



REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

STATEMENT BY

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to the United Nations**

Before the

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Commission on the Status of Women**

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Madame Chairperson,

Let me begin by associating my delegation with the statement made by the representative of the State of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Guyana values this forum as an opportunity for the sharing of experiences and best practices as well as the strengthening of efforts towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. We congratulate you, Madam Chairperson, as well as the other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of this Commission. We also take this opportunity to convey appreciation to Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women for her tireless efforts over the years in the field of gender equality and wish her well as she proceeds on retirement.

The delegation of Guyana is pleased to join the discourse on Agenda Item 3 on the Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century." We welcome in this regard, the attention being paid to "the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality" and "women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building." The issues underlying these themes are not only integral to the achievement of gender equality and the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action but also have a direct bearing on global efforts to promote development and peace and security.

Madame Chairperson, women and girls, constituting the majority of the world's population are also a majority of the world's poor. Poverty remains one of the root causes of conflict and disempowerment, rendering women and girls particularly vulnerable. Notwithstanding the goals for the empowerment of women articulated in the Beijing Platform for Women and the reaffirmation of commitment by governments to these goals, it is clear that much more remains to be done to secure a brighter future for women and girls.

This is not to deny the recognisable progress, uneven though it may be, that has been achieved with regard to gender equality. For its part the government of Guyana, guided by our nation's Constitution, remains strongly committed to the equality of women and men and has accorded high priority to its promotion. My Government is firmly of the view that women, who constitute a majority of the population in Guyana, and as an integral part of our society, should be allowed to contribute constructively, as equal partners with men, to the process of national development within a secure environment.

In recent years we have witnessed an intensification of measures to ensure the empowerment of women, through initiatives such as the establishment of Regional Women's Desks in the ten administrative regions of the country, the re-appointment of the National Commission on Women and the strengthening of collaboration with the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute which is mandated to assist in capacity building, skills training and the promotion of gender awareness nationally. Guyana now boasts of having one of the most progressive legislations in the English speaking Caribbean with regard to the equality of women. Particular progress has been realized in the area of education where there is equality of opportunity for both males and females. Records indicate that girls are performing better than their male counterparts to the extent that education officials now face the dilemma of strategizing on ways and means of overcoming the phenomenon of male underachievement. Guyana maintains a strong tradition of women's active participation in politics and public life and they now account for 31% of the Parliamentarians as well as the magistracy. The prestigious position of Chancellor of the Judiciary is currently held, for the first time, by a woman. However, there is still scope for greater participation of women in decision-making roles, including on State Boards and in the Private Sector.

In spite of achievements made globally, gaps continue to exist between articulation and implementation of legal and other measures aimed at gender equality. Further, there are still persistent behaviours and attitudes in many societies, which support beliefs in male superiority. These attitudes are detrimental to the full enjoyment by women of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms and can only be changed through dialogue, public education which clearly emphasizes the benefits to be derived from gender

equality, and the development of partnerships with men and boys. It is for this reason that Guyana supports empowerment programmes in areas such as those concerning the family, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and the elimination of domestic violence which include participation by men and boys. We therefore concur with the recommendations for action proposed by the Secretary General's as contained in document E/CN.6/2004/9.

Guyana has viewed as progressive United Nations Security Council Resolution ~~1325~~ adopted in October 2000, which served the purpose of focusing global attention on the need to mainstream a gender perspective in peace processes. We consider that women and children, who as experience has taught us suffer disproportionately as a result of conflicts, should be enabled to play a pivotal role in the maintenance of peace and security. We have noted that some peace-keeping missions include gender advisers and propose that women be made more aware of their potential role in conflict prevention and post conflict situations. Guyana also supports the earliest appointment of a gender adviser for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as noted in the Secretary General Report E/CN.6/2004/10, as a means of ensuring that the gender dimension receives adequate attention on a consistent basis.

Madame Chairperson, in conclusion, permit me to emphasize that the challenges that attend to the empowerment and equality of women can and must be overcome through increased dialogue and the development of genuine partnerships between women and men. We should also continue to ensure that women are made aware of their rights in order to enable them to effectively lobby and develop networks to achieve gender equality. My delegation cannot overemphasize the important role of the international community in addressing not only the human rights and political dimensions but also the economic challenges facing developing countries which ultimately impact the lives of women. We remain convinced that the solutions to these challenges must involve international action to address socio-economic issues including debt, financing for development and international trade, in order to improve the status of women.

I thank you.