

STATEMENT

BY

AMB. ANTHONY ANDANJE
DIRECTOR/MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE
OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA

TO THE

SECOND COMMITTEE

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 24:
"WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT"**

DURING THE

70TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 & China, and Sierra Leone on behalf of the African Group.

Kenya welcomes the recently adopted Post 2015 sustainable development agenda. We believe it represents a new vision and commitment to action for both developed and developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

It is unfortunate that the role played by women in development is affected by gender discrimination. It denies women and girls equal access to education, health care, and decent work. It also denies them representation in political and economic decision making.

Women constitute 51% of the global population. Their contribution must be central to the realization of the Post 2015 sustainable development agenda.

However, an unacceptably high number of women continue to bear the brunt of discrimination, poverty, unemployment, violence, HIV and AIDS, and lack access to education and essential services.

My delegation believes we must focus on ensuring that women and girls have access to education, health and decent work opportunities as elaborated under the SDGs. It is therefore imperative that we take measures that will help uplift the lot of women and girls even as we ensure equal opportunities for them.

If we are to ensure that women effectively engage in development, governments must be encouraged to put in place clear administrative steps and legislative measures.

We are convinced that they would ensure that women have the tools necessary for effective participation, equal access to financial services, and the right to own factors of production. These in our view, are the core issues that should be on top of our agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Since Independence, Kenya has endeavoured to make women active partners in the development process through mainstreaming programs. This has benefited them along with the rest of the population. This approach has not only been effective in improving equity but also in increasing the economic productivity of women.

Our commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women is premised on the recognition of the central role women play in development.

More than 70% of Kenyans living in rural areas derive their income mainly from agriculture. Most of them are women who bear largest burden on the farm.

This entails balancing household chores with child care as well as responsibilities for other family members.

Mr. Chairman,

Although Kenyan women often depend on land to generate income, they only own one percent of agricultural land. This is

meagre considering their significant contribution to agriculture, food security and nutrition.

In order to safeguard their rights to property, the government has enacted various legislation such as the National Land Policy (2009).It recognizes women's rights to own property on equal basis with men.

The Matrimonial Property Act, 2013 safeguards women's property rights during and upon dissolution of marriage. Whereas the Marriage Act, 2014, gives effect to constitutional provisions on equality between parties to a marriage.

More significantly, the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act, 2011, provides for dual citizenship. It enables a woman married to a foreigner confer him citizenship, a notable departure from the past where only a man could confer a foreign wife such citizenship

Mr. Chairman,

The government introduced free primary education in 2003 to give access to Education to all Kenyan children in accordance with the Constitution. It underscores the right of every Kenyan to access quality basic education.

Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of girls attending school. Between 2006-2008 the number of girls in school surpassed that of boys. Similar increases in girl-child enrolment were recorded at secondary school level.

Gender parity in education at primary level has indeed been attained.

Mr. Chairman,

As part of its efforts to uplift those furthest behind, the Government has initiated programmes, policy, legislative and administrative measures to ensure more involvement of women in development activities. In this respect, gender equality has been prioritized in mainstream development plans especially, in the country's development blue print, Vision 2030. Its Medium Term Plans (2008-2012 and 2013-2017) place the realization of gender equity and equality at the core of our National Development planning.

The Second Medium Term Plan emphasizes gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women, as key priorities in ensuring equality between men and women in access to economic, social and political opportunities.

Mr. Chairman,

At least 30% of all public procurement is reserved for women youth and persons with disability. This has enabled women to participate in government procurement by providing them with the opportunity to do business with Government

The Government has also set up a kitty – the Women Enterprise Fund, to give them access to development funds. The fund has enabled women access funds for starting or growing their business ventures without the burden of collateral required by banks.

Mr. Chairman,

As regards gender based crimes, Kenya gives priority to enforcement of various legislation that target crimes against women and girls. Laws such as the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act, 2010; the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation

(FGM) Act, 2011, the Sexual Offences Act, 2006, the Marriage Act, the Penal Code and various legislation dealing with gender based crimes, attract tough penalties against offenders.

We are convinced these measures will give impetus to our efforts to help safeguard women and girls.

Mr. Chairman,

On the political front, the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, stipulates that no more than two thirds of any gender shall constitute elective and appointive positions in Government. As a result, more than 30% of Kenya's Cabinet comprises of women, 25.9% of Parliamentarians are women and over 40% are in the Judiciary.

Mr. Chairman,

As you are aware, in every nation the development process is shaped by the realities of financial and natural resources, administrative capacity, and tradition. Women, as the primary water collectors, food producers and wood gatherers; are the most affected when resources such as land, water, trees and pasture are degraded.

It is therefore important to involve more women in the debate on climate and climate change. We believe their voice must be heard at COP21 climate change meeting to be held in Paris later this year.

Finally Mr. Chairman, we urge more countries to join us in developing policies that focus on women in development. It is only by working together that we can attain our collective goal of uplifting their wellbeing.

I thank you.