

PERMANENT MISSION OF DENMARK
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Carsten Staur,

Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations



COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fifty-fifth Session

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Mister Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome this opportunity to address the Commission on the Status of Women at its 55th session. While I would like to associate myself with the statement made by Hungary on behalf of the European Union, I would also like to state ways we can continue to focus on the importance of access for women and girls, as well as for boys, to education based on lessons learned through your efforts to achieve genuine gender equality in Denmark as well as internationally.

Mister Chair,

Every year, we benefit from this important session to take stock of the status of girls and women's empowerment. But a prerequisite for their empowerment is to obtain genuine equality for women and men, boys and girls, worldwide. Today, in addition to talking about women, I would like to turn our attention to that of men in order to improve conditions for women as decision-makers, as colleagues, partners and parents. And at the same time, men and boys must not be overlooked in the equation when striving for equality.

This year we celebrate the 100th International Women's Day. The efforts to improve equal opportunities have been monumental during this century, but still in so many places girls and women are still deprived of opportunities to develop, thrive and participate. Let us use this anniversary to inspire a turning point, from where both women and men will work together to make it possible to realize the full potential, irrespective of gender. I hope that the will in EU countries will be the International Day of Equality.

Mister Chair,

Equality is doing an inherently singular or doing exactly the same things. So what is gender equality? Gender Equality means that all human beings are free to develop their abilities and make choices without limitations set by strict gender roles.

Everyone has the right to be treated equally and to live their lives free from discrimination.

Seriously, equality is not just important to us as individuals. It is also essential to our well-being as a society. Strong communities are ones where everyone feels they have a voice and can make a difference.

Equality, equity and justice are related but not synonymous. It is central to building strong, viable economies that benefit from the talents of all of its members.

Partly because we lack behind on achieving gender equality and MDG3, we are still far from eradicating poverty globally. And we face many challenges, if we want to achieve the Millennium goals by 2015.

As decision-makers we must play our part. We must build a framework for equality and empowerment within which communities, businesses and individuals can bring about change. Here, education plays a central role. Access for girls and women to primary and higher education, coupled with an enabling legal framework for equal access to jobs, can rightly be promoted as the single most important factor for women's empowerment and building strong economies and inclusive societies.

Mixer Chair,

I welcome the emphasis this year on education. Access to education and jobs is essential for empowerment. Still, in many places in the world, ingrained social and cultural practices prevent women from pursuing the education which then further reduces their opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

Dear Sir, puts great emphasis on education of girls and women, boys and men - both nationally and through international cooperation. We see education as the most

essential building block for personal development, for earning a living and for participating in the development of democratic societies. What the most public aims of our educational systems is to teach girls and boys to respect each other's worth and capacities.

In many areas of the world, girls are not given the opportunity to influence or choose their own career path. In some countries, girls are not allowed to attend the school environment. This is not only a violation of their rights, but it also hinders the development of both women and men. Gender-segregation on the labour market starts with culturally induced limitations on girls' vocational and academic skills.

In our international cooperation, we place special emphasis on contexts where girls and women are particularly vulnerable, such as in Afghanistan. We do not invest in primary education, but also invest in both skills training and capacity building of women.

Nationally, the challenge is not to focus on the rights of girls but to include them in the process to improve the rate of completing further education, and generally to improve their achievements throughout their schooling. We can also still do more when it comes to broadening people's vocational and professional choices, especially in the area of gender-segregation on the labour market. As a result, primarily in unskilled jobs, seem to be the first victims of the financial crisis; we are now initiating policies in order to promote the possibilities of boys and men in education and retrain men to enter the care sector.

Mister Chair,

Education is central for economic growth and development. For girls and boys we are ensuring our future societies economically and socially in a win-win situation.

A recent Global Gender Gap Report (2008) concluded that there is a strong correlation between the gender gap and the rate of competitiveness. And the report shows a clear

and must ensure that policy makers in all countries integrate gender equality into their national priorities if they want to maximize their development potential.

Also for this reason, I am very satisfied to see the outcome document of this September's MDG+ high-level meeting emphasized the importance of women's economic empowerment. It is clear that the U.S. experience shows that women are key drivers of change that they have a multiplier effect and we know that investments in women pay off.

While investing in education, training and capacity building of women, we also believe it is crucial to create an enabling legislative, financial, political and administrative environment that facilitates women's entrepreneurship.

Denmark will also continue to actively support and promote women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Healthy women provide more and better for their children, families and communities. That is a fact. Women who can plan the timing and number of their children have greater opportunities for education, work and involvement in the development of their society. "Healthy women deliver"; since they – given the opportunity – earn an income – are more likely (than men) to spend their earnings on food, education, medicine and other necessities for the family.

We must all – as men as well as men – be part of our solutions that lead to sustainable and inclusive societies and economies. Therefore, gender equality must be a key priority in all international, regional, national policies and cooperation.

Mister Chair,

100 years after the first celebration of International Women's Day, the Executive

Director of UN Women has presented an ambitious 100-day plan. We should all

work together to bring this vision into reality.

With the establishment of UN Women, all member states gave full political backing to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through the UN system.

However, this does not mean that the rest of the UN system should scale down their current gender and women's activities.

The establishment of UN Women promises greatly enhanced future prospects of achieving gender equality throughout the UN system and at country level. Denmark is fully committed to contributing to the important exercise of transforming the work of UN Women both at the normative and operational levels. We also welcome the consolidation of the UN's gender equality efforts, which will contribute to responding appropriately to MDG3 and 5.

Madame Chair,

Men and women are partners in building their lives, communities and societies. As parents they make the first, decisive choices about their children's education, forming their path in life. As decision-makers, we create the framework and conditions for equal opportunities or the opposite – for all. We are approaching 2013 and have only little time before achieving the Millennium Goals. We must make the right choices that benefit both the individual and the development and prosperity of society.

Thank you!

