Delegation from Republic of the Congo

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**Commission on the Status of Women**

**Congo’s General Position**

Congo is a country that is quite poor, with a population that has a very low GDP-per capita. What this means is that we are not extremely concerned with women’s issues when compared to the looming issue of poverty. As a result, although we are supportive of women, we do not have the resources to implement and supervise large shifts in women’s rights. In addition to this the sentiment is still that women are not equals. Though they have made advances in voting rights and are now allowed to run for public office, they are not to be in charge of their households. They should still be subordinate to their husbands who provide for them.

**Topic #1: Women and Sustainability**

The role of women in the environment in the Congo is that they are the main workers, but they are not to be involved in the decision making process. Carrying out the tasks such as the cultivation of food and its preparation are their responsibilities. Decisions about these things are however left to men. Women’s opinions in these issues are unimportant as what they do to complete these tasks is unimportant as long as they get done. In negotiations Congo will make an attempt to save face by agreeing to the problem, and agreeing to terms without any real legal implications. Agreements that require a use of resources and real action are unfavorable and will be avoided. When it comes to the Greenbelt initiative, Congo is in agreement to making the woman’s job more efficient in ways that will cost very little to the country. Allowing women to plant seeds to grow plants near them is a great low cost option that is beneficial to everyone. Not only does this allow women to have an easier job, but it also makes the production more efficient, and is a low cost way for the country to better women’s position. This initiative also helps to better the Congo’s environmental initiatives, preventing desertification. In regards to proper sanitation and disposability of women’s menstrual waste, this is not much of a concern in the Congo. The reason for this being that with such a poor population women do not often have access to things such as pads which are the main concern for this issue. There are also much more pressing issues regarding people’s sanitation. For example when clean drinking water is a concern, pads are much less of a concern. What all of this means, is that while the Congo is in support of these types of issues, they are not considered particularly pressing issues and should not have resources poured into solving them.

**Topic #2: Violence Against Women**

In the Congo, violence against women is unfortunately quite commonplace, with much of it even happening from government officials and undisciplined army personnel. Although these things are not in any way condoned, there is little that can be done with so few resources. Incidents are also very rarely reported. Marital rape is also not really considered to be something of concern. If a woman is in a marriage then it is considered her duty to her husband. And there is very little that she can do about it. In addition to this adultery for men is considered a very minor crime with a small fine to pay if found guilty. However for women this is a much more serious infraction, as she should be fully committed to her husband. For women there is jail time involved for committing adultery. Women are also required to pay a dowry to their husbands upon marriage. This is considered completely fair given the financial burden that they place on their husband. With all this being said, Congo does not see violence against women as being very pressing. It is something that is much to commonplace to be completely eliminated. We will support agreements at the surface, but once again will not take any initiative to correct these things at the heart of the issues, as we do not want to have to allocate precious resources to do so.

**Topic #3: Women in Education and Employment**

In the Congo, education is offered to girls, equally as it is offered to boys. This is therefore not a major issue as a consideration for women’s rights. Though the rate of girls that are educated is lower in girls than it is in boys, this is not the Congo’s fault. This is because of factors such as if parents allow their children to go to school, and any additional costs related with schooling, such as school supplies. When it comes to job opportunities, due to cultural factors, women are much more often in positions to be taking care of the family. This is more important than finding a job, as men are considered better suited for supporting the family, while women are better suited to nurturing it. Though we, the government, can make it more equal in the sense of obtaining a job through equal hiring legislation, it is not our job to tell the people who should hold this job. In this sense the Congo government has done its job and should not be held responsible for further action. To summarize, Congo has done what is acceptable for this cause and does not have the resources to offer any additional help in these areas. In a country with such a low rate of education in general, education for women specifically is not of major concern. And who holds a job is believed to be the concern of the family and is not the business of the government’s. Should there be ideas to increase equality in education or work, Congo will be supportive as long as it does not promise to impose an additional economic strain to the country.

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