



SLOVAKIA

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~~STATEMENT~~

by

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High-level segment
of the 2010
ECOSOC Substantive Session

~~"IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOALS AND
COMMITMENTS IN REGARD TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN"~~

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to speak today to this esteemed forum on such an important issue. I would like to begin by expressing my great appreciation of the activities and initiatives of the UN in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women.

Long time has passed since Olympe De Gouges drafted the 1791 Declaration of the Rights of Woman. One would expect that equality is a non-issue – that we have little, if any, substance to discuss. However, high number of initiatives aimed at gender equality as well as the recent Secretary General's report mapping the situation fifteen years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the light of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Development Goals prove the opposite.

Gender imbalances in decision making processes and decision points, just like gender stereotypes, which lead to gender segregation in education and labour market. Despite the huge span of debated issues related to equality, distorted perceptions of policy objectives, often insensitive to gender and culture are being put forward and long term goals of prevention and elimination of discrimination are forgotten.

Also Slovakia faces many challenges in this context. Despite successes achieved in the area of gender equality and equal opportunities in Slovakia, there still persist relatively strong gender stereotypes. Notwithstanding the adoption of the *Anti-discrimination Act* or adoption of the *National Strategy* and the *National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2010–2013*, we can certainly agree that support for gender equality is much more effective if the former legislative and strategic documents are accompanied by specific activities to incorporate a gender perspective into daily life.

In this regard, as an example of good practice I would like to highlight our annual award *The Employer Friendly to Family, Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities*. This award has been organised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family since 2000. The aim is to appreciate and motivate employers towards creating working conditions with due consideration the family responsibilities of employees and gender aspects of working conditions.

We have nothing to fear, as long as there is the will of the many to replace the dominion of the strongest by the principle of a just equality.

Mr. Chairman

The Security Council Resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), or the appointment of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, serve excellent examples aiming at better efficiency in addressing gender inequality. In this context, I call upon all states to ratify the Status of the International Criminal Court. Stopped out efforts aimed at implementation of Resolution 1888 (2009) receive my attention and maximum support.

In order to implement a provision, however noble, it has to meet political consensus. Consensus at the international level seems to have materialized in a new composite Gender Equality Entity and I would like to express my firm conviction that the consolidation of the four existing entities into a single body will help to harmonise the management and the overall functioning of the UN's gender architecture. I believe that this new body will provide strong support for the efforts of member states to achieve equality between women and men, leading to improved implementation of international commitments for stronger gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women.

It is of utmost importance that the international community – that we – do apprehend that development is conditioned by full realisation of rights of all human beings – including women and girls. „Gender equality is not only a question of diversity and social fairness, it is also a precondition for meeting the objectives of sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion“, as summarized by the 2010 European Commission report on equality between men and women.

Solely a half of our society – a male part of the society – will not manage to cope with economic, environmental, financial and social issues. And nowadays, when the whole world deals with the consequences of the financial and economic crisis, we must not allow discussions of equality to be drowned out by occasional problems. In the end, resources have to be found for achieving the fifth MDG to promote gender equality and empower

women. Such investments should not be seen as a cost but an investment in people and sustainable development.

I therefore welcome the Ministerial Declaration as an important reminder of our international commitments in all spheres of life.

Thank you for your attention.