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**STATEMENT  
BY**

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THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON  
AGENDA ITEM 28: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

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*Please check against delivery*

## **Chairperson,**

South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by the delegation of Algeria on behalf of the G77 and China and the delegation of Malawi on behalf of the SADC Group.

Substantial progress has been recorded over the past decade and longer in promoting, protecting and advancing the human rights of women globally, especially in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In South Africa gender equality is a national priority. While women now have improved access to housing, water, sanitation, electricity, social services, health-care and other services, more needs to be done as women in South Africa still bear a disproportionate burden of multiple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. As such, we are conscious of the need to mainstream gender transformation in all policies and programmes of government. In this regard, the South African Government has adopted five national priorities namely, job creation, education, health, rural development, food security and land reform, and fighting crime and corruption. Our government is committed to the advancement of women's human rights and has placed their realisation at the center of these national priorities.

South Africa is strongly committed to achieving the goals and targets articulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals, and other global, continental and regional instruments on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Seventeen years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action, much still needs to be done to fully realise its effective implementation. Multiple and complex challenges remain for millions of women across the globe in accessing basic justice, freedoms and the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights.

South Africa recognises that the establishment of UN Women in 2010 has provided important impetus to the mainstreaming and integration of gender perspectives across the entire United Nations system.

This has also had a positive impact on the UNSC Women, Peace and Security agenda, resulting in a renewed focus on the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325. In this regard, we have seen a renewed commitment by the United Nations system and Member States to address the challenges associated with women's participation in political, electoral, peacekeeping and peace-building processes, particularly in post-conflict settings.

We therefore support the continued commitment shown by UN Women to integrate a gender perspective under the Women, Peace and Security agenda, in keeping with its broader UN system-wide mandate.

This pertains also to the recruitment, selection and promotion of women in all UN organisations, entities and country teams, particularly at senior levels.

South Africa welcomes evidence of integration of gender perspectives across areas other than those specifically dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. Most recently, gender perspectives have been reflected in important sectoral areas such as sustainable development, climate change and trade and development.

**Chairperson,**

We remain committed to the advancement of women's rights consistent with our constitutional framework, our values and our international obligations. In this regard, our constitution promotes women's rights as human rights.

The South African Government has established a progressive and enabling legislative framework to protect, promote and advance the human rights of women. We have performed well in the area of political decision-making for women. We presently have 44% women representation in Parliament and 43% women at the level of Cabinet Ministers. At the provincial level, five of the nine provincial premiers are women. According to recent studies South Africa has the fifth-highest proportion of women on its corporate boards after Norway, Sweden, Finland and the US.

To this end, the South African Government has committed itself to pass into law by 2013 the Gender Equality Bill, in support of achieving 50/50 gender equality across government, public and private sectors, particularly at leadership and decision-making levels. The Gender Equality Bill is truly transformational. All organisations, entities and companies in South Africa will be required to meet the 50/50 gender equality target through the institution of specific gender parity measures, subject to monitoring and review by the Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

We are deeply conscious of the fact that rural women are particularly vulnerable to exclusion from opportunity that poverty and the associative ills of illiteracy and limited or no education brings, thereby subjecting them to lives mired in poverty, hardship and lack of access to decent work and employment.

We are therefore in the process of implementing a Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy aimed at empowering rural women and affording them access to economic opportunity and resources.

Efforts are underway to ensure that women, including women with disabilities become the main beneficiaries of land reform processes in South Africa

Undoubtedly, mainstreaming gender into budgeting processes is critical to building an equal society, consequently, gender responsive budgeting has been incorporated at all levels of budgeting planning processes across all spheres and levels of government in South Africa

**Chairperson,**

As in other countries with large traditional and rural based constituencies, South African women still bear the brunt of financial dependency on husbands, fathers, partners and family members, where they are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of gender-based violence

As such, the South African Government is stepping up the fight against gender-based violence and in particular sexual offences and domestic violence. The launch of the National Council Against Gender-based Violence on 25 August 2012, chaired by the Deputy President is a signal of the priority attached by the government to combating the scourge of gender-based violence in South Africa. The South African Minister of Justice is soon to make an announcement on the establishment of Special Sexual Offences Courts as an important tool to combat the unacceptable scourge of violence against women and girls.

Already South Africa has transformative laws such as the Domestic Violence Act, Maintenance Act, Employment Equity Act, Child Justice Act and Children's Act, serving to promote the rights of women and girls

South Africa is proud as part of the African Union, to have declared 2010 to 2020 the Decade of the African Women

In promotion of this Decade, we are committed to taking concrete steps to promote the empowerment of women on the Continent

In conclusion, the South African Government remains strongly committed to doing all that is necessary to ensure the upliftment and empowerment of women throughout our country, while contributing to promoting respect for women's human rights internationally

I thank you