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**SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**STATEMENT
BY**

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RIGHTS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
COOPERATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**ON
AGENDA ITEM 29: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

**UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK
11 OCTOBER 2011**

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THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT
BY

MS. CLAUDINE RAMOSEPELE
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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
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Chairperson,

South Africa is honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the Africa Group and the United Republic of Tanzania and aligns itself with the statements read by Argentina, China, Kenya on behalf of the Africa Group and the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the SADC Group.

South Africa wishes to congratulate you on your leadership of the Third Committee and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of the full cooperation and support of my delegation in ensuring that we have a successful session.

Chairperson,

South Africa believes that gender equality and equity are fundamental rights and prerequisites for sustainable development. Our country is party to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and continues to be actively engaged in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other international instruments pertaining to the advancement of women, women's empowerment and gender equality. Societies that will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and their full development potential

South Africa will continue to work closely with the African Union, the Women and Gender Equality (WGEU), and believe that closer collaboration with the UN Commission on the Status of Women will bring a greater visibility, better coordination and enhance the effectiveness of a gender perspective throughout the UN system.

Chairperson,

Women play a significant and positive role as change agents in societies, especially those emerging from conflict. In this regard they have demonstrated great resolve for reconciliation in national cohesion during peace building processes. The needs and priorities of women continue to be highlighted in peace conferences and in post-conflict reconstruction. This situation needs to be retained as a matter of necessity.

We need to encourage the involvement and active participation of women on key stakeholders in all stages of peace processes, including as mediators and key participants in conflict resolution, peace-building and post-conflict development. Good practices for increasing women's representation in national and international conflict-resolution and peace-building bodies should be more widely disseminated and consistently implemented.

Furthermore, women need to play an active role in the discussions on climate change. They are the ones who fetch water from the streams, collect wood for cooking and to build their own small farms for subsistence farming. It is therefore logical that they play an active role in this regard for the reason that they are the best caregivers who ensure the survival of

children, grandchildren and the aged. In addition, the United Nations system is particularly concerned with the situation of rural women, women living in informal communities and indigenous women. These are the severely vulnerable women who continue to struggle for survival on the margins of society and are victims of social exclusion and economic marginalization.

Chairperson,

South Africa endorses the current international debates that draw attention to the full spectrum of human vulnerabilities as they relate to women's lack of access to and control of resources, unmet food insecurity, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and the threat of conflict in the region of sub-Saharan Africa, the Continent and beyond. Within this context it remains important to highlight the plight of women and other vulnerable groups, as they remain disproportionately affected.

The current global financial crisis highlights in particular, the need for greater participation of women in financial decision-making, recognising that the gender dimensions of the consequences of the global financial crisis on women and girls in particular have not received enough attention. The South African Government has introduced an empowerment bill, business and social partners to design mechanisms to retain jobs and create new ones in the face of the downturn. The challenge, however, remains the effective involvement of and tangible benefits derived for women.

Chairperson,

The South African Government accords the highest priority to poverty eradication, the creation of decent work, investment attraction and the promotion of a more inclusive economy. In 2009, my Government created a new Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities to emphasise the need for equity and access to employment opportunities for all groups in our society.

South Africa is cognizant of the fact that the advancement and development of women is not the responsibility of Government alone but that all stakeholders including the private sector and civil society have a role to play in this regard.

Furthermore, the South African Government has mainstreamed a gender perspective into its main priorities. These include:

- Economic transition, including:
 - Job creation;
 - Access to quality health care and education;
 - Crime prevention and response, as well as
 - Rural development

Chairperson,

The South African Government has since 1994 endeavored to build an inclusive and sustainable economy through a process of socio-economic and political transformation. An Women's on the African continent. Challenges of

underdevelopment and are subjected to various forms of discrimination, abuse and gender-based violence. Many women remain on the margins of our economy because of disempowerment and limited access to development.

Despite these challenges, much progress has been made in the emancipation of women in the past decade. More women now have access to basic services such as housing, education, health, free basic water and electricity. South Africa continues in its employment and training sectors to develop policies and programmes that address the emergent needs of women.

The South African Government is currently working on a Gender Equality Bill which will provide the necessary legislative authority for the protection and empowerment of women and address issues of enforcement and compliance towards the attainment of the target of 50/50 gender parity. The bill involves consultation with civil society and other stakeholders on the Bill is underway and the final Bill will be presented to the Cabinet for approval by early 2017.

In conclusion,

My delegation commends the establishment of the United Nations Women as among the key achievement in advocating the rights of women. Office to the United Nations and the United Nations Community in conflict prevention, mediation and elections, aimed at addressing issues affecting women.

I thank you

underdevelopment and are subjected to various forms of discrimination, abuse and gender-based violence. Many women are the primary earners in their households because of unemployment and limited access to education and skills development.

Despite these challenges, much progress has been made in the emancipation of women through various initiatives, including legislative reforms. Compared to 1994, more women are now in the formal sector of the economy, particularly in the health, five basic water and electricity. South Africa continues in its employment and other sectors to develop policies and programmes that address the needs of women.

The South African Government is currently working on a Gender Equality Bill which will provide the necessary legislative authority to hasten the empowerment of women and address issues of enforcement and compliance towards the attainment of the target of 50% gender parity. The process of consultation with civil society and other stakeholders on the Bill is underway and the final Draft Bill will thereafter be submitted to Cabinet for approval by early 2012.

In conclusion,

My delegation commends the establishment of the United Nations Women as among the key actors in advancing the rights of women. Given the African Union and the United Nations Partnership with the Southern African Development Community in conflict prevention, mediation and election, aimed at addressing issues affecting women.

I thank you