STATEMENT BY HON. SOPHIA M. SIMBA (MP) MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, GENDER AND CHILDREN AT THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

WEDNESDAY 28TH FEBRUARY 2007

Madam Chairperson,
The delegation of Tanzania joins other delegations in congratulating you and the members of the Bureau on your continued leadership of this Commission. We assure you of our full support and cooperation.

My delegation associates itself with the statements read by the Ambassador of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the Ambassador of Lesotho on behalf of SADC.

Madam Chairperson,
My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate H. E. Ban Kim Moon for his election to the post of Secretary General of the United Nations organization and for appointing a female Deputy Secretary General Dr. Asha-Rose Mtengeti Migiro who happens to be a Tanzanian. My delegation wishes to assure both of them our full cooperation and support in the pursuant of their duties.

Madam Chairperson
The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. We welcome the recommendations provided by the Secretary General in his reports. On our part we have already implemented some of his recommendations and urge for our concerted efforts in their implementations.

The Government has ratified the Convention on the Right of the Child and the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. The Government has also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the ILO Convention No. 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Madam Chairperson,

The Government of Tanzania is concerned with the persisting acts of discrimination and violence perpetuated against the girl child. In many cases, discrimination against girls begins at the earliest stages of life. Girls have often been subjected to various forms of exploitation, violence and harmful practices such as female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, sexual abuse, rape, teenager pregnancies, child labour, female genital mutilation, early and arranged marriages. There is thus a need to create an environment for girls that will promote and protect their lives.

Several measures have been undertaken by the government to protect girls including legal reforms both in Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar. A single piece of legislation related to children is in the process of being drafted. This would protect children including the girl child from abuse, neglect and other violation of their rights.

Currently, the Sexual Offences (Special Provision) Act 1998 is in place. Although this Act aims at protecting the dignity of women and girls, it has not been very effective in deterring acts of violence. We have learnt that having legislation in place is only one step; continuous advocacy, legal literacy and access to legal services and support mechanisms are required for the laws to be effectively implemented. In this regard the collaboration of the government with other stakeholders such as the development partners and the civil society is necessary to complement the government's efforts.

Madam Chairperson,

Empowerment of girls is key to the elimination of discrimination and violence against women. The Government is actively pursuing gender parity in education as we believe that education is the key to girls' empowerment. Tanzania has almost reached gender parity in primary education with 96 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. However gender disparity in secondary Schools and tertiary education remains an area of concern. Concerted efforts and

support to realize the goal of gender parity in secondary education and at tertiary level is thus necessary.

Madam Chairperson,

Participation of girls in policy and decision – making is also necessary to ensure that their needs and concerns are taken into account. Girls together with other Children and young people have participated in the Public Expenditure Review (PER) process. We are planning to strengthen their participation to allow greater visibility of children in the government budgeting process and hence ensure availability of more resources to address children and young people's issues with much emphasis on the development of the girl child.

Madame Chairperson,

Let me conclude by reiterating the commitment of the government of the United Republic of Tanzania to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and urge for concerted efforts from all of us in this endeavour.

I Thank you.