Mr. Chairman,

At the outset please allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election to guide our discussions during this sixty-eighth Session. We pledge our continued support and cooperation.

Suriname aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Fiji, Guyana and Cuba, speaking respectively on behalf of the G-77 & China, CARICOM and CELAC.

We reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the first Executive Director of UN WOMEN, Michelle Bachelet and in this regard we pledge our continued support to the newly appointed Executive Director, Ms. Phumzile Mlabo Ngcuka, to further the goals and objectives of the Entity.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender equality and the empowerment of women has been a topic of discussion for decades. The principle was codified in regional and international human rights instruments and world leaders deemed it of such importance that they agreed to it as a stand-alone goal at the beginning of this millennium (MDG3).

While notable progress has been made with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women, challenges remain for millions of women and girls. In some parts of the world girls face considerable obstacles to get an education, women and girls still face the horrendous acts of violence, including sexual violence and trafficking and in many countries of the world women remain underrepresented in political life.

We concur with the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly when he remarked in his opening statement that and I quote: “We simply cannot reach our development goals, or advance human well-being without addressing the needs and challenges of women and youth, while also making use of the contributions of both” end quote. We applaud him for announcing his initiative to convene a High-level Event to discuss the role of women, youth and civil society in the post 2015 Development Agenda.
Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women and girls has been referred to as “the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights violation in the world”.

The data currently available on violence against women and girls, although underreported, should serve as a wakeup call for all—both women and men—to significantly scale up efforts to rid the world from this scourge. The involvement of men and boys is crucial in these efforts. Men should not only be seen as part of the problem (perpetrators) but they should become part of the solution (agents of change).

An often times overlooked element is the support for victims and survivors. In our view this support should be an integral part of a comprehensive strategy in the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

During the last 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Suriname has shared with the international community some of the initiatives in combating violence against women undertaken and being considered by the Government, in close cooperation with civil society organizations, including faith based organizations and organizations specially for men.

We commit ourselves to be a part of initiatives at the regional and international level that are aimed at creating awareness and seeking solutions for ending violence against women and girls.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Suriname has recently launched its Gender workplan for 2013 with the identification of the following priority areas: education and training, the eradication of poverty, violence against women, health and voice and participation.

The implementation of this gender workplan will be conducted through a partnership between the different Ministries and in close cooperation with civil society, workers organizations as well as with international partners. This workplan will form the basis for further dialogue and the formulation of a gender policy for the period 204-2016.

Specific initiatives to be implemented or to be continued relate to, among others: revising school curricula to eliminate negative gender stereotypes, preparing and adopting legislation regarding sexual harassment at work, implementation of ILO Convention 100 on equal pay and campaigns to prevent teenage pregnancies and infection with the HIV virus.
In closing Chairman, there is general agreement that investing in women is smart economics. The international community therefore has a duty to ensure that the other half of humanity is equipped and not hampered to realize their fullest potential.

Thank you.