



TUNISIA

**Statement by HE. Mrs. Sihem Badi,
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On behalf of the African Group

**AT THE FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**

*under the general discussion for agenda item 3 "Follow-up to the Fourth World
Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General
Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality in the
twenty-first century"*

**New York
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Madam Chair,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group before the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

At the outset, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Madam Chair, and to all other members of the Bureau on your election to preside over this session. The African Group pledges its full cooperation and is confident that you will steer those important deliberations to a successful conclusion.

The African Group aligns itself fully with the statement made by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We further thank the Secretary-General for his resolute leadership under the priority theme and believe that the recommendations contained therein will certainly augment our collective endeavours.

Madam Chair,

The African Group recognizes the critical role and contribution of rural women in enhancing agricultural and rangeland production, improving food security and eradicating poverty. In this regard, we welcome the priority theme of this session entitled "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges".

In line with most international instruments including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), African Heads of State adopted the 1990-2000 Plan of Action for the African Women's Decade underscoring "a grassroots approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women as the means for accelerating commitment to improve the lives of women. The theme of the decade is "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" and this theme is aligned with International Women's Day.

Ten themes have been selected as priority areas for the Decade as follows: Fighting Poverty and Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women and Entrepreneurship, Agriculture and Food Security, Health, Maternal Mortality, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, Education, Environment and sustainable development, science and technology,

Governance and Legal Protection, Finance and Gender Budgeting, Women In Decision Making, Gender and Equality in the African Women movement and mentoring, Youth and Governance and Gender, Women on gender equality and women's empowerment, Ending violence against Women (VAW).

In connection with ending violence against women, the African Union adopted during its 17th Summit in Addis Ababa in 2011, a decision requesting the adoption of a resolution on eradicating the practice of Female Genital Mutilation by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Since, important steps have been taken towards making effective this decision during the 67th session of the General Assembly.

The African Union has put in place appropriate approaches, financial mechanisms and a legal framework to deliver on the commitments for the decade.

The Commission has also started operationalizing the Gender Management System (GMS) under the African Union Secretariat as part of the new African Union Specialized Technical Committee structure. Under this structure, the Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs will play an important role in remaining holders of Gender and Women's Affairs in the continent.

Madam Chair,

The twelve critical areas of concern identified during the Beijing process continue to form the basis for assessing the levels of gender equality and women's empowerment.

In relation to these critical areas of concern, Africa has registered some progress at national, sub-regional, and regional level. A majority of African countries have achieved success in areas such as increased school enrolment for girls, wider coverage of health care services, increased participation of women in decision-making, and representation of women in governance structures.

Madam Chair,

Despite the many achievements made, many rural women are still struggling to afford nutritious food, particularly as food prices go up globally. These challenges are compounded by lack of clean air, safe water and basic sanitation services and infrastructure.

The ongoing global crises relating to food, climate and volatile markets linked with agricultural trade have further, disproportionately impacted rural women and girls, worsening already difficult situations where they have had to bear significant burdens.

The majority of rural women perform both domestic tasks and manage also farm and trade. They are responsible for the care of children, the sick and the elderly, in addition to performing essential social functions within their communities.

Madam Chair

In Conclusion, I wish to reiterate the African Group's commitment to the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, this goal will only be attained if adequate resources are mobilized and allocated for implementation.

We therefore urge the international community, Governments, United Nations Agencies and other international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations and private sector, to re-double their efforts to enable the effective implementation of policies and strategies to gender equality and empowerment of women, as a path towards achieving the international agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you for your attention.