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## STATEMENT

BY

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to the United Nations

On Behalf

OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

At the

General Debate

OF THE

55<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
STATUS OF WOMEN

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

**Mr. Chairman,**

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group aligns itself fully with the statement made by the delegation of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, allow me to extend our warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to all the members of the Bureau on your unanimous election to preside over this session, and to the full support of the African Group in the accomplishment of your noble task of securing the proceedings of the 55th Session of the Conference.

We commend the Secretary General for his report contained in document E/CN.6/2011/3, which provides a comprehensive examine of the critical issue of women and girls' access to and participation in science and technology, including for the promotion of women's labour access to employment and decent work.

While noting that encouraging progress is required in advancing women's participation in science and technology and even women's participation in some sub-field of science, particularly life science, we are still concerned with the fact that they continue to be underrepresented in other important fields of economic development such as computing, engineering, manufacturing and construction.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Recognizing the essential role women play in African national economies, specially in agriculture where they count for more than half of food production, as well as in household responsibility and community management, the African Group is of the view that ensuring women and girls' access to science and technology, knowledge and skills is an economic imperative.

Indeed, to address food security and to sustainably feed more than 4 billion people lastly and to feed 9 billion people in 2050, we need the active participation of women.

Lacking at the pressing nature of the development challenges facing Africa in particular, we fully agree with the Secretary General when he argues that policymakers have a key role to play in integrating a gender perspective in science, technology and innovation policies.

But the adoption of good policies and gender mainstreaming cannot in itself bring the necessary changes in society. It is not in itself a revolution in the role of women, as the equals to men, to participate more effectively in poverty eradication and sustainable development efforts.

Instead, building women's scientific and technical capacity in Africa can only help them achieve a better and more vibrant productivity. To contribute fully to economic growth, if economic and social infrastructure and institutions are not adequately improved, including through the transfer of technology and technical assistance.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In the past decades much progress has been made in Africa in expanding access to basic education for girls.

Nevertheless, a lot is still to be done in order to make science and technology attractive to women. We believe that building technical capacity is also a challenge in Africa, while the severe impact of the global economic and financial crisis, as well as the donor emergency of this continent, hampers African efforts to development and poverty eradication.

It is worthy to note that, the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Protocol to the Africa Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003 and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa provide a fundamental framework for African commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Indeed, since the Session of the Commission on African Women, the African countries have continued to provide leadership in championing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through its regional and global commitments.

In this regard, important legal frameworks have been developed in Africa to meaningfully address the challenge of the access to and participation of women in science and technology.

The First African Union Conference of African Women in Science and Technology, held in Addis Ababa in August 2007, expressed clearly that women are a resource that could be used towards social and economic development of the continent, through participating in science and technology programs. The meeting aimed mainly at addressing the under-representation of African women in science, mathematics and engineering fields, and also considered and endorsed a proposal to establish a continental association under the auspices of the African Union.

Furthermore, the Second Decade of Action Education for Africa (2000-2010), called for a greater participation of women in science and technology at all levels including higher education.

By adopting the ever All Gender Equality in 2000, and since further to declare an African Women's Decade 2010-2020, and the launching of the fund for African Women, the African countries showed undoubted commitment and leadership in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Moreover, while the African Union is proud to adopt a continental Gender Policy, it is fully sensitized of the challenges and the weaknesses in institutional and technical capacities at national as well as regional levels.

Therefore, we strongly believe that the combination of comprehensive legislation; investing in girls' education; women's training and professional skills; promoting women's access to science and technology will enable women to significantly contribute to the efforts towards poverty reduction and achievement of sustainable development of the African continent.

A renewed international commitment to the provision of technology and technical assistance to developing countries, in particular to the African

continent is of crucial importance to stability and effective implementation of policies and strategies on gender equality and empowerment of women.

Indeed, these are challenges that require the concerted efforts of not just one country alone. The struggle for women's empowerment is a global development, international space and a priority agenda for all continents, not just from governments but equally from all stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector.

This is why the priority theme of the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the status of women, "Access and participation of women in science, technology, education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women equal access to employment opportunities, is a commitment in the first decade for equality, development and peace for the twenty first century.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In conclusion, the African Group has some of the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's report and reiterates its readiness to fully collaborate with the Commission on the Status of Women towards the achievement of consensus, realistic work and action which can be the main outcome of the deliberations of the current cycle of the Commission.

I thank you for your attention!