



**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland
to the United Nations**

**STATEMENT BY
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KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**BEFORE THE THIRD COMMITTEE
ON AGENDA ITEM 56(a) AND (b)
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
AND OF THE 23RD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**14 OCTOBER 2008
NEW YORK**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Since it is the first time I am taking the floor in my national capacity, allow me to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election. My delegation is confident that your skill and diplomatic experience will ensure that you steer this Committee through to a successful conclusion of its work.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the one delivered by the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Mr. Chairman,

We take note of the Secretary-General's Reports on this Agenda Item which have provided us with an insight into progress achieved as well as the challenges that confront us as we pursue the shared goal of the advancement of women.

The Kingdom of Swaziland subscribes to the fundamental ideals of democracy, such as the upholding of human rights, respect for the rule of law at national and international level, the presence of constitutionally guaranteed freedoms which include strengthening women's empowerment, gender equity and equality. To this end we have acceded to most international instruments relating to the advancement of women including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and we also subscribe to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a State Party to most regional and sub-regional protocols and we are also signatory to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which was signed in August, 2008. This Protocol acknowledges the role women play in the development of any society. It is designed, intended and calculated to correct existing imbalances in the quest to establish an order where women are on an equal footing with their male counterparts on any sphere of public life.

Mr. Chairman,

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland guarantees the rights and freedoms of women and it provides that women have the right to equal treatment and equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities. For example, just before our recently held national elections the "Vote for a Woman Campaign" was launched, which was a positive initiative to elect more women into political office.

Furthermore, the Gender Co-ordination Unit under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Affairs is mandated with the responsibility of facilitating the

mainstreaming of gender concerns into all areas of development. One of the major milestones depicting our government's firm commitment to the advancement of women is the inclusion of Gender and Development issues in the country's National Development Strategy.

Mr. Chairman,

The full elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is one of the prerequisites for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Kingdom of Swaziland.

At the recent high-level event on MDGs on 25 September, the Secretary-General mentioned that "women and girls suffer persistent bias and neglect, evidenced by disturbing gender gaps in health, education, employment and empowerment". At this half way point to 2015, statistics show that MDG 5, on maternal health is the area of least progress among all the MDGs. More than half a million women continue to die each year giving birth. Like maternal mortality, the condition of obstetric fistula is also preventable. More than 2 million in Africa, Asia and the Arab region are living with the condition and some 50,000 to 100,000 new cases develop each year. The persistence of obstetric fistula is a signal that health systems are failing to meet the needs of women and girls. The challenge to end obstetric fistula requires intensified efforts at the national, regional and international levels. These efforts must be part of strengthening health systems to achieve MDG 5 on maternal health.

In this regard we acknowledge with appreciation the work of UNFPA in its efforts to enhance support to our country and region, especially regarding the achievement of MDG 4 (Reduction of Child Mortality) and MDG 5 (Improvement of Maternal Health).

Mr. Chairman,

The Kingdom of Swaziland also recognizes the role played by rural women in society, in particular their contribution to development. A number of programmes have been designed to facilitate projects initiated by rural women. For example, micro-credit financing schemes such as the Imbita Swaziland Women's Finance Trust (ISWIFT). ISWIFT is an organization founded by women as a direct response to the financial needs of women. The main objective of these schemes is to address the constraints faced by business women, in particular those from rural areas, in establishing or expanding small businesses. The constraints addressed include, the non-availability of financial services from formal financial institutions due to the women's business legal status as well as the lack of credit worthiness and business acumen mentoring.

We also have a number of savings and credit co-operatives designed to cater for the financial needs of women.

We further look forward to the observation of the International Day of Rural Women on 15th October.

Mr. Chairman,

We note that the Secretary-General's Report contained in document A/63/216 states that women continue to be victims of rape and sexual violence, perpetrated by intimate partners as well as non-partners in many settings. It further states that studies indicate that only a small percentage of such crimes come to the attention of the police, and even a smaller number result in convictions. Shame, fear of retaliation from their families or communities, as well as fear of being re-victimised by the criminal justice system, often prevents women from seeking redress.

The Kingdom of Swaziland condemns and rejects violence against women in all its forms and manifestations. We further acknowledge that the consequences of violence against women are often severe and long-lasting. For this reason, legislation to address domestic and sexual violence is currently being promulgated and will soon be passed as an Act of Parliament.

In this regard, we support the Secretary-General for his leadership in the campaign to end violence against women and we look forward to more information with regard to its three focus areas, namely, significantly enhanced global advocacy, strengthened efforts and partnerships at the national and regional levels, and United Nations leadership by example.

We also commend UNIFEM for its efforts to support our country and regional objectives to achieve the elimination of violence against women.

Mr. Chairman,

The Kingdom of Swaziland is ready to present its first country report on CEDAW at the next Committee meeting. To this end, we would like to express our appreciation to our development partners for their assistance in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by reaffirming the Kingdom of Swaziland's commitment to the advancement of women. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are critical for the achievement of sustainable development in every area of our society.

I thank you.