REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

BRIEF FOR THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW63)

THEME: “SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS, ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS”

Presented by: Head of Rwanda Delegation

NEW YORK, MARCH 2019
The Chair of the 63rd Commission on the Status on Women,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen
All protocols observed;

On behalf of the Government of Rwanda, I wish to extend my congratulations to the Chair and the entire Bureau for the organization of the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women. The topic of this 63rd CSW is critical for women’s empowerment in the world and we hope that innovative insights from participants will inform governments policies and strategies.

The Government of Rwanda positioned gender equality and women’s empowerment at the heart of the Country’s transformation and sustainable development. The country recently adopted the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) that aspires to develop Rwandans into a capable and skilled people with quality standards of living and a stable and secure society. The strategy also mainstreams gender equality across all its pillars as an a key factor of sustainable and inclusive development.

It is in this framework that the Government of Rwanda is implementing developed a Social Protection Strategy with the aim of ensuring that all citizens of Rwanda have a dignified standard of living, protected from social exclusion, exploitation, and abuse and supported to access decent employment and livelihood opportunities. The strategy offers a space for gender responsive approaches to ensure that all social protection programs promote gender equity and women’s empowerment.
As part of efforts to reconstruct Rwanda and nurture a shared national identity, the Government of Rwanda drew on aspects of its culture and traditional practices to enrich and adapt its development programs to the country’s needs and context. Inspired by those values and traditions, after 1994 genocide against Tutsi, home grown solutions were innovatively designed as a response to issues of poverty especially among a big number of women who were left as widows and with responsibilities to take over family responsibilities and leadership. One of the successful innovation was to bring back an old practice where members in a community support the most vulnerable especially providing them with cows as one of the most economic asset of that time. Building on that culture, a pro-poor program called one cow per poor family was launched and it is contributing to day to day fighting malnutrition, increasing crop productivity and household incomes and promoting social harmony/cohesion. More than 298,859 poor households including those headed by poor women have benefited from this program.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On the front of employment creation and skills development, Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) was adopted to accelerate poverty reduction and contribute to the country’s long-term poverty reduction, ensure that economic growth is pro-poor and ensure that the majority of the population has improved their living conditions. This is implemented in 416 sectors. Under VUP direct support and from 2009 to 2017, 141,211 male and 287,107 female households benefited from the program while public works have witnessed 419,344 male headed household and 395,518 female headed households as beneficiaries.

In a move to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable while ensuring that no one is left behind, extended public works was tested and now being scaled up in all
sectors. This mainly focuses on female-headed households caring for young children. This has increased accessibility to appropriate employment opportunities and enabled beneficiaries to meet their basic needs, increase household productivity, diversify their livelihoods with a view to achieving sustained graduation from extreme poverty.

As we enhance social protection systems, the Government of Rwanda continues to explore new avenues, new home grown solutions including those designed to respond to issues of malnutrition among children and pregnant mothers.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A challenge to many communities is to manage and sustain accessibility to health insurance especially for the most vulnerable population. In Rwanda, a Community Based Health Insurance has been put in place since 1999 as a Rwanda’s flagship health financing scheme to improve accessibility to health services by the population. The use of community health insurance (Mutuelle de santé) covers majority of female’s 94% and 93% males. This has greatly contributed to increased community access to health care and services have mostly contributed to reduced maternal and infant mortality rates in the country.

Gender mainstreaming in the National development sectors is one of the key approach adopted by the Government of Rwanda to ensure that no one is left behind. It is in this vein that a gender strategy for the infrastructure sector was developed to ensure that all subsectors are gender responsive. Gender profiles in some of the subsectors like energy and water and sanitation were developed to support stakeholders’ gender analysis and planning and guide the sectors interventions on gender equality.
On another front, The Government of Rwanda has invested efforts in setting convenient infrastructures that have accelerated internet penetration especially at the community level. Important to note is that mobile phone is becoming a dominant ICT tool used by female and male heads of households boosting rapid information sharing among Rwandans in the country, facilitating rapid financial transactions especially sending and receiving payments through mobile money. Women in remote areas and poor household traditionally constrained by lack of mobility means are being able to get information and access services that were before costly and time consuming.

Further to note, energy related infrastructures especially in line with electrification in rural areas is expending its network rapidly, both male and female households using electricity as a source of lighting have increased. In addition, public lighting installed on major national and district roads have reduced security threats including those related to gender based violence.

Additionally, the Government of Rwanda started the Feeder roads development program in 2011 with the core objective of facilitating farmers to access market for their agriculture produces. The existence of feeder roads have addressed the most pressing issue of women’s mobility, boosted women’s access to local market, health facilities and increased girl’s access to schools. On access to health services, it’s important to denote that with improved road infrastructures, women are able and willing to visit health centers when pregnant and as result they are able to be assisted by trained personnel thus reducing death rates at the time of delivery.
The National Strategy for transformation aims to strengthen capable and responsible public institutions committed to citizens’ advancement and efficient service delivery. In this line, the country is now working towards moving progressively to online services in all public services with the objective of accelerating citizen’s access to services with reduced transport costs and time.

Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This CSW 63rd provides an opportunity to further rethink and strategize on systematic engendering of social protection systems, access to public services and infrastructural setup. I call upon everyone present here to contribute in finding common solutions women’s social inclusion accessibility to public and private services. The Government of Rwanda is committed to continue tracking accountability to gender equality in all sectors including in social protection, infrastructure and service delivery.

To conclude, let me once again reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Rwanda to advance the socio-economic transformation of Rwandan women and girls. As we are implementing agenda 2063 of the African continent, let us ensure the whole continent leave no one behind and accelerate the momentum of equal opportunities and Let me call upon everyone to join efforts and create a more equitable environment to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in our respective communities

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