



Permanent Mission of The State of Eritrea
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Statement
by
Honourable Ms. Tekea Tesfamichael
President of the National Union of Eritrean Women
during
59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women
on
Review and appraisal of the implementation of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

12 March 2015, New York

Mme. Chairperson,

I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau for being elected to steer the work of this important Commission. Your chairmanship comes at a momentous time as we are marking the twentieth anniversary since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

At the outset, Eritrea aligns itself with the statements delivered by South Africa on behalf of the G-77 and China; and Sudan on behalf of the African Group.

Mme. Chairperson,

Eritrea has taken stock of the achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing+20 and has shared it with the United Nations Economic Commission for African and UN Women. Eritrea's report addresses the status of women within the societal context and socioeconomic and political formation of the country.

My delegation notes the mixed progress made by many nations on the 12 critical areas of concern that we identified in Beijing. Many of the generational issues we wanted to address are deeply entrenched in the minds and practices of the societies we live in, whether we come from developing or developed countries. The areas of concern remain critical in the advancement of women, and we ought to seize this opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitments to move forward in empowering women as articulated in the political declaration that was just adopted. Eritrea welcomes the thrust of the document.

Mme. Chairperson,

For the last few weeks as President of the National Union of Eritrean Women, I have been attending various functions, both at home and abroad, relating to the 35th anniversary of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW). I am humbled by Eritrean women's energy and enthusiasm inside and outside of the country to continue their cause for equality. The National Union of Eritrean Women is a national body established in 1979, during the Eritrean people's struggle for self determination and independence. The women took the important step then of organizing themselves to resist the atrocities and to defend their dignity in the most unlikely time and place. So my message to this august body is that, yes it is possible for women to organize themselves even in situations of armed conflict in order to defend their rights. Today, as was thirty-fives years ago, our motto and guiding principle is "**Yekaalo**" and "**Kekewn iyu**". Which means, "**Yes I Can**" and "**Yes We Can**".

Mme. Chairperson,

Women should "never kneel down" to affirm their equality. They must remain resolute and determined to advance what they are set out to achieve. I brought up this "yes we can and never kneel down" mind frame as an example to recognize and highlight women's role and

contributions in transforming societies and also to maintaining peace and security. I am happy to note that peace, security and development is prominently featured in the African Common Position (CAP) as one of the important pillars for sustainable development and implicitly in the outcome document of the Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

Mme. Chairperson,

Eritrea has been engaged in ensuring that its policies and actions are making positive and meaningful contributions to the lives of women and girls. All discriminatory laws pertaining to child marriage, parental consent, social status, employment, land ownership, inheritance and female genital mutilation were barred. Additionally, new legal provisions were introduced that allowed women to play larger role in ensuring social justice and gender equality. Eritrea has adopted various regional and international legal frameworks, strategies and action plans, such as CEDAW, Beijing and COMESA Gender policies. The newly developed National Gender Action Plan (NGAP) which covers the period from 2015 to 2019 serves as a successful example in harmonizing international obligations and national policies.

Mme. Chairperson,

Gender as a dynamic issue is closely aligned with the MDGs. Eritrea is pleased with the significant progress it has already made in achieving the health MDGs, 4, 5 and 6, which have the greatest impact on women and the girl child. Eritrea is also on track to achieve many of the other MDGs.

Eritrea has made significant progress in the five critical areas identified in the Platform for Action, namely, education, health, poverty, violence against women and decision making processes. Eritrea believes that a gender sensitive environment, coupled with specific action plans manifests a prioritization of women's right.

Mme. Chairperson,

To address the root causes of gender inequality and poverty, the government has taken a holistic approach towards poverty eradication and equitable sustainable growth policies. Equal pay for equal work, as well as ownership of land and property, is guaranteed by law. The major investments made in basic infrastructure and social sectors, including the prioritization of food security, have given Eritrea the ability to withstand the impact of drought which has plagued the sub-region in recent times. In a country where over 60% of the people depend on the land, there has been a conscious efforts by the government to give equal access to land to all women. Moreover, affirmative action is pursued to enhance women's involvement in decision making and politics. Policies regarding access to education, skills development, employment opportunities, credit and other resources have been diligently implemented with the view of rectifying women's disadvantaged position.

The introduction of an innovative and energy efficient stove locally called, "Adhanet", has provided visible environmental change, benefiting the people. The increased access to clean drinking water has improved the lives of women in rural areas who traditionally travel more than two hours to fetch water and collect fire wood.

Mme. Chairperson,

Let us be clear that, in spite of the achievements registered so far, women in Eritrea, as in many parts in the world, continue to face enormous challenges. These challenges range from climatic factors to issues related to human and institutional capacities as well as resources which constraint countries from fully subscribing to the Beijing Platform for action. That being said, women in Eritrea are further challenged by the prevailing occupation of their sovereign territory and the unjust sanctions imposed on the country. These two unwarranted situations continue to impede and infringe on the full enjoyment of women's and girls' rights and on the development efforts of the country. This constitutes a denial of the people's right to peace and security as well as the right to development. It has to be challenged and rejected by all peace loving people and advocates of the post 2015 development agenda that aspires to leave no one behind.

Mme. Chairperson,

Let me conclude by taking this opportunity to invite all delegates to a side event that has been co-organized by the UN Country Team and the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the UN on Monday 16th March from 11:30 to 12:45am in Conference Room E. The Theme of the side event is "Empowering Women: Eritrea's achievements and experiences".

Thank you Mme. Chairperson.