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STATEMENT

BY

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ON

THE AGENDA ITEM 65:
"PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE
RIGHTS OF CHILDREN"

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Please check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,
Thank you for giving me the floor. I thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and insightful reports submitted under this agenda item.

My delegation appreciates the introductory statements made yesterday by the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Special Representative on Violence against Children, Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We appreciate the very important role played by the institutions they represent in our collective quest to address the numerous challenges that face children.

Mr. Chairman,
An education is vital for the full realization of an individual's potential, and is central to a country's social and economic development. Needless to say, educated children will most likely appreciate and embrace their choices in life, are not likely to engage in early marriage; will discard harmful practices, whether imposed by culture or modernity; will engage in and participate in activities that will advance their potential including to leadership positions; will plan their family and take care of it and will likely protect themselves from violence. This is what education will do; the outcomes are identifiable and measurable.

At the time of Kenya's independence 50 years ago, many more boys than girls went to school. Social customs and gender roles generally favoured boys at the expense of girls. Over the 50 years since our independence, cultural barriers to girls education have been whittled down and differences in enrollment have declined considerably. Kenya's Constitutional guarantees for the right to education and the implementation of various policies including integrating Early Childhood Development into basic education are continuing to improve the net enrolment rates of both girls and boys which have grown from 92.9% in 2009 to 95.7% in 2011. As a result, it is expected that Kenya will achieve the goal on universal primary education by 2015. Further and in order to improve the quality of education, the Government is currently putting in place the necessary infrastructure in schools, which will enable the launch of laptops programme for grade 1 students. This programme will be implemented progressively over the next three years. It is aimed at introducing technology to children at an early age in order to bridge the digital divide and inculcate skills that will enable them to be more competitive globally. The Government is committed to continue improving the education policies and systems in the country.

Mr. Chairman,
Notwithstanding the efforts being put in place by various governments, under-five child mortality is still unacceptably high. Advances made in HIV/AIDS and malaria over the last decade are in danger of being wiped away if PMTCT(Preventing mother to child
transmission) interventions and resources are not sustained. The Kenya Government is collaborating with many stakeholders and partners such as the Global Fund and other agencies as well as a cross section of the civil society in the campaigns to reduce cases of HIV/AIDS, malaria and Tuberculosis transmission under the PMTCT programmes. Kenya is one of the 22 countries of priority listed under the Global Plan Towards the Elimination of New HIV infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping their Mothers Alive. This provides the foundation for country-led movements towards the elimination of new HIV infections among children and keeping their mothers alive. Among the various initiatives in the Plan, in November 2012, Kenya launched the national campaign to stop new HIV infections among children by 2015. The campaign is running under the slogan, Kata Shauri, Tulinde Kizazi (make the decision and protect generations), to mobilize Kenyans to take both individual and social responsibility to prevent all new HIV infections in children and promote maternal health. The campaign is encouraging the full participation of men in ensuring that their children and their children’s mothers are healthy and it will also encourage men to go for voluntary testing (to know their HIV status) and to always accompany their partners to antenatal clinics. The Government has also abolished pre and post maternal care fees in public health facilities. This is will increase access to maternal healthcare and consequently reduce the child and maternal mortality rates.

Mr. Chairman,

The abuse of children remains a problem that affects the most modern of cities as well as the most traditional of rural communities. Children with disabilities are 3 to 4 times more likely to be victims of violence. Girls with disabilities are at an even greater risk of violence. What is most worrying is that violence against children is perpetuated by people known to their victims who often have close and personal ties with the victims. The consequences of violence against children can be lasting and enduring for both the victims and communities as a whole. After the launch of the first ever Kenya Violence against Children Survey, the Government is developing and executing a comprehensive plan to effectively respond to violence. The plan combines both a long-term investment in prevention and a commitment to improving the functioning of State institutions. Some of the programmes in both private and public sectors include: help lines, Shelters and Rescue homes, Gender Based Violence Recovery one stop centres, legal aid clinics, psychosocial support services, rehabilitation and resettlement services as well as police gender desks. In addition, male involvement groups have been formed to champion the rights of women. Of significance is the Million Fathers Campaign launched in July 2012, as part of the UN Secretary-General’s Africa UNiTE Campaign to end violence against women and girls. The campaign has been engaging men in their various roles as fathers, brothers, husbands and friends to serve as advocates to end gender-based violence within their communities and society as a whole.
Mr. Chairman,

The impacts of poverty and HIV and AIDS have led to dramatic changes in family units and systems of care leading to child headed households. Children heading households not only deal with the loss of their parent or parents but also have to stop going to school or attend school irregularly, in order to work and care for the rest of the family. Additionally due to their social, economic and physical vulnerability, they face a heightened risk of sexual exploitation, hazardous work, forced labour and physical abuse. All these leave such children with both physical and psychological scars that deny them an opportunity to reach their full potential in life. In order to increase social safety nets for child headed households, the Government of Kenya together with partners put in place the cash transfer programme for orphans and vulnerable children in 2007. Since then the programme has grown from covering 4,700 households to over 130,000 households by March, 2012. Evidence suggests that the program is having a significant impact on poverty reduction and school enrollment. The Government is making every effort to continue improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.

Mr. Chairman,

While the global averages reflect some significant success in achieving the MDGs, the country by country assessment particularly in sub-Saharan Africa reflects that there is a lot of work that needs to be done in order to achieve the MDGs. With only a few months to 2015, it is obvious the goals set in 2000 will not be met. Four of the goals that directly impact children have mixed results. The post 2015 development agenda should open a new dawn for development and this should include addressing the unfinished business of the MDGs. To do so, it must address itself to the challenges of achieving the MDGs. It must be both practical and ambitious. It must comprehensively address poverty. Most fundamentally it must seek to meet our present needs and secure those of future generations.

I thank you.