



Statement by

Honorable Minister Kouraiti Beniato
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Kiribati

On behalf of the

Pacific Islands Forum Group

55th Commission on the Status of Women

Chairperson

I am honored to address the 57th session of the Commission on Status of Women on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum group of countries which are members of the United Nations.

2. Congratulations on your election as Chairwoman of Office.

3. I wish to commend the report of the Secretary General on “Access and participation of women in training, science and technology, including measures for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work” and sincerely welcome the inclusion of a discussion to review the Beijing Platform for Action in the agenda. We also commend and support the idea that the outcomes and lessons learned for this session feed directly into the 2011 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR).¹

Chairperson

The diverse and territories of the Pacific are of different sizes and giving our gender commitments and all have inadequate levels of resources to meet them fully in the immediate or long term. Despite this, improving gender equality in the Pacific region is a major concern and we in the Pacific continue to discuss, promote and implement our national, regional and gender commitments.

5. In August last year, the Secretariat of the Pacific community convened the 11th Pacific Triennial Conference for Women in Noumea, New Caledonia. The focus of this meeting was a detailed review of national and regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action within one mechanism and continuing to accelerate progress.

¹ The AMR which was mandated at the 2005 World Summit to assess the progress made in achieving the MDGs and other goals and targets agreed at the major UN conferences and summits over the past 15 years, which constitute the United Nations Development Agenda (UNDA). Each year, the UNDA applies on a specific aspect of the UNDA. In 2011 it is: monitoring the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education.

Chairperson

6. Gender Equality in access to education has been achieved~~in~~ in primary and secondary school in most countries~~of the Pacific~~. However, some disparities exist~~and they~~ in participation~~is significantly~~ in 2009 women still have higher overall levels of illiteracy than men in a few Pacific countries.²
7. A Pacific review of the~~existing~~ Pacific Platform for Action in 2010 showed~~ed~~ that a key factor~~in~~ underpinning gender discrimination is the transition~~where~~ women and girls into traditionally male-dominated subjects such as trades and sciences and their participation~~in~~ all levels of educational decision making. Women~~are~~ going~~on~~ marginalisation in each of these areas~~is~~ due to social attitudes and practices which classify women into particular domains of activity and specific fields of work. For example~~in~~,~~the~~ national studies~~conducted in Kiribati and Samoa~~ has confirmed that women's involvement in science and technology was not equal to men's; women did not have careers as engineers or scientists~~in~~ in science subjects~~and~~ were not~~had not been~~ leaders in local~~new~~ new technologies, they~~were~~ they were overlooked when assessing career needs. Rather than lacking in aptitude~~some~~ reasons for not taking the science path is a lack of career counselling~~and the lack of female role models in science subjects in science related careers.~~
8. A major constraint is that~~available~~ data~~on~~ related~~to~~ gender~~disparity~~ to access~~More~~ scarce are data~~on~~ the quality~~of~~ education, including the extent to~~which~~ it may be perpetuating gender stereotypes. Definitions of literacy also warrant further research. For example, does literacy mean reading and writing~~or~~ over~~in~~ in English and/or the vernacular?

² Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) (2010). Reviewing Progress in Implementing the Pacific Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories. SPC, Noumea, New Caledonia. The Pacific Education Framework (PEF), 2009–2015.

9. Whilst the Pacific has considerable way to go to fully implement gender equality across education, it would be remiss of me to not provide some examples of successful policies, projects and programmes carried out by member countries and other stakeholders. From a regional perspective the Pacific Islands Forum Education Ministers' Framework for Education Development (the Framework) provides a framework for the education ministries of Pacific Island Forum countries. The idea of having a regional framework to further the development of Pacific education has been supported by Pacific Island Forum countries through their education ministries. The approach is built on the support of development partners. The Framework seeks to coordinate gender activities and provide advocacy, and a leadership role in policy dialogue at the regional level. Whilst it guides, it does not direct the work of Education Ministers or the national and local government agencies theme through the Framework and specific priorities include the development of strategies to increase participation of girls in upper secondary and vocational training and to implement more cost-effective strategies for service delivery to rural and outer island communities.
10. In the Pacific we also recognise the important role women play in education and play in advocating for human rights principles. The Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) under the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has been instrumental in carrying out human rights and legal literacy to educate teachers from a number of Pacific nations for this role. The University of the South Pacific (USP) has recently included gender studies into its academic curriculum and this course of study is being further explored by a full-time Coordinator of the curriculum.
11. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Community and Education and Training Centre (CETC) continues to be the only regional institution offering community development training for Pacific Islander. Recently the CETC has sought to broaden and strengthen training programmes offered so that they are better equipped to among other things understand, analyse and address the gender dimensions of crucial and emerging issues such as the use of ICT in community development.

12. Gender equality measures are in place in most education ministries, largely (but not only) as a result of donor influence. Gender officers are now included in some curriculum writing teams, for example in Solomon Islands and Samoa.
13. Given these realities, the priority now is for governments to strengthen technical and vocational training for women in fields where the greatest opportunities lie, and for the integration of women into traditionally tertiary educational fields.
14. I am delighted to report that in 2010, Palau, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Australia submitted their respective reports under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and are all scheduled to appear before the Committee this year. Kiribati appeared before the UPR committee in 2010. In the same year, the governments of Australia presented their six and seventh reports; New Zealand their seventh report and Papua New Guinea and PNG presented their initial, second and third reports respectively to the United Nations CEDAW Committee. The challenge now is to implement the respective recommendations and more importantly to make available the resources to do this.

Chairperson,

15. No Pacific statement is complete without placing the world for theurgos in attention and assistance to the Pacific Islands' vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. We recognize the importance of the inclusion of gender in developing mitigation and adaptation activities such as through improved access to resources including scientific research, training, technology and information and empowering women to become agents of change. It is also important to take into account women's specific priorities and needs and to make full use of their expertise, traditional knowledge and practices in the development of new technology and approaches to address climate change.

16. May I take this opportunity to acknowledge the representatives of NGOs, governments, civil society, business and the media.

Pacific and the development partners that we work with, who are present here at this meeting.

17. In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation for the contributions made by New Zealand, Australia, the United Nations and other governmental organisations working in the Pacific in support of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

18. Chairperson, I thank you once again for the honor to address the Commission on this important issue of “access and participation of women and girls in education/training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to the employment and decent work” and to share the Pacific experience.