

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

First and foremost, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Malawi, and indeed, on my own behalf, I express our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the people and Government of Cuba on the recent loss of lives, and the tremendous damage of their infrastructure and its aftermaths.

Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on your election to preside over the deliberations of this important body and would like commend you on the manner in which you are conducting the meetings. And I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support throughout the period of this session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China. Malawi also aligns itself with the African Group.

The government of Malawi fully recognizes the fact that no meaningful sustained development can take place without the full and equal as well as active involvement and participation of women and girls. To this effect, the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is one of the key development agenda of the government. This is demonstrated by the formulation and implementation of national policies as well as legislation and the adoption and ratification of gender-related regional and international treaties, conventions and protocols.

Notable among these are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol on the African Charter on Human Rights (also known as the African Women's Protocol), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the SADC Development Protocol. Additionally, the Malawi Government has also introduced the national Response to Combat Gender-based Violence and the National Program on Increasing Women Representation in Parliament and Local Government.

Mr. Chairman,

The Malawi Government has also formulated and reviewed gender-related laws as part of its efforts to promote gender equality in areas such as violence against women and inheritance of deceased property; marriage, divorce and family relations; gender based violence; protection of children and

juvenile justice. Other laws being reformed include those aimed at addressing trafficking of women and children.

Mr. Chairman,

As we are reviewing the five-year record of implementing the Republic of Malawi's Constitution, it reaffirms its full commitment to the ideals and provisions of this landmark document. Let me mention that 52% of Malawi's population of 13.1 million are women. In this regard, Malawi has made considerable achievements in the implementation of activities in almost all the twelve critical areas of the Constitution to overcome the inevitable challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

In terms of education, the Malawi Government has put in place elaborate programs and policies to ensure that boys and girls have equal access to education. The Free Primary Education introduced in 1994, coupled with interventions such as the School Feeding Program have increased the enrolment of girls and boys in primary schools and their retention and completion levels. Additionally, the Free Admission Policy for tertiary education, the construction of girls' hostels, a 50-50 selection policy into secondary schools are all aimed at ensuring that female students are able to enroll and complete their secondary education. At tertiary level, a 60-40 percent quota system for admission of male and female students into university is in place as well as an increase in bed space for female students in the Universities of Malawi.

Mr. Chairman,

In terms of health, the Government is continuing implementing health-care policies aimed at ensuring that women and girls, particularly in rural areas, have access to sexual and reproductive health services. For example, in 2007, the Government developed the National Reproductive Health Strategy aimed at accelerating the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity. This has resulted in the reduction of Malawi's maternal mortality rate from 897 in 2007 to 807 for 1,000 live births in 2009. Presently, other programs and services also focus on reducing unsafe abortions, HIV and AIDS prevalence rates and scaling up access to ARVs and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services.

Mr. Chairman,

As a way of promoting women in politics and decision-making positions, the Government in 2008 launched a National Program on Increasing Representation of Women in Parliament and Local Government, popularly known as the 50-50 campaign. Some of the fruits of the program is that in the 2009 elections, 47 women were elected to the House of Parliament.

has a female vice president, showing a 50-50 ratio in the highest decision-making ranks.

Chairman,

Permit me to reiterate my government's commitment to continue promoting gender equality and empowerment of women by among other things, rigorously implementing activities related to the Beijing Platform for Action thereby facilitating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other international goals. The implementation of these activities is guided by the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, the overarching strategy for social and economic development and poverty reduction in Malawi.

Thank you for your attention.