

EGYPT



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The Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations
New York

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**Statement by
The delegation of Egypt**

Agenda Item 28: "Advancement of Women"

Third Committee

New York, October 15, 2012 Check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to express my appreciation for the valuable briefings by Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, and Ms. Ms. Nicole Ameline, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. I associate my statement with the statements delivered by Algeria on behalf of the G77 and China, Cameroon on behalf of the African Group, and Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group.

Mr. Chairman,

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, in June 2012, reaffirmed our common commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, not only in the context of gender equality and women's empowerment, but as key components of the normative framework of sustainable development.

The reports submitted under this item, highlighted some of the global challenges, that need to be addressed, to ensure the full realization of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the Millennium Development Goals. Discrimination and violence against women and girls in all their forms, remain a universal phenomenon, especially in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation. Socio-economic and gender inequalities, particularly in education and employment, as well as poverty and poor access to reproductive healthcare, including maternal and newborn care, are maximized in case of rural women, older women and women with disabilities.

Egypt is deeply concerned about the grave situation of women and girls in the Occupied Arab Territories, in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations. We regret that the reports submitted under this item lack any reference to that dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation.

Mr. Chairman,

We stress the key role played by the United Nations to empower women worldwide, and welcome the inclusion of women among the priorities of the Secretary-General for his second term, with strong emphasis on ending violence against women, promoting women's political participation, and developing an action agenda for ensuring their full participation in social and economic recovery. We also recognize the important contributions made by the Commission on the Status of Women in this regard.

I would like to express our appreciation for the support extended to Egyptian women by UN-WOMEN, through their office in Cairo, to promote the political participation of women and their economic empowerment. Egypt welcomes the new programme initiated jointly by UN-Women, FAO, IFAD, and WFP, to recognize the role of women in poverty eradication, and empower rural women, through economic integration and food security initiatives.

Mr. Chairman,

Egyptian women exercised their legitimate right to run for office and elect their representatives. New faces in all political, economic, and social aspects have emerged. Women from all over Egypt, from all social, political, cultural, and religious classes and backgrounds stood in long lines for the first time in front of polling stations to cast their vote in the first democratic elections the country has witnessed for decades.

The "National Council for Women" has been reconstituted in March 2012, in order to build on the progress achieved over decades. The Council reformulated its priorities to include eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women, particularly trafficking in women and girls, and female genital mutilation; enhancing their political participation; economic empowerment and poverty eradication; eradicating of illiteracy; changing negative stereotyping of women's role in society; and providing health care, with a special focus on women with disabilities, older women, rural women and women-headed households,

and in partnership with the concerned authorities, as well as civil society. It took the following steps:

- **First:** Upon a proposal by the Council, a decree was issued in April 2011 to amend the Egyptian penal code in order to toughen the penalty for crimes of rape, abduction, and all forms of sexual harassment. A hotline to report sexual harassment cases and provide victims with legal aid has been established by the Council. Another proposal is to be submitted to the parliament for amending the Penal Code to ensure elimination of any form of discrimination against women, in light the constitution that affirms the equality between all citizens before the law, without discrimination between women and men.
- **Second:** The Council developed an ambitious strategy to enhance women's political participation. A new training centre for political development for women has been established to encourage women's participation in public and political life; and raise their awareness of their political rights, as well as to improve the performance of female parliamentarians and members of the localities. The involvement of media, political parties and civil society in supporting active political participation of women is an integral part of the strategy.
- **Third:** Ensuring women's access to finance and microfinance, including credit, micro-credit and marketing facilities, in particular rural women, and women-headed households, as well as establishing vocational training centres for women on small industries; including traditional handicrafts and dairy industry.
- **Fourth:** Developing and expanding medical services for women in remote areas; and improving the situation of environment, health, and sanitation in remote villages and establishing well-equipped care centres for older women and women with disabilities.
- **Fifth:** The Council is working with the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons to implement the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, through awareness-raising programs and women's economic empowerment.

Mr. Chairman,

I conclude by reiterating Egypt's commitment to all international conventions to which it acceded, for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, as well as its commitment to cooperate with the United Nations system, including the UN Special Representatives and Rapporteurs in this regard.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman