*Delegation from Republic of Mali*

*Commission on the Status of Women*

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**Position Paper**

Half a century of political unrest in the Republic of Mali has interfered with the Progression of Women’s rights. The current Government of Mali is committed to improving the status of women throughout the Republic, while remaining steadfast to their country’s values and beliefs. The Malian National Assembly’s recent adoption of the Gender Quota Bill on November 12th 2015 demonstrates their devotion to women’s rights. The Gender Quota Bill outlines that 30% of all elected or appointed officials must be women. With female representation, the Malian Government can work towards effective improvements in the lives of women.

**I. Topic One: Women and Sustainability**

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a pressing issue for the women and girls of Mali. 55% of Malians do not have access to latrines. Girls are predominantly affected by this, which leaves them susceptible to disease. Without accessibility to potable water, girls are forced to give up their education to provide for their families. The Malian government has created a National Strategic Plan for the Promotion of Hygiene Education, which addresses the issues of sanitation and access to water, for school children. This plan aims to provide an estimated 60% of schools with proper sanitation facilities and access to clean drinking water. Article 25 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights asserts, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family.” In compliance with this, the Republic of Mali must expedite its attempts to integrate proper water and sanitation facilities to communities of Mali.

**II. Topic Two: Elimination of Gender-Based Violence**

The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, a resolution passed by the African Union in July of 2004, committed Mali to “sustained public campaigns against gender based violence as well as the problem of trafficking in women and girls, reinforce legal mechanisms that will protect women at the national level and end impunity of crimes committed against women in a manner that will change and positively alter the attitude and behavior of the African society.” Mali has not stayed true to these commitments. There currently is no legislation banning Female Genital Mutilation, a life-threating condition affecting an estimated 85.2% to 91.6% of Malian women. Additionally, there are currently no laws addressing sexual assault and domestic abuse, and instances of such crimes are rarely reported. Rape is punishable by up to 20 years in prison but laws are rarely enforced, and legal action is almost never taken. The first step in combating these prevailing issues of gender-based violence is proper legislation, provided it does not interfere with rights of men outlined in The Family Code. The amendment to The Family Code in 2011, established the male is legally the head of his household, and his wife or wives must adhere to his decisions. The second course of action is educating women, particularly in remote areas of Mali, on the dangers of gender-based violence, and their rights and limitations under Malian Law.

**III. Topic Three: Women in Education and Employment**

61.7% of the Citizen’s of Mali are illiterate, which can be broken down to 51.8% of males, and 70.8% of females. Focus must be placed on improving education not only for women and girls, but for boys as well, as they are key to creating a flourishing Malian society. Progress has been made regarding primary level education, but more attention needs to be assigned to secondary level education. The literacy rate of urban areas is 53.2% opposed to 21.6% in rural areas, exemplifying the educational disparities across the country. There is an average of 42 pupils per primary school teacher, and only 52% of these primary school teachers have the minimum qualifications. Secondary school enrollment for males is 26%, and 17% for females. Mali is amid the worst uneducated countries of the world. Access to education, quality of education, and Mali’s commitment to education must be advanced. Action must be taken to employ and properly train more teachers. Currently the Malian government is focusing on primary school education. This focus needs to be expanded to secondary school education, encouraging enrolment and students continuation of their studies. Educating Mali’s children has the potential improve the lives and socioeconomic statuses of numerous families.

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