



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Community, Culture and Sports

**REPORT ON THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

Ministerial Statement
To The Senate

By

Senator Alexis Swan
Junior Minister of Community, Culture and Sports

Wednesday, 26th March 2014

Madam President, I am very pleased to inform Senators about the 58th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (or CSW as it is commonly referred to) held at the United Nations in New York from 10th – 21st March 2014.

Madam President, for the first time, four (4) representatives from Bermuda attended the first week of this significant meeting as part of the United Kingdom's delegation in an observer capacity. The representatives were Senator Alexis Swan, Junior Minister for Community, Culture and Sports; Deborah Blakeney, the Director of the Department of Human Affairs under whose banner the Bermuda gender mandate sits; Jane Brett, the Policy Analyst for the Department of Human Affairs; and Laurie Shiell in a dual capacity as the Chairwoman of the Bermuda Women's Council and the Executive Director of the Centre Against Abuse.

Madam President, the CSW is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. Every year, representatives of UN member states gather at the UN Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide. CSW is the highest level international forum on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Madam President, each year there is a priority theme and a review theme. This year, the priority theme is "challenges and achievements in the implementation of the millennium development goals for women and girls" and the review theme is "access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work". The emerging issue is "women's access to productive resources".

Madam President, in addition to member states there are also many representatives from accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world who actively participate in CSW and who are influential in shaping the current global policy framework on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Madam President, the Bermuda delegation attended a wide range of events organized by the United Nations and permanent missions to the UN as well as parallel events organised by lobby groups and NGOs related to the theme.

Specific sessions attended included those on Violence against Women; Everyday Sexism and Hate- the Consequences for Women's Empowerment and Equal Opportunities; Encouraging more Women to Choose Careers in STEM- the acronym which stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; Women's Leadership and Political Participation; and Indicators for Monitoring Gender Equality.

Madam President, a great deal of attention was focused on these issues throughout the week and the panelists came from diverse backgrounds including Glaxo Smith Kline, the large pharmaceutical firm; United Nations statisticians; UK. MP Lynne Featherstone - the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for International Development; Zonta International and Soroptimist International (the latter two are global women's organizations working to improve the lives of women). Some of the noteworthy takeaways included facts such as salary disparities between men and women are lowest in STEM jobs, however women only hold 28% of STEM jobs; women in the United States earn 77 cents for every dollar a man earns; and women's representation in Parliament is at 21% globally- up from 14% in 2000.

Madam President, women's issues in developing countries are sometimes much different than those in more developed nations but the group found that an issue such as violence against woman is common amongst all nations. One in three women globally will experience the scourge of violence during their lifetime.

Madam President, the Bermuda group also attended a reception hosted by the UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations - Sir Mark Lyall Grant, which included an introduction to the UK Minister for Women & Equalities, Maria

Miller. The Bermuda group also met with Helene Reardan Bond, the UK Government Head of Policy for Equalities, to discuss the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to Bermuda.

Madam President, CEDAW is a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world. The extension of CEDAW has been on my Ministry's agenda for some time. With some 187 countries having already signed onto the convention, CEDAW is one of the most ratified treaties in the world and it is time that Bermuda joined the group. The UK assured us that they will be focusing their efforts to progress this in the next few months.

Madam President, you may be wondering what exactly are the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals - or MDGs as they are referred to - are eight international development goals that were established after the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, and following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The eight international development goals are:

- Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/aids, malaria and other diseases

- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

All 189 United Nations member states at the time (there are 193 currently) and at least 23 international organizations committed to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Madam President, many of the events were focused on the assessment of the impact of the MDGs and two of the consistent criticisms that we heard were that none of the eight goals relate to ending violence against women and girls and that gender equality was not explicitly included. As the CSW looks toward a post 2015 development framework many organizations are demanding a stand-alone goal on gender equality.

Madam President, although Bermuda is an overseas territory of the UK, geographically the United Nations places us in the Latin America and Caribbean Region. In this regard the Committee of NGOs of CSW for Latin America and the Caribbean asked the Centre Against Abuse this year to contribute to a regional assessment of the MDGs. The Centre provided suggestions on how to include violence against women, and more specifically domestic violence in the sustainable development goals for 2015 onwards. The Centre Against Abuse's contribution was noted in a document called, *"A Look from Latin America and the Caribbean on the Millennium Development Goals and the Post 2015 Framework"* presented at CSW.

Madam President, as Bermuda prepares to embark on the development of a National Gender Policy, attendance at this meeting was a tremendous opportunity

to learn and gather information. Indeed, I along with other Bermuda representatives, were truly inspired by what we heard at the sessions and by the people that we met. I am looking forward to developing and implementing some of the ideas and frameworks that we heard about especially in regards to encouraging more young women to enter into the STEM professions. Equality for women is something that needs to be promoted more in Bermuda and investing in our women changes a society and creates economic growth.

Thank you Madam President.