

Address of the Liberian Delegation to the Sixty-Second Session of CEDAW
Thursday, November 29, 2015
10am-5p.m.
Geneva, Switzerland

Salutation:

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen;

The delegation of Liberia is honored to be in the presence of this distinguished body and welcomes the opportunity to interact with other member states, as well as members of the commission to discuss this critical global agenda on the elimination of all forms of Violence and discrimination against women and girls. Liberia considers this as pertinent and an impetus for proceeding to a successful implementation of the SDGs. The compilation of this report cuts across other Government Ministries and Agencies. However, we have come from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to provide answers on behalf these Ministries and Agencies on the implementation of CEDAW. This is the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Liberia, and we have found this dialogue among member states to be extremely helpful in identifying key areas in eliminating all forms of Violence and discrimination against women and girls in Liberia.

Liberia has marked a number of notable achievements since its last report few years ago. In 2011, the country passed the children's law which prohibits FGM, all forms of violence and harmful practices against children. The law also addresses the issue of children's enrollment and re-enrollment into school (or into alternative forms of education for those who have dropped out of school). Special measures are taken to ensure equal access to education for female and disadvantaged children and that teacher training curricula include instructions regarding teaching child's rights.

As further evident of the GOL commitment to eliminating all forms of violence against women and protecting the rights of children, the President of Liberia, H.E Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf made a six count commitment at the 70th session of the

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to ban FGM and eliminate all forms of violence against women. Additionally, the Liberia Human Right Action Plan Steering Committee has been mandated to include the abolition of FGM in its Action Plan for implementation. I am also pleased to say, that the Government of Liberia through Cabinet adopted a draft Domestic Violence bill in June 2015 and is currently before the National Legislature for enactment. The draft Bill defines domestic violence in general as: ***“any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, man, or child, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life between parties in an existing or former domestic relationship.*”**

The Government has also addressed the issue of Early Child and Force Marriage in the Rape Law as it criminalizes the practice. Furthermore, 18 years, which defines the age of the child as per the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), was unanimously adopted during the Constitutional Review Conference held in March 2015 as the legal age for marriage and has formed part of the Constitution Review Committee propositions pending the National Referendum slated for 2017.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I am proud to add that, Liberia was very proactive and the first country in the MRU sub-region to eradicate Ebola and have put in place a vigilant system to track and contain any future incidence. Currently, Government through the Ministries of Health and Gender, Children and Social Protection, is providing medical and social assistance to all EVD survivors including women and children.

Other areas that the country has and is responding to strongly are: women involvement in the constitution review process, politics, women peace and security, women emancipation and the protection of human rights.

With regards to ensuring women’s peace and security and access to justice , I would like to reiterate and reaffirm the commitments made by Liberia during the launch of the Global Report on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 held on the

13th – 14th of October in New York, some of which include: improving women's access to justice throughout the country, the Government commits to working with the Judiciary to initiate the decentralization of Criminal Court E to all counties of the country, so that rural SGBV survivors may have recourse. This will be done through the implementation of the new phase of the GoL/UN Joint Programme on SGBV which is currently in the finalization stage, as well as ensuring allocation in the national budget to support the implementation of Resolution 1325 across the country, with the aim of reinforcing women economic empowerment programs and expanding their coverage for the benefit of women and girls in rural areas. This is critical for the achievement of the objectives of our national agenda for transformation.

The Government, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and in collaboration with partners, is also conducting a review of the National Action Plan to develop a bridging strategy to address gaps in implementation.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to announce that Liberia was amongst countries who co-sponsored UNSCR 22/42 which was unanimously adopted by the Security Council to improve the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda few weeks ago.

Finally, I wish to state that the Aliens and Nationality Law of 1973 which prohibits children born abroad to Liberian mothers from acquiring Liberian citizenship is currently being reviewed so as to harmonize the laws. These provisions are inconsistent with Article 28 of the Liberian Constitution of 1986, which establishes that any child who has **a parent** who was a Liberian citizen at the time of birth acquires citizenship, provided that the person renounces any other nationality upon attaining the age of 18yrs.

In the interim, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is collaborating with relevant ministries, agencies and civil society organizations to sensitize and educate Liberian women on their rights to transfer their citizenship to their children under Article 28 of the 1986 Liberian Constitution.

As Liberia moves towards achieving an inclusive development, in which women will enjoy full participation across every sector, the Government has committed to ensuring that the outcome of the ongoing constitution review process will guarantee and institutionalize women's full and equal participation in governance and national affairs.

Thank you.