family Support Units in some Police Area Commands and Divisional Police Stations across the country. The Objective 4 of the National Gender Policy (2006) incorporates the principles of CEDAW and other global and regional frameworks to support gender equality and women empowerment in the country's laws, legislative processes, judicial and administrative systems.

Madam Chairperson,

15. As we seize this opportunity to review progress made in our collective commitments to end violence against women, my delegation welcomes and supports concrete actions in the following areas:

16. One-Stop Centre to provide a comprehensive package of multi-sectoral services. Building a synergy of all stakeholders in the response group has become very pertinent, especially when dealing with the trauma associated with rape victims, who have to repeat their stories over and over again to various service providers. This One-Stop-Centre implies that the counsellor, medical doctor, laboratory technologist, police, etc, are brought under one roof for easy documentation, handling and prosecution of cases reported.

17. Involvement of men as champions of the campaign to end violence against women. The initiative of UN Secretary-General H.E. Ban Ki-moon, in establishing the 'Network of Men Leaders' to end Violence against Women and Girls is highly commendable.

18. Special Courts to reduce delays in rendering justice should be established to facilitate access to justice to victims/survivors of violence against women, including strong advocacy to break the culture of silence and promote zero tolerance across the globe.

19. Promoting women's empowerment as the way out of gender discrimination. This involves the strengthening of the individual and collective

abilities of women for positive action and attainment of a balanced partnership of both sexes.

Madam Chairperson,

20. I would like to express my Government's appreciation and commendation to the Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Madam Michelle Bachelet, for her visionary leadership and the unprecedented visit she made to Nigeria. I also wish to seize this opportunity to reaffirm and pledge Nigeria's continued support and commitment to ending violence against women wherever it occurs.

21. Finally, permit me to leave you with this quote from His Excellency, Dr. Nelson Mandela who rightly said: *"For every woman and girl violently attacked, we reduce our humanity. For every woman forced into unprotected sex because men demand this, we destroy dignity and pride. Every woman who has to sell her life for sex we condemn to a lifetime in prison. For every moment we remain silent, we conspire against our women. For every woman infected by HIV, we destroy a generation..."*.

22. I thank you all for your kind attention.