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THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

AT THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
THIRD COMMITTEE

Under the General Discussion of Agenda Item 28:
“Advancement of Women”

NEW YORK
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Chairperson,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. At the outset, allow me, to commend you for the excellent manner in which you are conducting the work of this Committee.

The African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The African Group thanks the Secretary-General for his reports submitted under this agenda item and takes note of the recommendations contained therein.

The African Group believes that strong and visible leadership and commitment at all levels is required to move forward the agenda of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In the same vein, Africa continues to champion gender equality and the empowerment of women through many groundbreaking initiatives and commitments. Africa has declared 2010 to 2020 as the “African Women’s Decade” and has adopted gender-parity principles in all spheres. Since the Beijing Conference most of our countries have adopted many important commitments and protocols, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the African Union Gender Policy and the Africa-wide Campaign on Violence against Women. The Millennium Development Goal 3 which aims at promoting gender equality and empowerment of women goes beyond just parity in numbers. It emphasizes the fundamental transformation in social, economic and political roles and relationships between men and women in ways that ensure an equitable distribution of power, opportunities and outcomes. In line with these various commitments, a lot of progress has been made by African countries in terms of political participation of women and their economic empowerment through micro-credit programmes. African leaders understand that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is not just a goal in itself, but a key to sustainable development, economic growth, and peace and security. But we realize we need to do more, including the implementation of MGG 3.

Chairperson,

Rural women constitute one fourth of the world’s population and the majority of African Women live in rural areas. Rural women play a critical role in poverty and hunger eradication, in supporting their households in achieving food and nutrition security, improving rural livelihoods and generating income and overall well-being. Africa is convinced that there is an urgent need to focus on the empowerment of rural women and their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels. We call on the international community to continue its efforts in strengthening policies aimed at
prioritizing rural and agricultural development, as well as integrating and mainstreaming gender perspectives into rural, agricultural and development policies towards 2015 and beyond.

Chairperson

Violence remains the most dehumanizing manifestation of discrimination against women. It prevents women from the full enjoyment of their human rights. Unfortunately, continuing evidence shows that it remains pervasive and there is a need to further intensify efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women throughout the world. The African Group applauds and fully supports the Secretary-General's "Unite to End Violence against Women" campaign and the 'Network of Men Leaders' geared towards expanding global advocacy efforts to prevent violence against women. The Group believes that legislation provides the right foundation for a holistic and effective approach to addressing Violence against women and girls. The international legal framework, as embodied by CEDAW, obligates and guides States in the adoption of their own laws to address violence against women and girls.

Injustice and inequality against women persist in developing and developed countries and in all regions. Women still outnumber men among the world's poorest people. Many women work in vulnerable and low-paid jobs. The unpaid domestic and care-giving work remains a predominantly female realm, limiting women's opportunities for education, training, employment and political activity. The African Group believes that all these factors results in the exclusion of women from the benefits of education and sustainable development, and place them at risk of violence. The Group therefore calls for the implementation of the comprehensive commitments made by the international community on development including transfer of Official Development Assistance, transfer of technology, access to markets and on gender equality and women's rights. These will ensure women's equal access to economic resources, enhance their participation in decision making, and advance the empowerment of women and girls by uplifting their capabilities which would enable them to enjoy access to these resources through international co-operation.

Chairperson,

As we are approaching 2015, the gap between commitments and implementation must be closed. Without progress in gender equality there cannot be progress towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Discrimination against women and gender inequality impede progress in development, peace and security and the realization of human rights. The African Group believes that emphasize should be directed towards goals that are intended to promote the education
and health of women and girls. The Group welcomes the medical research development and technological initiatives on the treatment of HIV and AIDS that are accessible, affordable to all and are of good quality. We believe that the HIV treatment for 15 million people target set by the Secretary General is achievable only if the significant current gains in HIV prevention and antiretroviral treatment are sustained, while we work toward strengthening the treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. We therefore call on the international community to collaborate in creating an enabling environment including reviewing policies that will foster generic competition in order to reduce the cost of the price of drugs.

The African Group reiterates its commitment in intensifying efforts for the elimination of the Female Genital Mutilations and calls for the support of the international community towards the implementation of resolution 67/146 adopted last year. One of the most severe consequences of early childbearing is obstetric fistula. Child marriage puts the health of young girls in danger and exposes them to pregnancy and early childbearing which in turn puts the young girl at higher risks of maternal mortality, injury and disability. The Group reiterates the need to strive to increase reduction in maternal mortality in order to realize progress and achieve MDG5, hence to influence the post 2015 development agenda.

Illiteracy remains a serious constraint for women, limiting women’s participation in decision-making, maternal health and ending violence against them. We are also witnessing growing problem of trafficking in women and girls. The African Group recognizes that situations of increased poverty, unemployment, inequality, humanitarian emergencies, sexual violence, gender discrimination, social exclusion, marginalization, racism, among other factors, make women and girls vulnerable to trafficking in persons and contribute to exploitative conditions. There is an urgent need therefore to address the social, economic, cultural, political and other factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking. There is also a need to adopt and implement comprehensive policies and programmes at the national, sub-regional and regional levels to prevent all forms of trafficking in persons.

In conclusion, Chairperson, the African Group believes that it is imperative to investigate the current status on the advancement of women, identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is important to know where we are coming from, where we are and where we are heading; in order to shape the future we want. The voices of African women, their aspirations, interests, problems and needs should inform the development policy framework which will replace the MDGs.

I thank you, Chairperson.