



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. LESETLA ANDREAS TEFFO, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 29: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 70TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 12 October 2015)

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 29: Advancement of women. The Group wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under agenda item 29, which will stimulate and frame our discussions.

The Group welcomes the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the spirit that no one in our societies shall be left behind, and where gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls forms a core component of the commitment. An aspect of the 17 sustainable development goals that we welcome is the vertical and horizontal references to women and gender. Not only is there a stand-alone gender related goal, but the issue of women has been mainstreamed throughout the text to ensure that when we implement goals relating to education, health, employment etc., the specific challenges faced by women are taken into consideration.

The Group remains concerned that despite the lofty ideals and aspirations, contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the MDGs to list but a few, the realisation of gender equality has not been fully achieved. The majority of women in developing countries still find themselves vulnerable and discriminated against. In this regard we therefore call for the continued and strengthened implementation of gender frameworks and the renewed focus and commitment to implementation. While we remain supportive of the internationally agreed frameworks, we believe strongly that by now concrete and tangible results should have been achieved in areas such as: women and employment, decent work and land reform. We are concerned that women's hopes are posted in 10, 15 and 20 years cycles and that there are is constant lack of commitment on the means of implementation of such agreements.

As we recently celebrated 70 years of this organisation, we call for the concrete actions on The Advancement of Women.

The Group of 77 and China however, would still like to reaffirm its support for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Mainly because this is the guiding policy framework for the achievement of women's development and gender equality, the full realization of their rights and the socio-economic empowerment of women and girls. In addition, during the adoption of the Political declaration at the 59th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59), Member States pledged to take concrete action in accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action. We look forward to engaging all relevant stakeholders in this regard.

Mr Chairman,

There has certainly been progress in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, the fact remains that there are still severe challenges affecting women, such as the high

incidences of poverty, violence, extremism and discrimination. There is also a marked disparity in the advancement of women among the regions, and there exists an urgent need to expedite actions at all levels to address these problems. Our action must be geared towards addressing the root causes which include disparities between men and women, as well as armed conflicts and socio-economic constraints.

Despite continued progress over the last few decades in advancing gender equality, many women and girls around the world are still falling victim to numerous forms of discrimination and do not have equal opportunities to fulfill their potential. We are still faced with a myriad of challenges and obstacles that need to be thoroughly addressed and effectively overcome in order to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Those obstacles include, amongst others, high incidences of poverty and gender based violence, in every single stage of women's lives.

The Group of 77 and China calls for improved and intensified efforts at all levels in our societies, in addressing 1. the alarming statistics concerning the increased incidents of trafficking in women and girls, 2. the violation of fundamental women's rights, 3. violence against women and girls, 4. the wide spread of HIV and AIDs, 5. unemployment and the lack of access to social services. Women are also the most vulnerable in terms of health. The Group wishes to highlight the importance of addressing the effects of both communicable and non-communicable diseases which negatively affect the ability of women to realize their rights and achieve their fullest potential.

The Group of 77 and China is also deeply concerned about the suffering of women and girls living under foreign occupation. In this regard, the Group wishes to underline the urgency for collective actions to remove the obstacles to the full realization of their rights.

Mr Chairman,

In addition to those persistent obstacles, new threats and challenges are emerging. In this context, the Group of 77 and China would like to stress the following; 1. Importance of adopting appropriate measures to identify and address the ongoing negative impacts of the global economic and financial crisis, 2. The food crisis, energy access and continuing food insecurity, 3. the distortions and impediments to international trade, and 4. the challenges posed by climate change on women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, and 5. the need to design stimulus packages taking into account the needs, priorities and contributions of women. The Group also wishes to underscore the importance of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives, aimed at addressing gender gaps in policies, plans and budgets in order to contribute to gender equality and the fulfillment of women's rights.

Mr Chairman,

Despite the progress registered thus far, challenges and obstacles remain in achieving the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Since the adoption of Agenda 2030, it is even more imperative that national efforts allow for the inclusive and effective participation of women and girls, including the creation of an enabling environment to foster increasing political participation of women at all levels of decision-making, and the economic empowerment of women.

The continued absence of women in peace keeping is a major impediment for the achievement of gender equality. As the international community commemorates the 15th anniversary since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, it is hoped that its

objectives are not forgotten. This resolution reaffirms the important role of women and urges all actors to increase the participation of women in the post conflict reconstruction and development phases. It also calls for their full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The importance of women and girls in society cannot be over-emphasised, and they should therefore be afforded the respect, dignity and support they deserve.

To this end, we reiterate the importance of continuing to share national experiences and best practices with a view to expanding efforts to coordinate at national and international levels to support national programs for women, including women and girls with disabilities, as well as migrants, rural and indigenous women and girls. In this respect, the role of UN Women is of utmost importance in promoting better coordination within the UN System in order to address all these multiple barriers that impede the advancement and empowerment of women.

Mr Chairman,

It is also important to enhance international cooperation and global partnership for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the fulfillment of commitments on official development assistance, debt relief, market access, financial and technical support and capacity building, in particular in areas such as women's education, health and job creation in order to contribute to the elimination of gender disparities.

Finally, the Group of 77 and China reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Agenda 2030, and looks forward to working together towards the further empowerment and advancement of women.

I thank you.

