



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

by

**THE HONOURABLE DR. SOLI JOOSHI KAIRI**

Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

at

THE 52<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

on Agenda Item 3.

*"Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the  
Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly Entitled  
"Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace" and the  
Twenty-Fifth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women"*

New York, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Chairperson,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Firstly, I would, on behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, like to offer our deepest condolences to the Government and people of China for the recent tragedy and bereavement.

We are honoured to be able to participate in this 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Under the leadership of our Chairperson, we would successfully advance actions in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA) and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

**Chairperson,**

We align ourselves with the eloquent statements delivered by Yemen and Equatorial Guinea on behalf of the G-77 and China and the African Group respectively.

**Chairperson,**

In the past few years, our country has managed to give credence to what has so far been achieved to address the challenges we have faced in the context of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA). Our country is recovering from an eleven year old civil war that resulted in a complete breakdown of civil and political authority with dire social consequences. We are now in the process of rebuilding our nation and consolidating our democratic institutions to ensure the rights and welfare of our citizens. In particular, we have a special obligation to protect our women and children who were victims of untold horrors during the civil conflict. In this direction, we are happy to report that we have made significant progress in implementing the two outcome documents pertaining to Beijing and New York.

**Chairperson, distinguished delegates,**

The Government of Sierra Leone remains fully committed to accelerating and implementing all 12 critical areas of concern specified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the provisions of the outcome document of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly. We have amply demonstrated our commitments at the national, sub-regional and regional levels by formulating the appropriate mechanisms to advance the rights of our women, by our engagements in various fora to share experiences and engage with other nations and experts to adopt best practices for the benefit of our women.

In 2007, the MDG needs assessment was done and guided the national policy planners in implementing programmes for relevant service delivery and enhance the development of the PRSP II also known as the Government's Agenda for Change. Furthermore, we participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> African Regional Conference on women (Beijing+15), held in the Gambia in November 2009, which adopted a key document for our region with strategies for the Acceleration of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing commitments for Africa.

**Chairperson,**

Our Government under the leadership of the H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma is fully committed to gender parity and equity in all areas. In education, the government funds girl-child education scheme, a key strategy that is yielding dividend and has ensured the girl primary school enrolment is almost at par with the boys.

Also significant to note that gender and Child rights legislations have been enacted. In addition to the Anti-Human Trafficking Act enacted in 2005 to address national and international trafficking issues, the Revision of Customary Marriage and Divorce rights seeks to address rights of rural women. In marriage, the Domestic Violence Act and the Devolution of Estates Act (2007) to ensure protection of women's inheritance rights. Sexual Offences and Matrimonial Causes Bills will soon be enacted into law. The Family Support Unit (FSU) established through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and the Sierra Leone Police in 2002. Currently we have 80 FSU stations that serve as the first point of call for sexual and gender-based violence victims. Additionally, a National Committee on Gender-Based Violence (NCGBV) plays a coordinating and monitoring role related to gender-based violence nation-wide. The Committee is a multi-stakeholder group comprising of the government departments, International and National Non-Governmental Organizations preventing and responding to GBV issues. The Committee meets regularly chaired by the Minister and co-chaired by the Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of crime services. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act will be subject to periodic review for amendments to take it from reprobate.

**Chairperson,**

Even in the face of the current global financial crisis, we are faced with challenges but have resolved to remain committed to our development agenda. We have reproduced our shared development plan, which has been launched to address the unacceptably high maternal and child mortality and morbidity. In fact a basic health package has been developed and will be launched by H.E. the President in April. This package covers essential life saving interventions for pregnant and lactating mothers and children in the health centers and hospitals.

**Chairperson,**

The same commitment applies to the area of governance. In this connection a National Gender Strategic Plan has been developed with support from development partners. The plan include six priorities namely: capacity building and coordination; women's participation in governance; reproductive and sexual reproductive health rights; women's empowerment; gender budgeting and accountability. ICT, Research and Documentation. Since Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 has also been developed and will be launched very shortly. The UN Women, UNFPA and the UN Women report writing is at an advanced stage.

**Chairperson,**

All of the above is yielding fruit. We have also witnessed an increase in the number of women participation in political spheres. In the judiciary for instance, 9 out of 21 Judges are females, while 4 out of the 7 the Supreme Court Justices are women. In 2008 a landmark appointment of a woman as Chief Justice was made. As we speak, the chairperson of the National Electoral Commission is a woman. In Parliament we have 14 percent female representation in Parliament. We have 2 female Cabinet Ministers and 4 female Deputy Ministers. We now have increased number of female recruitment in the Security Sector Institutions. In fact, female participation in the Sierra Leone Police increased from 5% during the pre and conflict era to 20% in the post conflict era. The appointment of the first female Brigadier in West Africa is another case in point. At the Local Council level, we have about 20% female representation in the Councils.

**Chairperson,**

Women's economic empowerment is well articulated in both the Government's Agenda for Change and the National Gender Strategic Plan. We have a Ministry devoted to gender issues and the advancement of women and gender concerns have been mainstreamed into most of national policies, plans and programmes.

**Chairperson,**

Encouraging though the reform activities undertaken, the full and effective implementation of BDPFA is still a challenge. The Family Support Unit is key to ensuring that the legal rights of women and children are strengthened and expanded. The capacity of UNFPA staff for Gender Programme Unit's activities should be strengthened to train well qualified social workers. There is need to develop operational guidelines for the Sierra Leone Police to address and prosecute perpetrators of gender based violence. There is need to increase and reinforce capacity of justice providers of domestic violence, ensuring access to justice and timely judicial interventions.

including prosecution of perpetrators, combating impunity through case monitoring and evaluation. Improved financial access for the army, care service delivery due to lack of financial and technical resources.

In conclusion, in a person, progress has been made made much much done. We must remain committed to the cause until the removal of gender parity and equity. We have to ensure that women, girls and their rights and protection under the law and that their human rights are respected. This is to ensure their full participation in decision-making to determine their own destiny and by extension the destiny of humanity. The rights and protection of women is inextricably linked with the development of our nation and indeed any nation.

I thank you for your attention.