



# TUNISIA

Statement by H.E. **Saad Nasser**,

Deputy Minister for Women, Children and Ageing Affairs,

on the occasion of the 51<sup>th</sup> session of  
the Commission on the Status of Women

(March 31st, 2010)

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement by HE Sawa Terzi, Deputy Minister for Women, Child, and Fighting  
Affairs, on the occasion of the 54<sup>th</sup> session  
of the Commission on the Status of Women  
(March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Mr President

Distinguished

Ladies and Gentlemen

Tunisia is honored to take part in the works of the 54<sup>th</sup> session of CSW to celebrate 15 years after Beijing and to contribute to the international community's interest in gender equality with the aim to put an end to all forms of discrimination, violence, and exclusion against women, and to heighten the awareness about this civilizational issue that has been, since my country's independence, included in its strategic orientations. Tunisia has adopted a national approach within the framework of a national approach that links sustainable and comprehensive development to President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's strategy to build a modern society that supports women's rights and empowers them through

Following the adoption of the Code of Personal Status in 1956, a piece of legislation that freed women from prostitution and polygamy and that became a pioneering model in our region, national efforts, during the last two decades, were directed towards strengthening these achievements and consistently enhancing them. In this regard, numerous initiatives have been carried out since 1997 with the aim to promoting women's rights, which led to the elevation of the principles of equality and personal status to a Constitutional level while the Code of Personal Status, mentioned in the Constitution, was being translated into laws, political parties, contracts and also the penal code have all been revised to ensure the freedom from all manifestations of discrimination against women. A positive discrimination was, on the other hand, followed to reduce the gap between men and women and to take, among other things, to ensure women's access to decision-making positions.

Also, and for the sake of gender equality and preserving women's interests, a piece of legislation has been adopted regarding the optional marital status of women. Furthermore, laws were enhanced to protect the rights of single mothers and men, entitled to family allowance and housing, the right of mothers to pass on their inheritance to their children and a total equality between men and women in employment and wages. These laws also set the same minimum age for marriage for both men and women. Also, a law was adopted in 2004 outlawing all forms of violence against women, especially within the family.

Mr President

Since 1990s, Tunisia has adopted an approach based on the notion of social gender by creating in the Commission of Women and Development within the framework of development plans in order to put in place various programmes on the right track. Also, the President's electoral programme 2009-2014 presented the idea of social gender as an approach to produce statistics and research at the national level and, in this regard, a "Center for research, studies, documentation and information on women" was set up to follow up on their situation and reflect their requirements for a comprehensive improvement in their condition.



Thanks to these achievements, women's gains were reflected in the overall trend towards attaining the internationally agreed development objectives improved such as the increase in life expectancy for women rose to 75 years in 2008 compared to 67 in 1997. In 2008, while the maternal death rate stood at 17.7 per one thousand live births, the infant mortality rate decreased to 16 per one thousand thanks to solidarity-based mechanisms with the participation of civil society.

Mr President

Tunisia also gave priority to the role of women in the development of the knowledge society. The rate of girls aged 6 attending primary schools has reached 99%, 98% and 90% of students respectively in college and universities are girls. Women also represent 46% of university professors and 47% of researchers.

On the other hand, and in full conformity with the Beijing objectives, women's participation at the political, economic, and social levels was strengthened as women represent 27% of the Parliament's members as well as of all elected municipal councils. In fact, the Presidential programme for the period 2009-2014 will give Tunisia's women's views and perspectives through a stronger presence in leading and decision-making positions of no less than 35%. These initiatives encourage women to join in various and important activities.

This approach was even more intensified by initiatives undertaken by First Lady Ben Ali, First Lady of Tunisia, and current President of the Arab Women's Association in favour of women, supporting all international efforts to promote women's emancipation and ensure support to all related issues.

Among these initiatives, I would like to mention the one called "Arab Strategy for Women in Emergencies" of protecting women in war and conflict zones. It was developed in the aftermath of natural disasters and that was adopted by the Arab League in 2009. The Arab strategy to put an end to violence against women will also be launched from Tunis on the occasion of the international day for the elimination of violence against women.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that promoting the status of women is not exclusively a women's task but one that requires the involvement of men and men the gender equality. It is also an issue that requires educating young people and raising their awareness.

Mr President

I am convinced that our meeting and the role of women in the development of Tunisia will contribute to common efforts in maintaining social equality and justice between men and women and create a true harmony with the Beijing objectives and the Millennium Development Goals. We will work with our partners to all relevant treaties and conventions.

After elevating women's status with equality in the family and society, Tunisia will continue its efforts to further advance women's gains and promoting their status within the family and society.

I thank you.