

GHANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF GHANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
19 EAST 47TH STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
TEL. 212-832-1300 • FAX 212-751-6745



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STATEMENT

BY

H. E. MR. KEN KANDA

**AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF GHANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

ON

AGENDA ITEM 28: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

AT THE

**THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 66TH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK, 11TH OCTOBER, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General for his insightful reports on this important agenda item. I am guided in particular by the statements made by Her Excellency Amina J. Mohammed, Chair of the African Union Group of 77 and China.

The Government of Ghana remains committed to promoting and ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment in our country. The 1992 Constitution and the laws of Ghana in conjunction with other international legal documents such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and Protocol, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the outcomes of the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly remain the guiding policy framework for gender equality and empowerment of women in our country.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General's report noted that despite the lack of recognition for the pivotal role rural women play in agriculture and rural development, the high level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals in 2010 highlighted rural women as essential to global national food security and rural development. It stressed the need for all regions to institute rural reform policies favourable to women as well as individual and collective efforts to build up the capacity of women's rights to own land and other property.

Furthermore, with increased migration of rural populations to urban areas, the expansion of women's roles in agriculture and other tasks. Yet, this has not translated to the full and equal participation of women in decision-making bodies at the national, regional, and local levels. To enhance rural development, the report emphasized the need for gender-sensitive policies in rural development, agriculture and other related sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

Rural women form the backbone of the agricultural labour force in most developing countries and in Ghana, 47% of rural women constitute the labour force. They generally work as subsistence farmers, small-scale entrepreneurs and unpaid care workers or casual wage labourers. The global financial and economic crisis, volatile prices of food and fuel, as well as the uncertainties and impact of climate change has further complicated efforts to reduce poverty and inequality and aggravate an already dire situation.

Realizing that agriculture is the backbone of Ghana's economy; and the fact that in Ghana, food crop farmers are about 55% to 60% women, the Government of Ghana has undertaken a wide range of measures to address the complex challenges confronted by rural women. These include the provision of credit facilities, improved technical services, as well as upgrading their skills in management and finance. Since 1995, there have been programmes aimed at providing women with micro-credit and small loans, agro-processing equipment, and benefits to enhance their capacity through information services.

Education is the most sustainable means to empower women and to lift them out of poverty. The Ministry of Education has organized "night schools" with the intention of making women functionally literate. With the advent of the adult literacy programme and the adult feeding programmes, the enrollment and retention of rural female students has improved.

significantly. Other social protection programmes targeting poor and rural women, such as pre-natal and post-natal care, health insurance, and community-based health financing schemes (CHFS) and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) have also been introduced.

Mr. Chairman,

Public investment in sustainable infrastructure, such as water supply, sanitation and renewable energy as well as fuel-efficient and labour-saving technologies is fundamental to reducing the burden of unpaid care work. In addition to enhancing their chances of dignified employment outside the home, this approach is therefore necessary to incorporate the needs of women into national policies, especially with regard to food and agriculture.

States, civil society and international organizations must work together to identify, monitor and evaluate the impact of such measures. National statistical offices should analyze and disseminate comparable sex-disaggregated data to ensure that such measures are integrated in policy design and target rural women in national and local employment creation initiatives as well as public works programmes to enable them to participate in the global value chain.

Likewise we also need to put in place temporary special measures to realize the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and budgeting. This includes reviewing existing commitments on rural women's rights and development to ensure their effective contribution to local and national development. In addition, we need to examine the impact of agricultural subsidies and other support practices and assess their impact on gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas.

Mr. Chairman,

The participation of women in decision-making is critical to the fight against poverty. This level of low participation by women excludes their perspectives in policies and legislation and deprives society of their contribution to national budgets and resource allocation. Essentially, it is crucial that we move beyond socio-political considerations to ensure women's full participation in decision-making. Conscious of the need for a multi-pronged approach to increase the number of women in politics, Ghana is considering the introduction of quotas as a starting point to address the existing gaps.

At the inception of the new UN-Entity for Women, it is high time that we develop a new concept that promotes the participation of women in the political arena. Indeed, we must all take the necessary steps to hasten the implementation of gender programmes and Millennium Development Goals.

Let me conclude, by congratulating the three women, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Ms. Leymah Gbowee and Ms. Tawakul Karman, who have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their fight for women's safety and rights to full participation in peace-building. Their activities are not only an inspiration to women in Africa and the Middle East but to women all over the world.

I thank you.