



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations

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STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. IDA ODINGA, MCH,
HEAD OF DELEGATION**

AT THE

**55TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**

FEBRUARY 28, 2011 (AMSTERN)

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Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations
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STATEMENT

BY

**M. I. O. OJINGA, M.P.,
HEAD OF DELEGATION**

AT THE

**25TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**

PERMANENT MISSION OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We also congratulate our members of the Bureau that elected you. My delegation conveys its utmost confidence in your able leadership and assures you of its unqualified support for this Session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement by the distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as the statement by the distinguished representative of Mozambique on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson,

Kenya welcomes the recent establishment of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, to consolidate and accelerate efforts towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. We pledge our full support to the new United Nations Secretary-General, Executive Director of the organization. We are confident that this session and the new gender entity will forge a coherent working partnership in formulating global standards and policies and carrying out programming activities that will fast-track the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide.

Chairperson,

Education is both a tool of social justice as well as a fundamental driver of economic growth, employment and decent work. Kenya, therefore, welcomes deliberations on this important priority. **We believe that access and active participation of women in education, particularly in sciences and technology, will guarantee more employment opportunities for women and girls.**

Chairperson,

The connection between women's human rights, gender equality and socio-economic development is increasingly apparent. It is with this vision that Kenyans overwhelmingly voted in favour of a new Constitution that comprehensively addresses these issues. It captures the Government's commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. **It recognizes the aspirations of women and girls as essential values of human rights, equality, freedom, democracy, social justice, development and rule of law.**

Chairperson,

Free primary education, which is now guaranteed under our new Constitution, will complement the Government's effort to meet MDG 2 by 2015. **It has also guaranteed that all children, especially girls, attend school at the primary school level, where enrollment figures increased from 2008 to 2011.**

This increase has been attributed to the Government's strategic actions which include lobbying communities in support of girls' education, enhancing programmes for the prevention of child labour, enforcing rules and regulations to curb sexual harassment, the provision of adequate and quality gender responsive education materials and promoting girls' enrolment in school irrespective of age. Similarly, the **implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2003, which specifies that all learning institutions must take into account the special needs of persons with disabilities** has ensured that the interests of these children are protected and promoted.

Kenya's Government is taking steps to expand and enhance comprehensive programmes that are essential for basic education. More emphasis is being placed on the girl child and in particular girls with special needs to increase their enrolment. The enrolment of girls in primary schools increased from 43.1% in 2003 to 59.7% in 2008.

Chairperson,

Subsidized secondary education has seen the rate of enrolment of girls in primary and secondary schools increase from 43.1% in 2003 to 59.7% in 2008. Indeed the Government of Kenya recognizes that in order to realize the Millennium Development Goals as well as our Vision 2030, which is the blue print for Kenya's development, maximum exploitation of science, technology and innovation is crucial. The Government continues to put mechanisms in place to encourage the girl child to take up and put more effort in science and technology subjects. In this regard, we have embarked on affirmative action in science and technology courses for female students in the prior training institutions by providing full sponsorship and bursaries.

At the university level, there is a deep but modest increase in women's enrolment but parity is yet to be achieved. Although there are more women in high schools at the primary level, the number of women in high schools is still low at the university level. In the Public Universities, the enrolment of female students increased from 34.7% in 2002/3 to 37.7% in 2008/9. In addition, female enrolment in public Technical and Entrepreneurship Training Institutions has also increased and currently stands at 49%. The relatively lower admissions of female students into universities reflect the cumulative effects of the factors that hinder girls' participation, good performance and progress at lower levels. As an affirmative action, the Government put the university admissions cap on female students higher than that of males to help bridge this gap.

Some of the major obstacles which impede preference of parents for boys in transition to secondary school, pregnancy of girls in primary school leading to school dropout, forced early marriages, and increasing number of children out of school are some of the factors that forces many girls to take over responsibilities to bring up their siblings.

Chairperson,

It is a pleasure to note that some positive results have been recorded in the employment sector as a result of Kenya's growing economy which has been on the recovery path after a decline in 2008. Kenya's economic growth is expected to reach 6% by the end of the financial year ending June 2011.

Affirmative Action's enforcement and compliance to it being closely monitored to ensure that the situation of women in the public sector improves.

Chairperson,

The Government of Kenya recognizes the benefits of creating a gender friendly environment in the employment sector. This is being achieved through the implementation of the Employment Act of 2007 which entitles women to 'three months maternity leave with full pay in addition to the annual leave'. In addition, men are currently entitled to two weeks paternity leave. The new Constitution further requires Parliament to establish a court with the status of the High Court to hear on employment and labour disputes. To increase access to financial capital, the Government has established the Women Enterprise Fund as well as the Youth Enterprise Fund.

Chairperson,

As I conclude, I wish to state that besides education, Kenya has made other progress in other critical areas such as decision making, leadership, responsibility and professional growth of women. Based on these and other reforms.

The developments I have shared with you are as a result of the Government's commitment to the promotion of gender equality. I wish to re-affirm this commitment and to assure you that Kenya will continue to work collaboratively with that care to ensure that the rights of women are mainstreamed in all spheres of development.

Finally, I would like to thank you for making the last session a fruitful one. I requested the admission of women outside of the International Women's Day to enable delegations celebrate the day with fellow countrywomen. We are grateful that this request was received favourably and that after we finished our deliberations in New York, we will be able to celebrate this important day with our fellow women in our countries on March 8th, 2011.

Thank you.

Chairperson

As I provide I wish to state that besides education Kenya has made other progress in other critical areas such as health, housing, roads, electricity, water supply, etc.

The development of Kenya should not be seen as a goal of the Government, it is a process. I wish to re-affirm the commitment and to assure you that Kenya will continue to work collectively with other partners to ensure that the rights of women and girls are fully protected.

Finally, Madam Chairperson, during the last session, Kenya requested the Commission to hold its session in Nairobi for the International Women's Day to ensure maximum coverage and day with fellow country women. We are pleased that the request was received favourably and that this year we will be able to celebrate the important day with our fellow women in our country on March 8th 2011.

Thank you