



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR STAFFORD NEIL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON AGENDA ITEMS 64 AND 65: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN/IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 11 October 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank the various speakers this afternoon for their presentations which have been very interesting, informative and incisive in their analysis.

I also extend condolences and sympathies to those countries that have suffered severely from the recent natural disasters – in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan and India and in Central America – in Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador. The scale of loss of life has been extensive and merits substantive support and assistance from the International Community.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the most significant events of the UN calendar this year was the ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, held under the guidance and direction of the Commission on the Status of Women during its 49th session.

The review concluded that since Beijing there has been some progress in the advancement of women. Notable among these is the increased number of countries that have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and its protocols. As at the end of July 2005, 180 States had ratified, acceded or succeeded to the Convention. A number of withdrawals of reservations made to the Convention were also recorded. These are all encouraging developments in support of the most important international legally binding instruments for the promotion and protection of women.

Mr. Chairman,

As we all know, legislation is one of the most effective vehicles for addressing wrongs and therefore it is encouraging to note that in addition to subscribing to these key international instruments, a number of countries have also undertaken legal reform measures, as well as the introduction of policy guidelines at various levels to address women's equality and empowerment. We are also pleased that improvements have been made in other areas: in access to education, including quality education as well as gradual gains in the social, economic and political spheres and on women's health issues in many societies.

But even as we celebrate such progress, we have reason to be cautiously optimistic about the future, as so often happens advancement in some areas has to be squared with new sets of obstacles which arise in others.

Women's advancement can only be achieved if women's health needs at basic levels are addressed. I speak Mr. Chairman particularly about the continued impact of HIV/AIDS, not only from the point of view of its socio-economic effects on communities but also of the increasingly feminine face HIV/AIDS has assumed, with the increasing number of women and girls now infected with the disease, surpassing their male counterparts in the incidence of new infections. Earlier this year the report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to the ECOSOC Substantive session indicated that although women are less likely than men to engage in high-risk behaviour, women and girls now account for just under half of people living with HIV, partially owing to social factors. Other preventable health casualties related to child-bearing, such as maternal mortality have for too long not received the attention deserved. In highlighting one other such case, Mr. Chairman, we also note the efforts of the United Nations to bring attention to the preventable, treatable medical condition - fistula, unknown to many yet has been referred to as the "nightmare for African women". This is a condition that also requires some attention. Not only does fistula threaten the dignity and self-esteem of those it affects but it also hampers opportunities for economic and social advancement.

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women has been one of the most degrading violations of women's basic rights and fundamental freedoms. The interim report of the Secretary-General on Violence against Women, contained in document A/60/211, indicates that there exists an extensive framework of standards and norms to combat violence against women.

States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels, have undertaken a broad range of efforts to prevent and combat violence against women. However, the Report has indicated that violence continues at serious levels throughout the world. The Secretary-General also reported in paragraph 52 that new forms of violence have emerged. The need to address this unacceptable situation calls for a comprehensive examination of its root causes and the application of effective remedies. We look forward to the full Report of the Secretary-General at the 61 st session of the General Assembly, to help us determine how to more effectively address this intolerable violation of the rights of women.

Mr. Chairman,

Poverty among women is a particular problem for many countries of the developing world. As we all know poverty and unemployment are directly related. The impact of the globalised environment for many of us is marked by shrinking economies and the reduction of employment opportunities. This has forced many women into the informal sector where there are low, unpredictable levels of income and often discriminatory practices against women. Globalisation is also marked by the increasing mobility of women, a great number of which come from developing countries, who are migrating in search of a living for themselves and their families as a consequence of poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic conditions. These women are often vulnerable to violence, abuse and many inequities.

Mr. Chairman,

I referred earlier to the destruction caused by natural disasters in South Asia and Central America, particularly in Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico recently. This reminds us of the negative impact of natural disaster on the social and economic well-being of people, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and children in rural areas. The Millennium Project Report, has proposed a number of implementation strategies in recognition of the fact that two-thirds of the world's poor live in the rural areas. It will be recalled that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted, the need to improve the situation of rural women through, among other things, equal access to productive resources, especially land, capital and technology as well as to gainful employment. The Secretary-General's Report on the Improvement of the situation of rural women, contained in document No. A/60/165 has made some useful recommendations. Their implementation could help to realize the goals of Beijing and the MDGs and should be considered for early action.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender equality targets set by Beijing and the MDGs are closely linked and mutually reinforcing. Goal 2 of the MDGs, calls for the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015. Yet the Millennium Project Report indicates that there is limited and uneven progress on gender equality targets in this area. This calls for a redoubling of our efforts, particularly as equality in educational opportunities is critical in ensuring equality between men and women and girls and boys.

The Group of 77 and China reaffirms that while the primary responsibility for the advancement of women lies with national Governments, international cooperation remains indispensable for the full implementation of Beijing. International cooperation for us is not only about fulfilling ODA obligations which we strongly support. It is also about the transfer of technology, information and data sharing, as well as technical assistance, including through South/South cooperation, to which our Group is fully committed.

Mr. Chairman,

As you are aware, the Group of 77 and China strongly supports the work of the United Nations Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), in its important role in the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. We have noted the new horizons being explored by the Institute in responding to the need to provide research information on some of the most topical issues for developing countries from a gender perspective, in all regions across the globe. We acknowledge the generous contributions made, particularly by countries from the European Union, in maintaining the Institute and encourage all States to make voluntary contributions to the Institute to assist it in executing its mandate in the area of research, particularly in its critical transitional period.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China takes this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable work and efforts of the United Nations Development Fund (UNIFEM) in providing financial and technical assistance to developing countries, fostering

women's empowerment and gender equality. We also recognize the role of the office of the Special Adviser on Gender issues, the Office of the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to integrate a gender perspective in the United Nations activities. The Commission on the Status of Women is also especially commended for its work in the follow-up to Beijing and for its ten-year review, as well as for its continued commitment to ensuring that women's equal rights and empowerment continues to be pursued to full implementation.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77

G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77 G-77