



ITALY

FIFTY SIXTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

STATEMENT

BY

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OPPORTUNITIES

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Madam Chairperson,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Italian Minister of Labour and Social Security, and in charge of Equal Opportunities, I am pleased to take part in this discussion at the Commission on the Status of Women.

The decision of the Italian Government to incorporate the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action into the Equal Opportunities Act is designed to strengthen the Government's action to promote equality, since it allows a more unified perspective on areas that are crucial to the empowerment of women, full compliance with the Beijing Platform.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of the European Union. I would like to take this opportunity to illustrate briefly the Italian Government's actions at both the international and national levels.

At the international level, despite budgetary constraints, the Italian Government is fully implementing its commitments to improve the status of women. In this context, we are promoting a series of initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa in the areas of food security, the environment, and health, as well as in the fostering of women's participation in the reconstruction of countries involved in armed conflicts.

To prevent and eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM), Italy has developed a comprehensive law that not only prohibits this practice, but also mandates a range of prevention measures and support services. The Secretary-General cited this law in his report. In this context, Italy supports the adoption of a General Assembly resolution calling for the prohibition of female genital mutilation. We are confident that in the near future, thanks to the initiative of the African Union and the support of the African and other countries, the General Assembly will adopt this resolution. To this end, I am delighted to remind you that tonight at 7 p.m. the United Nations and the Italian Government will host the General Assembly Hall a concert by the African singer and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Angélique Kidjo, who through this venue is making her own unique contribution to the international campaign to end FGM.

I look forward to seeing you all at this event, which will be a music and a common social commitment.

At the national level, allow me to describe the present status of women and the initiatives of the Italian Government:

The percentage of full-time women who work outside the home in Italy is less than 50 per cent – 46 per cent to be exact. The figure drops to a mere 30 per cent in the south of the country. More than half of these women leave the workforce permanently when they give birth, thus confirming a troubling lack of services and support for women, in which a child's day care is scarce. In the country, women perform more than 70 per cent of household chores.

The story that these astonishing numbers tell does not tell us that Italian women are more educated than men. They are. They go to school and in their university studies. More educated women are more likely to find a more prominent role in every aspect of life, including, of course, the labour market.

Even in the agricultural sector, women are no longer relegated to traditional tasks. They are frequently pioneers in innovative and emerging business activities such as agritourism and organic farming. Yet the traditional division of labour within the family persists and women in agriculture are often considered their women working in other sectors of the economy.

So there is a clear contradiction between women's drive for more empowerment and the institutional systems, as well as the influence of tradition - in accepting their contribution and using it to the greater benefit of the Country. This contradiction is precisely what the Italian government is determined to tackle and eliminate, to ensure a more equal distribution of care work on the territory and in society as a whole.

This is why the Government is developing a national plan with a series of projects and actions at the regional level to bring about structural changes. Last year a law establishing gender quotas in public companies was passed. A national trial is now underway to secure a better gender balance in care work and the family will be included in the labour market reform being hammered out as we speak.

With this reform, the Government is strongly promoting the employment of disadvantaged segments of society and to reduce regional imbalances. As with the pension system, women's quality of life and their economic situation has been shaped by the urgent need for equality: equality between genders, equality between generations, and equality within generations.

Through this cross-cutting approach, measures to ensure the economic and social rights of women have been agreed and it is easier to better implement fundamental individual rights. There is growing evidence of violence against women, that is physical, sexual and psychological: it is a very real social and economic barrier and professional achievement, since victims of violence or sexual abuse have significant difficulties, mostly of a psychological nature, in fitting into the workplace, bettering their careers, and optimizing their talents.

Measures to be included include the adoption of the first National Plan to contrast violence against women and stalking. We are currently drafting the first National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings.

As you can see our agenda is rich and demanding, while our time is short and difficult. But we are and we will continue to be committed to achieving these goals.

Thank you.