

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, AT THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

New York, 10 March 1997

Madame Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Allow me to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on the excellent way you have conducted the business of the Commission on the Status of Women since your election last year. We would also like to thank the Secretary General for the various reports before the Commission.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Angela King on her recent appointment to the post of Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. We hope the appointment of Ms. King will allow the Division for the Advancement of Women to refocus its activities toward an integrated and coordinated approach in the endeavor to further advancement of women. The Group of 77 and China is committed to work with the Division for the Advancement of Women toward this end.

Madame Chairperson,

The Charter of the United Nations was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right in 1946 when the Commission on the Status of Women was established one year after its inception. The Commission was established to advise the Economic and Social Council on the promotion of women's rights in the political, economic, social and educational fields and to make recommendations to the Council on problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights. As the Commission celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, it is appropriate to take stock of the achievements registered and to set targets to meet the challenges in the years to come.

During the period, it has been possible to put the issue of the advancement of women at the top of the world agenda. The entering into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1979 is an important landmark. The Convention, often described as the Bill of Rights for Women, has now been ratified by 154 countries. It is through the elimination of all form of discrimination that women can get equal access to economic, social and political benefits in their societies.

During the last fifty years, four international conferences on women have been organized. The most recent one - The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, marked the unprecedented commitment of the international community for a five-year plan to enhance the social, economic and political empowerment of women.

Madame Chairperson,

The unanimous adoption of the Beijing document is not an end but marks the beginning of a long journey toward the advancement of the status of women. The success of the Beijing agreement depends, first and foremost, on the implementation process and that is the challenge facing our Commission.

Madame Chairperson,

The important task before this session of the Commission is not to rewrite or paraphrase the Beijing Declaration of Action, but to make specific, concrete and action-orientated recommendations which would enhance the implementation of the Beijing Conference at all levels. The implementation of the Beijing agreement leaves no spectators. It is therefore incumbent upon the Commission, the body assigned to monitor the implementation process, to map out some clear strategies which enhance coordinated implementation and follow up process within the United Nations system and the member states and other actors.

Madame Chairperson,

While progress has been achieved with the enactment of a number of conventions on the women's rights including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and agreements reached in Beijing, statistics and reality indicate that more work remains to be done. Of the world's 1.3 billion poor, it is established that nearly 70% are women. Most of these live in developing countries. Two-thirds of the world's one billion illiterate are women, while only half of the school-age girls are in school. Over half a million women die every year from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Madame Chairperson,

Fifty years after, women have not taken an equal place at the decision-making level. Women hold only 10.5% of the seats in the world legislative bodies (parliaments). The United Nations Secretariat has fared a little better than member states with only 17.9% in senior management posts as opposed to only 6.8% of female cabinet ministers. In both cases, the levels are unacceptably low. Economically women have not fared well either. In work place majority of women earn an average of three-fourth of pay men earn for the same work. While in the rural area women, produce 55% of all food grown in developing countries with very limited access land ownership or access to credit.

In addressing the four critical areas, namely;

- women and the environment;
- women in power and decision-making;
- women and the economy;
- education and training of women.

The Group of 77 and China urges the Commission to come up with specific recommendations which would include:

1. The provision of new and additional resources for implementation;
2. The need to improve institutional capacity through, inter alia, round tables, seminars, workshops and

training;

3. The creation of an enabling environment which enables governments to expand access:

- to education with special emphasis on girls;
- to credit and ownership of property;

4. The need to take legislative measures through capacity building and training.

Madame Chairperson,

In our endeavour to achieve the advancement on the status of women, we should accord adequately focus on general mainstreaming. There is a tendency, Madame Chair, to look at the issue of the advancement of women as an island. The advancement of women is about development of societies, countries and the world at large. If more than half of the world population lags behind, the other half will never achieve its full potential advance. Therefore, the implementation of the Beijing agreement should be taken up in the context of the implementation of major international conferences in a holistic manner.

In conclusion, Madame Chairperson, the Group of 77 and China will spare no effort to ensure the successful outcome of our deliberations. We pledge our full cooperation to ensure that this session comes out with concise, action-oriented recommendations which would enhance the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Program of Action.

Thank you.