



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

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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ON

ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

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Chairperson,

Zimbabwe aligns herself with statements made by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Sudan on behalf of the African Group and by the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of Southern African Development Community.

Chairperson,

Since the Millennium Declaration was adopted, my country prioritised MDG 3 (gender equality and empowerment of women) as one of the top three MDGs that we viewed as critical to the achievement of all the other Goals. The other two are MDGs 1 – Eradicate Extreme Poverty and MDG 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB and other diseases. In addition, in most of our development programmes Zimbabwe has sought to incorporate a gender perspective as per the stipulations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

Chairperson,

Under difficult conditions, Zimbabwe continued to deploy and direct much of its own resources towards the targets we set for ourselves. Indeed progress has been made in implementing numerous national legal instruments as well as the international instruments that we are Party to. As a way of domesticating the provisions of international instruments and harmonising them with our own national initiatives my Government adopted a National Gender Policy, which has continued to provide the requisite institutional framework for gender mainstreaming. As evidence of its commitment to fulfill its obligations, Zimbabwe's combined report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) will be considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women at its 51st session in February/March 2012. Zimbabwe is ready to learn from the process and yearns to do more to ensure that our women are at the same level with their male counterparts in all sectors of society.

Chairperson,

Like most countries and despite all our efforts, Zimbabwe is still recording gender inequalities throughout society. It is a fact that gender stereotypes, violence against women, under representation of women in decision making processes; the lack of involvement by men and boys; and the unequal distribution of unpaid work between women and men has negative impacts on women's employment opportunities and involvement in public life.

Chairperson,

My Government in collaboration with its partners has consequently established various initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of these areas of concern but the efforts still need massive scaling up so as to realize more positive change.

Nevertheless, Zimbabwe believes that for our women to enjoy the highest standards of health and human rights, their economic empowerment is of critical importance. My delegation believes that once our women are economically independent, most of the difficulties they face will fall on the wayside and they will be better positioned to cope with their difficulties and overcome them.

Chairperson,

My delegation is aware that women with disabilities, women living in rural areas, women infected or affected by HIV, and women migrant workers face multiple challenges and more discrimination. In our context, rural women are indeed agents for enhancing agricultural and rural development including food security. However, the persistence of rural poverty has meant that our rural areas lag behind urban areas in almost all MDGs. Rural women have limited access to health care, limited access to education and gainful employment, and face low quality food and unbalanced diet. However, despite their challenges rural women are not weak; they are crucial to the translation of agricultural production into food and nutritional security. In Zimbabwe, we salute these women for their hard work and innovation in cultivating and preserving food crops, and managing small animals. These gallant women continue to overcome most traditional obstacles to their advancement.

Chairperson,

Zimbabwe recognizes that women migrant workers face special concerns owing to their vulnerabilities, violence, exploitation and irregular migration. My delegation however also views them as active contributors to development in both the countries of origin and destination. We thereby call for the enhancement of their protection so that their social and economic development and that of society at large is not hampered. As much as if not better than men, migrant women workers send resources to their families back home; thereby literally keeping alive many souls.

Chairperson,

Regarding women with disabilities, my country has put in place various frameworks to cater for citizens living with disabilities. These frameworks are cognizant of the multiple challenges persons with disabilities go through. We remain committed to learning from and sharing best practices on better ways to enhance the situation of women with disabilities.

Chairperson,

Zimbabwe is committed to do all it can in cooperating with all countries and other stakeholders in combating trafficking in women and girls. Indeed human trafficking is a contemporary form of slavery hence our call to end it resonates with those that have labelled it as a serious scourge facing humanity today. To that end Zimbabwe has been actively engaged in strengthening our national and sub-regional responses

to trafficking in persons. My delegation hereby encourages Member States to implement the UN Global Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons.

Chairperson,

Violence Against Women is not tolerated in our country and our Government and law enforcement agencies will continue to strengthen their capacity in combating this social vice. However, tradition is a formidable foe which we do not underrate; we remain certain to defeat it in this regard.

Chairperson,

Zimbabwe is facing challenges in improving maternal and reproductive health services. Maternal and child mortality in the world remains high and Zimbabwe is no exception. We agree with those that have asserted that no woman should die or be disabled in the process of giving birth to life. My delegation appeals for the international community's cooperation in combating maternal mortality and morbidity, obstetrics fistula included. The improvement of health systems, ending child marriages and discouraging adolescent pregnancies will go a long way in eliminating obstetric fistula and most maternal deaths and morbidities. We remain grateful to all those in the global efforts to improve health for all, for women in particular.

Chairperson,

The creation of UN Women, the new gender entity, has generated hope that women's issues will receive scaled up attention and action. Zimbabwe hopes that the advancement of women will receive a comprehensive approach that devotes adequate attention to the social, economic and political life of women and society at large. My delegation continues to urge UN Women to also prioritize strengthening capacities in the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age and geographical area. It has been proven that improved data capturing and use by all stakeholders contribute to better policy planning, and programming, across all thematic sectors. My country hopes that all the necessary resources, financial and technical, will timeously be availed to the entity so as to ensure the implementation of programmes at the country level is accelerated.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reaffirm its commitment to eradicating all forms of social, cultural, economic and political factors that perpetuate gender inequalities and impede the advancement and empowerment of women. We call on the international community to join hands in the fulfillment of commitments we made in Beijing in 1995 and the objectives we set in New York in 2000. Given concerted cooperation, we should advance on all fronts.

I thank you.