



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zimbabwe  
to the United Nations*

**STATEMENT BY HON. JOYCE M. MACHINDE**

**MINISTER OF WOMEN AFFAIRS, GENDER AND COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT.**

**TO THE**

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

**ON THE 'PRIORITY THEME'**

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## Introduction

Chairperson,

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statements made by Argentina on behalf of the group of 77 and China, by Mozambique on behalf of the African Group and by Namibia on behalf of the SADC Group. Zimbabwe is pleased to participate in the 50th session of the Commission on World Education and Science, another important priority of the 2000-2001 theme. Zimbabwe's reports which provide a basis for our deliberations. Let me also congratulate Ms Michelle Bachelet on her appointment as Executive Director of UN Women and also point out that my country pledges its cooperation with her office.

## Science and Technology Education

Chairperson,

My Government firmly believes that development of nations is dependent on the availability and full utilization of appropriate science and technology. More than 50% of our population is women whose vast untapped skills to be fully utilized in some critical areas of education and training. AS A CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF EDUCATION, science and technology education has never developed fully by providing knowledge, skills and attitudes with which to make sense of the world.

Chairperson,

The 1975 Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action addressed the issue of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and to increase their access to education, training, science and technology, and removal of obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women. In line with this my government has prioritized the issue of promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in our national development agenda.

## Progress made and gaps remaining

Chairperson,

Despite the many challenges facing us in Zimbabwe, my Government has gone a long way to enhance the pillars of this year's theme on access, participation, training and employment of women and girls. We have surpassed the MDG target in terms of access to basic education. According to UNESCO

2010 statistics, Zimbabwe at 92% literacy rate is in the lead in Africa. This feat has been achieved through successive policy interventions that were adopted at independence in 1980.

My Government has made significant investments in education, especially the 'aid' to access and retain girls in school through the Education Assistance Model (EAM). Of the total number of children enrolled, 56% are girls. Furthermore, my Government has begun to build schools that all children of school going age access within 3km radius from their homesteads. The concept of providing 'life literacy' schools have been adopted and this has helped increase completion rates particularly for the girl child. The focus on early childhood development has resulted in the introduction of the early childhood learning (ECL) grade in all primary schools both in rural and urban areas. In addition, the Residential Computerisation Programme is availing computers throughout the country in rural schools in order to enhance both teaching and learning and also reduce the rural-urban digital divide.

### Making science and technology accessible to girls

To encourage subjects at secondary school, government has adopted a strategy of science and mathematics camps for girls in all the ten provinces of the country. These camps and science clubs provide a forum to promote and disseminate science and mathematics education and to boost the confidence of the girls to pursue science related careers in tertiary and higher education institutions. In these camps, female role models who have ventured into non-traditional careers come talk back to the girls. Two thousand girls from the ten provinces of the country participate in these camps every year.

### Chairperson

In higher and tertiary levels strategies have been implemented to increase access to education by female students. These include affirmative action and admission policies at universities. The establishment of the Zimbabwe Open University has enabled more previously disadvantaged females to participate in their chosen fields of study at their own pace. The establishment of the women's University in Africa in Zimbabwe by women themselves has resulted in the enrolment of 65% females and 70% males at the said university. This has greatly increased access to university education by women and girls. In addition a special student financial assistance scheme, 'Madam Phyllis' programme, set up by Government in 2005 has assisted up to 45% female students. His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe has set up a presidential scholarship programme to assist needy students to study at universities outside the country. 49% of the beneficiaries are female students.

strategies have resulted in a much improved access to tertiary education by women from 2006 to 2010 as follows;

- Vocational Education & Training enrolment of women increased from 34% in 2006 to 44.3% in 2010
- Universities from 36.9% to 39.5%
- Technical colleges from 56.7% to 69.4 %

Of the total number of students involved in open and distance learning 40% are women.

**Chairperson,**

During the past few years tertiary education there is mixed progress on the level of participation by females at tertiary levels. An assessment on the participation of women in science and technology at universities carried out in 2010 indicated female participation in the following faculties as follows;

- Agriculture: 48.7%
- Engineering: 7.4%
- College of Health Sciences: 31.9 %
- Natural Science: 50%
- Veterinary Science: 9 %

**Chairperson,**

Government is working in collaboration with a local Council called E-Knowledge for Women in Southern Africa (EKOWISA) which promotes the effective and efficient use of information and communication technologies (ICT) by women in urban and rural areas. This Council through availing ICT's to communities, teach languages to help them appreciate the value of ICT's in their businesses by marketing their products through the internet. 80% of community participants are women at each programme site.

**Chairperson,**

My Government has introduced a programme to develop science and technology in collaboration with the Society for Engineering and Technology in Africa (SETA) and SETA accomplishes this by introducing practical science and technology to create creativity and innovation in children, including the girl child.

## Challenges

Chairperson,

The above impressive gains and measures are threatened, stagnated and reversed in so far as our country has been subjected to economic sanctions that were imposed upon our country by the EU and the USA. The women and girl children of Zimbabwe have borne most of the brunt of the economic sanctions. The resultant economic decline has meant that girls are unable to complete their education in the country because of the high cost of education. Secondly, internationalisation of education is seen as a luxury for girls perceived as a luxury instead of a necessity because of limited resources. Thirdly, the flight of skilled human capital to other countries in search of greener pastures has eroded our gains and has also meant that the availability of role models to girls is compromised.

## Conclusion

Chairperson,

Zimbabwe remains committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and will continue to do its utmost to deliver progress to our women and girls and our society at large. We call upon the EU and the USA to unconditionally remove the economic sanctions they unfairly imposed upon my country. This development will facilitate the education and economic empowerment of women and girls which is a prerequisite to achieving gender equality.

I thank you.

Chairperson

Chairperson

The above impressive gains and measures are threatened, stagnated and reversed in some instances because of the illegal economic sanctions that were imposed upon our country by the EU and the USA a decade ago. The women and girls of Zimbabwe have borne the brunt of the economic sanctions. The resultant economic decline has meant that girls are likely to complete their education in the context of competing family demands. Secondly, introduction of innovation in science and technology for girls is perceived as a luxury instead of a necessity because of limited resources. Thirdly, the flight of skilled human capital to other countries in search of greater payoffs has eroded our gains and has also meant that a productivity-driven model for girls is compromised.

Chairperson

Chairperson

Zimbabwe remains committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women and will continue to do its utmost to deliver progress to our women & girls and our society at large. We call upon the EU and the USA to unconditionally remove the economic sanctions that have hindered our progress. This development will facilitate the education and economic empowerment of women and girls with a view to achieving gender equality.

I thank you.