



**Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania
to the United Nations**

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STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA ON
BEHALF OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE SOUTHERN
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) IN THE
THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

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STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. AUGUSTINE P. MAHIGA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TANZANIA ON BEHALF OF MEMBER STATES OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) ON AGENDA ITEM 56: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 13, 2008

Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Southern African Development Community, the countries of Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia Zimbabwe and my own country the United Republic of Tanzania.

We thank the Secretary General for his informative reports provided under the agenda item. It is our expectation that the recommendations contain therein will be considered during our deliberations.

We align ourselves with the statement read by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Chairperson,

SADC Member States are convinced that gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women are fundamental human rights and a prerequisite to sustainable development. SADC Member States are thus committed to promoting gender equality, equity and empowerment of women in their respective countries. It is in this regard that all SADC Member States have signed and ratified or acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;

SADC Member states have continued to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other internationally agreed commitments related to the rights of women. We are however concerned that despite various international and regional commitments and instruments the rights of women, their implementation is slow and the rights of women continue to be violated. There are still major gaps and constraints that are hindering progress in attaining full gender equality. The gap between commitment and implementation as well as capacity constraints to implement the commitments are major challenges; contradictions exist between customary laws, national laws and international commitments, underrepresentation of women at all levels of policy formulation and decision making persists, and high levels of poverty among women and girls

remain major obstacles to gender equality and constrains the attainment of other rights.

In our bid to continue to improve the plight of women in the sub region, SADC Heads of State signed a historic instrument, the SADC Gender Protocol on 28 August 2008. The Protocol consolidates and creates synergies between the various commitments on gender equality and gender equity made at regional, continental and international levels into one comprehensive regional instrument. The Protocol enhances the capacity to report effectively on all instruments and also addresses new challenges. It also calls for 50 percent representation by women at all levels of government by 2015, and further calls for member states to put in place legislative measures which guarantee that political and policy structures are gender sensitive.

The Protocol sets specific targets and timeframes for achieving gender equality and gender equity in all areas, as well as effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for measuring progress. As a legally binding instrument, it is a major step forward towards women's empowerment. Equipped with such a far reaching new sub regional instrument for achieving gender equality, SADC is further challenged with putting in place additional legislation, structures and strategies for its full implementation and thus looks to the international community for technical and financial support. It is however, encouraging to note that this new protocol builds on prevailing collective political will by the leaders of SADC to address gender equality and women empowerment.

Chairperson,

The signing of the Gender Protocol has been a culmination of a long process and concerted efforts between governments and civil society. Through this process we have learnt some concrete lessons worth sharing namely that:

- Policy change takes time and requires long-term funding support;
- Gender equality and equity and women empowerment should be advanced as a multi-stakeholders enterprise;
- Partnerships between civil society, media and private sector and Government at national and regional level are crucial;
- broad-based lobbying at national level is needed to make changes at regional and international levels, as well as for effective implementation of regional and international commitments; and that
- Technical assistance and guidance on advocacy, lobbying and processes for Policy Development is essential.
- National Parliaments are pivotal in generating political will and enacting national legislations for implementing regional and international gender instruments.

Chairperson,

SADC Member States condemn violence against women in all its forms and manifestations. We recognize that violence against women has wide ranging consequences for women, their families and communities and high costs for society as a whole. We applaud the Secretary General for the leadership role he has taken with regard to stamping out this menace and wish to extend our support to the Secretary General's campaign to end violence and call upon him to develop a concrete strategy within the UN system to support his campaign.

SADC is fully committed to end violence against women. In this regard, all Member states have ratified the addendum to the SADC declaration on gender and development on violence against women. The Majority of SADC member states have in place programmes to end all forms of violence against women. In addition, the new gender protocol gives a new impetus to these efforts as it specifies a number of issues that governments have to undertake so as to end violence against women.

Chairperson,

The attainment of gender equality and empowerment of women, requires a strong gender architecture within the United Nations. We are encouraged with the progress on the discussions of a gender architecture that has been made so far by the General Assembly deliberations on system wide coherence. We note the information provided by the Secretary General and look forward to getting more information as called upon in the unanimously agreed resolution of the General Assembly.

Chairperson,

The just concluded high level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has provided an opportunity to review the progress in the attainment of MDGs related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is a matter of great concern that we are off track on the MDG related to maternal health and that women continue to die each year due to childbirth. We thus support recommended measures outlined by the Secretary General contained in document A/63/222 to improve maternal health and to address the issue of obstetric fistula. In this regard we wish to acknowledge the work of UNFPA in creating awareness and step up action to address the problem.

We also wish to acknowledge the work of UNIFEM on advancement of women and the support it provides to member states, particularly in raising awareness on the issue of trafficking in women and girls and violence against women. SADC members have received support from UNIFEM in various areas. We would

however like to see more increased assistance in the collection of reliable data on the scope and nature of trafficking in women and girls which would guide the development of national policies and programmes to address the problem. We thus wish to call for increased funding to UNIFEM which would enable it carry out its mandate more efficiently and effectively in coordinated action with other funds and programmes and UN agencies in the field.

Chairperson,

Enhanced international cooperation and global partnership is needed to assist countries to effectively implement the Beijing Platform for Action and other international commitments. We reiterate the position of G77 that encourages the International Community should to honour its commitment to Official Development Assistance; the International Community must commit debt relief and opening of markets to give opportunities particularly to women entrepreneurs. Increased development assistance in such areas as education, health and job creation is vital towards eliminating gender disparities and eliminating violence against women.

Chairperson, let me conclude by reiterating the commitment of SADC towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly as well as other instruments on gender equality and empowerment of women and the readiness of its Member States to work with all stakeholders to achieve gender equality and the advancement of women.

I thank you.