



*Check Against Delivery*

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HELENA DR. JOUHANVILLE GARRA**

**VICE PRESIDENT**

**AND**

**MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

**REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

**AT THE**

Mr. Chairperson  
Secretary General of the UIV/Under Secretary General

Representative of the African Commission and  
Distinguished Delegates

Mr. Chairperson, Excellencies,

Once again, I bring you the best wishes from H. F. the President of the Republic of The Gambia to congratulate the Bureau of the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2010 for their excellent work in drawing together the arrangements for the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Government of The Gambia is fully aware of the fact that there cannot be any meaningful development without the full and active participation of all its citizenry, particularly women and children in the national development process. In this connection, one attainment of the Government of The Gambia is the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1988.

Gambia Government therefore reaffirms its commitment to Beijing Platform for Action, particularly the attainment of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and this is amply demonstrated through the formulation of national policies, legislation and the ratification of key international and regional women's rights conventions and treaties, notable among them the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1988, the Africa Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of women. After implementing a national policy for the Advancement of Women and Girls 1999 to 2009, The Gambia is now formulating a gender and women empowerment Policy for a new decade 2010 to 2020.

In November 2009, The Gambia hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> African Regional Conference on Women and Children. The conference was a landmark event as it was the first time that the heads of state of the African continent met to discuss the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The African review process took stock of the implementation of both national and regional commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action. The Banjul Declaration, will contribute in no small way to the advancement of the African woman at this meeting.

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Statement by H.E. Aja Dr. Isatou Njie-Saidy  
Vice-President and Minister of Women's Affairs  
The Republic of The Gambia

Implementation of the Beijing Platform mainly, economic empowerment of women through

Representation and participation of women in all decision making processes; Sexual and Reproductive health and HIV/AIDs; Climate change and food security and Financing for Gender

review process, particularly in helping us reach a consensus on the priority areas.

On the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of BPfA. may I share with you some

import sectors, as well as, in the services and tourism sectors. Women continue to constitute the majority, in subsistence agriculture, and in the mostly impoverished informal sector, of the economy, and in various fields.

Regarding education, His Excellency the President of the Republic of the Gambia is personally involved and has since been supporting child education through offering scholarships to girls

The Gambia has proven to be very proactive and responsive towards ensuring gender equality, through the establishment of several interventions such as the earlier mentioned President

Mr. Chairperson,

Health Delivery System. Primary health care is the mainstay of the health system. Public sector health service delivery operates at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Physical access to health services continues to improve with the upgrading and building of new facilities and the provision of trained health personnel. Safe motherhood, reduction of maternal and child mortality, and availability is assured through the provision of free maternal health care, recruitment of competent and skilled birth attendants, and an efficient referral facility for obstetric care in emergency cases. According to the 2007 PRSP Progress Report, between 65% and 97% of the population live approximately within 5km and 3km to a basic health facility and primary health care post respectively. The percentage of deliveries attended to by skilled health personnel increased from 56.8% in 2006 to 64.49% in 2008. Maternal mortality ratio has over the years reduced significantly from 1050 to 730 per 100,000 live births between 1990 and 2001 and further reduced to 556 per 100,000 in 2006. Infant mortality ratio has dropped from 64 per 1000 to 73 per 1000 between 1992 and 2005.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the area of promoting and protecting women and girl's rights a Women's Bill has been drafted and is at an advanced stage in its enactment process. The enactment of Trafficking in Persons Bill is another manifestation of the Government's commitment to promoting women's rights. A national plan of action was developed to address the issue of early marriage, sexual exploitation and related issues. Capacity building, sensitization and awareness creation workshops are conducted for teachers, law enforcement agencies, nurses, social workers, religious and community leaders as well as women and children. Gambian women soldiers, police and immigration personnel have participated in a number of peace keeping missions both within and outside the region. This is an important requirement under UNSCR 1325. The number of women at top decision making levels has increased. More women are seeking elected positions in both the National Assembly and at the local Government level. For the very first in the electoral history of the Gambia, 20 women contested at the Local Government elections and 15 won their seats. In the area of Women and the environment, media and the girl child significant efforts have been made by Government and its development partners.

Mr. Chairperson,

On the way forward, allow me to recognize the significant contributions of civil society and the global NGO community for their outstanding partnership with governments towards the full realization of the goals of PRSP and the gender related MDGs. This is a partnership that has endured, and it is a partnership that holds the key to the further implementation of the PRSP. For this reason, we would have loved to see the active participation of Gambian women

