

**Check against delivery**



**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**MINISTER OF WOMEN AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**OF MOZAMBIQUE**

**AT**

**THE 38<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**New York, May 23, 2007**

**Madam Chairperson,**

**Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to begin by saluting all the presents and congratulate the Committee on the Elimination of the Discrimination against Women, for the opportunity given to Mozambique to share with such a prestigious audience, its experiences and achievements regarding the fight for women's rights.

My delegation is comprised by 8 members, namely:

- Mrs. Josefa Langa, National Director for Women
- Mrs. Agueda Nhantumbo, Executive Secretary of the National Council of the Advancement of Women,
- Mrs. Célia Buque Armando, Legal Adviser to the Minister for Woman and Social Affairs,
- Mr. Albachir Macassar, Head of Department for the Promotion and Development of Human Rights, Ministry of Justice
- Mrs. Zilda Massango, Head of Department, Ministry of Agriculture
- Mrs. Esmeralda Muthemba, Gender Focal Point, Ministry of Education
- Mrs. Amélia Zandamela, Gender Focal Point, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

**Madam Chairperson,**

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

Mozambique is fully committed to the creation of a society of social justice, where women and men enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities to participate in all spheres of the society.

The Mozambican population is estimated of about 19.9 millions inhabitants, out of which 52% are female and the majority of them living in rural areas. The life expectancy index on birth, the rate is 46.7, being 48.6 for women and 44.8 for men.

The national political will to promote equal rights and opportunities between women and men is expressed in different tools. The democratic environment and pluralism of ideas within the country create a conducive environment for the exercises of women's rights.

Indeed, the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique adopted in 2004, states in its articles 35 and 36 the equality of rights between women and men, and in article 122, number 1 foresees the role of the State in the promotion, support and value the development of women and gives incentive to increasing role of women in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural activities.

In this regard, efforts have been made by state institutions and civil society to ensure the effective implementation of those constitutional provisions.

One of the priorities expressed in the Government Quinquennial Program 2005-2009, is the political will to coordinate, ensure and encourage a gender mainstream in the definition, planning and implementation of sectoral development programs, in order to ensure the effective implementation of our commitments regarding gender issues, including the CEDAW.

I would like touch upon the adoption of the Gender Policy and its implementing strategy, aimed at developing an integrated line of action for the promotion of gender equality, the respect of human rights and the strengthening of the participation of women in national development activities.

The Government of Mozambique is signatory of several Regional and International Conventions and Initiatives, aiming at promoting equal rights between women and men, such as the CEDAW (1993), the SADC Declaration of Gender (1997), and the Solemn Gender Declaration in Africa (2004) and the Optional Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and People's Rights related to the Women's Rights. These initiatives have led to the revision of discriminatory laws, the drafting of policies and programs that benefit the women.

**Madam Chairperson,**

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The Mozambican state has been working towards the strengthening of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, aiming at ensuring the effectiveness of equal rights and opportunities between women and men.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize the following existing mechanisms:

The National Council for the Advancement of Women, responsible for inter-sectoral coordination aiming at giving impulse and monitoring the implementation of policies and programs approved by the Government in the areas of women and gender.

The Parliamentary Commission on Social, Gender and Environmental Affairs, responsible for the integration of the environmental protection and gender equity issues in the agenda and work of the Parliament.

The Forum for Parliamentarian Women, enable the connection among Parliamentarian Women and female organizations aiming at integrating issues related to gender and fight against poverty in the deliberations of the Assembly of the Republic.

A Network of Female Ministers and Parliamentarian has been launched recently. This is a non political binding Forum in which women that exercise or have exercised certain responsibilities as Ministers and Parliament members can exchange ideas and define strategies an increased participation of women in decision making processes and national development.

These mechanisms are intended to strengthen the agenda of the advancement of women, maintaining a permanent dialogue with civil society for the promotion of gender equality, ensuring sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls, as well as advocating for the elimination of traditional, cultural and religious practices harmful to the women's rights.

I would also like to refer to the Gender Coordination Group (GCG), a forum that integrates cooperation partners, Civil Society and of Government representatives that deliberates on gender issues.

**Madam Chairperson,**

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With regard to the Mozambican legal framework for the promotion of women's rights, I would like to make reference to the existing legislation and on other under consideration, as follows:

**The Family Law** approved in 2004, introduced measures aiming to eradicate stereotypes and discriminatory practices and recognizes equal treatment in family relations, for example the definition of the nubile age 18 for both girls and boys. In this Law, the figure of family head is replaced by family representative, meaning that the family can always be represented by any of the two in the couple. Furthermore, a married woman can do the birth registration of her children in the absence of the father, what was not possible in the former legislation.

**The Land Law** approved in 1997, states explicitly that the women, as well as men have the right to land use including the rights to succession and the land possession papers.

I would like also to refer to the **Labour Law** recently approved by the Assembly of the Republic which recognizes equal rights for both women and men with regard to juridical treatment, as well as remuneration and progression in their professional carriers.

In this Law, the specific conditions of the working mother are protected, expanding after birth license period from 60 to 90 days, and a specific working schedule for breastfeeding.

In this context, in case of risk pregnancy, the working woman has a pre-birth license without any prejudice to the maternity license, and it is forbidden to dismiss the labourer without a justified reason during the pregnancy and up to one year after birth. The Law

also incorporate sanctions against sexual harassment at work and outside the working context and introduce for the first time paternity license for one every two years, on the immediate day following the child birth.

Within the context of continued efforts to revise discriminatory legislation, the commercial code and the notarial and registry code have been revised. Likewise, the Penal Code and the Succession Law are under revision.

A Proposal of **Law against Domestic Violation** has been drafted under the leadership of the civil society. This law foresees the prevention and sanctions for the perpetrators, as well as legal protection and assistance to the victims of domestic violence. A proposal of Law on the prevention and combat of human trafficking, special women and children has been also drafted, aiming at responding to a global problem to which Mozambique is not immune.

**Madam Chairperson,**

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Efforts aiming at **improving the women status in decision making**, particularly in the public administration, have been developed to gradually overcome the gender inequality, especially in the Government and the Parliament.

At the moment, the women represent 37% of the 250 parliamentarians in the Assembly of the Republic. It is important to note that in 1997, the percentage of seats taken by women was 28%.

The representation of women in the legislative organ in Mozambique is one of the highest, not only in Southern Africa but also in the whole world, and that represents the fulfilment of one of the commitments assumed by the Government, in the context of the SADC Gender Declaration of 1997, targeted to achieve 30% of women by 2005, in the political structure of decision making.

At the Government level, it is important to emphasize that the Prime Minister post is taken by a woman and there are six ministers (24% out of a total of 25 cabinet members); four vice-ministers (23.5% out of 17); six Permanent Secretaries (24% out of 25); and for the first time, the country has two provincial governors (18.18% out of 11 governors).

Although the representation of women in decision making has been increased, there is still a weak female representation in the decision making committees at local level. For example, we have only 20% of women leading local administration out of 128 districts. Indeed, the woman situation in the public administration is still unsatisfactory because of unequal gender balance. Thus, in order to ensure the respect for the citizen's rights and the monitoring of the national policies related to public administration, a National

Authority for Public Administration has been created. It is important to mention that the Chairperson of that Body is a woman, and two out the 4 commissioners are women.

The National Authority for Public Administration in coordination with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labour is involved in the elaboration of a Gender Strategy in the Public Administration aiming at strengthening the integration of gender issues in the management system of human resources.

**Madam Chairperson,**

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For the Mozambican Government as well as for the civil society, the violation of women's rights constitutes an obstacle for tranquillity and social harmony, since the woman is a fundamental pillar in the cohesion and socio and economic development. All practices, discrimination and exclusion attitudes compromise the social stability and the future of any nation and also contribute to perpetuate under-development and poverty.

Based on this philosophy, the civil society and the government institutions have inscribed in their programs actions which resulted in the following:

- ✓ Training the police in women's rights and assistance to the victims of violence as well as the introduction of these courses in the Police Academy training programs;
- ✓ The creation of counselling services to assist the victims of violence;
- ✓ Creation of 151 Cabinets to assist Women and Children at Police-stations with a effective staff of 600 trained police officers, in all provinces;
- ✓ Creation of Data Base on domestic violence with gender disaggregated data within the whole country and the capacity building of the respective computer operators;
- ✓ Installation of SOS lines (green line), within the Police-stations to assist domestic violence cases.

I would also like to refer to some constrains we are facing in this area.

The awareness work on the problem of violence has been useful, although we face some difficulties related to the lack of coordination among different stakeholders to increase the impact and the efficiency of their actions.

Equally, we have been facing difficulties in involving men in the programs related to combat domestic violence, due to cultural and traditional believes and customary

practices. However, we strongly believe that the participation of men would assure positives and long-lasting changes.

**Madam Chairperson,**

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Concerning **women and access to health services**, the strategy of primary health care continues to be the principal axe of the health action aiming at reducing the high morbid and mortality rates, in particular for the most vulnerable groups namely women fertile age and children in rural areas.

In Mozambique, the life expectancy average is higher in women, being 47 years old, 3 years higher than men, and the maternal mortality rate has declined from 900 to 408 out of 100.000 live births in the last 10 years.

The Government has defined the women and children as being the most vulnerable group in the population and has created an infant health maternity program that aims to promote and protect the health of this group which represents 50% of the population. This program has a scope of services aimed to educating and preventing set of pathological situations, including family planning as a way out to improve the women and their children's health.

The Strategic Plan in the Health Sector 2001-2010 foresees the reduction of maternal mortality through the increase and use of basic and complete obstetrician care and preventive measures that include family planning, prenatal care, birth and after birth care. The pre-birth coverage has significantly increased to 100% and the assistance to birth at the sanitary centres rose to 40%. However, the family planning is still below average, only covering 7%.

In parallel, an in-depth analysis of some health services has been conducted starting with the area of reproductive health, considering that this area affects both women and men. Therefore, the involvement of men in reproductive health services, originally addressed to women, has been defined as strategic.

The establishment of a psychological assistance centre for women and men resulted also from this process of analysis. This centre located in the Capital city of the country has been dedicated not only to treatment of people but also training of all entities intervening in this matter, including line Ministries and NGO's.

**Madam Chairperson,**

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Mozambique has one of the HIV/AIDS highest prevalence rate in the whole world. According to the most recent data, 16.2% of the adult population (15-49) is HIV positive.

In 2004 about 1.4 million of HIV positive Mozambicans, 58% were women. The gender inequalities are even alarming in the age group between 20-24 where in every four infected three are women, 75% of the HIV positive population is constituted by young women between 20 and 24 years old.

The **Government Policy and the Family Planning Strategy**, foresees that counselling services should be offered to the infected women aiming to reduce the number of newly born children infected by HIV, as well as the education on HIV prevention and provision of information on mother to child transmission.

Together with the United Nations Agencies, the Government and the civil society have developed a strong partnership in the area of HIV/AIDS through a PAF (Program Acceleration Fund). This program will serve as an entry point to support an effective and coordinated response. Basically, it is going to focus on three mutual reinforcing activities, such as:

- ✓ Assessment of the country's response with regard to Gender and HIV/AIDS;
- ✓ Promotion of Multi-sector Action Plan in areas such as prevention between girls and women, home based care, violence against women, education, and heritage and property rights;
- ✓ The awareness activities and mobilization of public opinion for an open dialogue on girls', women and HIV/AIDS issues.

Despite the above mentioned efforts, the Health sectors still face many constraints, namely:

- ✓ Health facilities are very few and located far from the population centres. More than 70% of the population, which the majority is rural (75%), spend more than an hour to get to the nearest health unit;
- ✓ Most of the Health Units only provide primary health care. The majority of these units lack capacity to provide adequate obstetric assistance in case of complicated births;
- ✓ Less than 50% provides pre-natal assistance and family planning and only 20% of Health Units provides diagnosis and treatment for sexual transmitted infection;
- ✓ Health staff is concentrated in urban areas and only 18% of about 15.900 employees of the health sector have higher or middle education. The vast majority of the health workers have only basic or rudimentary education.



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**In the labour sector**, about 84% of the workers are employed in the informal sector: being 92.6% rural workers and 65% employed in the urban areas. In the group of women, 95.9% of those working in rural areas and 77% of those working in the cities, they belong to the informal sector.

An increasing participation of female labour is notable in non-agricultural sector, especially in the urban areas, where the women have shown an increased involvement in self employment initiatives, mainly in the informal sector of the economy.

More than a half of working women develop self income rendering activities against only about a quarter of the men. This means that fewer men develop self income rendering activities. About 41.5% of the men are labourers against only 27% of women suggesting that the absolute number of women and men developing self income rendering activities is probably the same.

**Madam Chairperson,**

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Education constitutes a strategic tool in poverty alleviation and it is a fundamental right of each and every citizen for his outstanding position and integration in the social and economical life. The government efforts are focused in the expansion of access opportunities to quality and relevant education, with equity to all levels of the education system, taking into account the reduction of the regional and gender inequalities.

The Strategic Plan for the development of the Education is based on three main aspects:

The expansion to access and equity;  
The improvement of education and  
The development of institutional capacity building.

Gender units were created within all the Education Provincial Directorates and districts considered as critical. The creation of these units represents an important strategic step forward within the prosecution of the objectives to guarantee the access and gender equity in education.

Among several initiatives taken to guarantee the access and gender equity of education the following aspects are highlighted:

- ✓ The establishment of 50% of vacancies in Teacher's Training Institutions to be taken by girls for the Early Child Primary Education Level;
- ✓ The definition of annual goals for the girls' ingress in all the districts where there are gender discrepancies according to the local reality;
- ✓ The promotion of alternative systems to assist in girls' education through the promotion of informal education;
- ✓ Inclusion of a gender component, and education and gender and environment in the education curricula in secondary school level;
- ✓ Creation of counselling cabinets aiming to avoid girls' desistence from school;
- ✓ The Adoption of a new Early Secondary School curriculum that integrates human rights issues and civil education at schools and in development programs.

As a result of the actions taken, it is crucial to refer to the following progresses:

- ✓ A prioritization in the Education Strategic Plan, the girls' education and as a result of the net school rate of girls in the Primary Education there was an increase from 24.5% to 59.2% in 1997 and 2006 respectively;
- ✓ A creation of a school environment sensitive to gender through the identification and definition of organizational modalities of an educative process and changes in the teacher's training programs;
- ✓ The existence of a national illiteracy strategy and informal education and improvement of the organizational level of the sector;
- ✓ Reactivation of Illiteracy and Adult Education and the introduction of an accelerated illiteracy program;

However, its worth to note the prevailing constraints, such as: disparities within and among provinces; high drop rates in some areas after completion of the first grade of primary education (EP1), as consequence there is less proportion of girls attending the second grade of primary education EP2. For example in 2005, only 41% attended this level of education.

The students have to walk long distances from their home to school. The quality of teaching-learning process is still weak. Therefore, there is a need to strenghten and improve the quality of teachers training in order to increase its quantity and quality at all levels and kinds of education.

**Madam Chairperson**

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Despite the efforts undertaken and the progress achieved in the reaffirmation of our commitment in ensuring the participation of women in all political, economical, social and cultural spheres, we recognize that we still have a long way to go and a lot to do to enable women to benefit from their rights without any constraints.

Likewise, Mozambique has reached good progress in the open and participatory governance but huge challenges remain in supporting rural women to achieve an effective and substantial participation in decision making processes regarding public issues as well as in membership of organizations.

The implementation of several existing tools is still a big challenge to ensure gender equality and equity, because of the absence of a connection between cultural practices and the formal justice. For instance the Land Law brought gains by establishing that women and men have equal rights in the use of the land. However, traditional values give power on decision making to man. This situation has negative effects on the efficacy of law, limiting the access and control over land by women.

The lack of access to knowledge has been one of the main causes for weak women's awareness about their rights, and the weak management and results in their activities.

These facts combined with the lack of specialized staff in gender issues, results in the weakness in the capacity to influence management of gender issues at different levels.

Therefore, Mozambican State places high commitment in the identification of better strategies to enable attitude and behaviour's changes of the entire society and individuals towards a fair and non-discriminatory society.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my profound gratitude for this opportunity as well as the commitment of the Government of Mozambique in the identification of strategies and adoption of new initiatives in order to make the spirit of this Convention a reality in our country.

**I thank you very much**