



Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality

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Report of the Fourteenth Annual Session of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality New York, 10 – 12 - 13 March 2015

The fourteenth annual session was chaired by Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women. Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women participated in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Network.

The annual session featured a dialogue with the Chair and some Principals of UN system. The session focused on critical inter-agency challenges for 2015 including the post-2015 development framework and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the third-year implementation of the UN-SWAP. The discussion on both agenda items was structured from a strategic and political point of view, identifying key messages, mobilizing commitments from UN entities and entry points to ensure the post 2015 development framework would reflect the gains in CSW-59 and the proposal of the Open Working Group on sustainable development. Related to the UN-SWAP the discussion focused on the challenges for the UN entities to meet the standards, as well as on the lessons learned by the effective entity specific implementation of the UN-SWAP.

For the follow up to inter-sessional activities, summary of progress reports were shared virtually by the chairs of the Task Forces and leading agencies on the Standing Agenda Items.

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Part I. ANNUAL SESSION

The fourteenth annual session of the IANWGE was held on 10, 12 and 13 March from 8.15 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. at the United Nations Headquarters. The annual session focused on inter-agency approaches to key inter-governmental processes for 2015 including the post-2015 development framework and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the third-year implementation of the UN-SWAP. The discussions were structured from a strategic and political point of view, identifying key messages, mobilizing commitments from UN entities and entry points to ensure the post-2015 development framework would reflect gains in the CSW-59 and the proposal of the Open Working Group on sustainable development. The specific discussion on the UN-SWAP focused on the challenges that UN entities face in meeting the performance standards, as well as on the lessons learned from effective entity-specific implementation of the UN-SWAP.

1. High-level dialogue of the Chair and Principals of UN system

The fourteenth annual session was chaired by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women participated in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Network. The opening session featured a dialogue with the Chair and Principals of UN system who were invited to a dialogue with the Chair on the strategic direction for the UN System's work on gender equality and the empowerment of women and key strategic issues related to intergovernmental processes, particularly the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, the Financing for Development discourse, and progress on UN system coordination especially through the implementation of the UN-SWAP.

The Chair welcomed participants and noted that in the eighteen years of IANWGE, the high-level of participation in the opening session was unprecedented. She emphasized that if the international community is to step up for gender equality, the UN System must also step up its work related to gender mainstreaming. The UN system must be *fit for purpose* to support Member States in implementing a gender-responsive agenda in a post-2015 era. An indispensable component of being *fit for purpose* is to ensure that the UN system is accountable for its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Chair highlighted the strong advocacy by the UN System, including UN Women, for a transformative goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals. Noting that such a goal and gender mainstreaming across the other goals was proposed in the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The Chair called on IANWGE members to continue their advocacy to ensure these proposals remain in the final outcome of the post-2015 negotiations. She noted that given the centrality of gender equality to development, peace and human rights, it is crucial that gender equality perspectives are reflected in all elements of the final outcome of the post-2015 negotiations – the declaration, goals and targets, means of implementation, including increased investments for gender equality including for the development of statistical capacities and gender statistics to support effective monitoring and evaluation; and strong accountability mechanisms that clearly set out who is responsible for what, and allow women and men to hold decision-makers answerable for their actions.

Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO noted that the intersection of the Beijing+20 commemoration and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda offers a historic opportunity to examine the gaps and set priorities for IANWGE going forward. The Director-General stressed that it is only through mainstreaming a gender perspective in the mandates and operations of all entities of the UN system,

that the system will be able to deliver as one on gender equality and women's empowerment. With reference to the post-2015 development agenda, it was crucial to act together within the parameters of entity-specific mandates to integrate a gender perspective across all targets and indicators of the new development agenda. This required making gender equality a cross-cutting issue across mandates. The Director-General also expressed appreciation for the work on the UN-SWAP.

Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA reiterated that gender equality must be addressed in a systematic manner. For UNFPA, the post-2015 elaboration process has generated a lot of momentum for the UN system to ensure gender equality is the top priority within the system. He stressed that without the active involvement of men and boys, gender equality goals could not be met. The Executive Director stressed that in 2015 ground-breaking commitments will be made. He stressed that the post-2015 development agenda must be universal, inclusive and must involve strong provision for financing to implement action on each of the goals. Gender equality and the empowerment of women must be at the forefront of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Executive Director endorsed the UN-SWAP and the inclusion of gender equality in the new development agenda.

Maged Abdelaziz, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, brought a regional perspective to the discussion. He informed the IANWGE members that the African Union Agenda 2063 focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women and that the African Union had declared 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment. Moreover, 2015 is crucial as it is also the midpoint of the African Union's Decade on Women (2010 to 2020). The Special Adviser noted that the experiences at the regional level must be utilized and inform the work on gender mainstreaming at all levels. He recognized that while UN-SWAP reporting was done successfully, small offices which do not have evaluation units or resources to set up such units face challenges in conducting reporting on the UN-SWAP. A strategy for merging small offices and undertaking identical evaluations could be developed in the future.

Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, reiterated UNICEF's strong commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action. As the UN system entity focused on child rights, UNICEF has continually worked to advance gender equitable child outcomes which include gender parity in healthcare, education (changing metrics to measuring secondary school completion rate rather than primary school enrolment) and skills acquisition. In the context of the negotiation of the post-2015 development agenda, UNICEF had advocated for targets to end child marriage, bring about gender parity in education, health, nutrition, and WASH programs. Moreover, in 2014, UNICEF worked with the UN system and civil society partners to develop proposed targets for post-2015 development agenda. Also, UNICEF had instituted the Gender Thematic Fund and adopted the Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 which targets gender equality and the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming in strategic action areas for the agency. Built around UN-SWAP elements, the Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 commits leadership at the highest level for achieving gender equality. The Assistant Secretary-General also noted that UNICEF has aligned its performance indicators with indicators of UN-SWAP. She stated that UNICEF believes that the representation of women at the highest levels of decision-making level is essential.

Cristina Gallach, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, reaffirmed the commitment of the Department of Public Information to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Noting that the UN-SWAP guides all UN departments to ensure that they are moving forward in the right direction, Ms. Gallach thanked Ms. Aparna Mehrotra for her support to DPI. The Under-Secretary-

General noted that DPI promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women across the board and across different communication centres in the world and will continue to do so in the future.

Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe informed IANWGE that the regional commissions have led the regional review of the Beijing + 20. The outcomes from these preparatory meetings include strong language which can promote key issues in the future. He stated that 700 civil society organizations were part of these regional preparatory meetings. He noted that there are differences among the regions but they face similar challenges. The Executive Secretary also noted that data disaggregation by sex was limited in most regions which must be improved in the future development framework.

Amir Mahmoud Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP) informed that the entity had undertaken extensive reforms to improve its performance on UN-SWAP indicators. WFP had restructured the organizational chart to place the Gender Unit to report directly to the WFP Deputy Director. WFP used 'Business Owners' to really 'own' the gender mainstreaming process, with the gender office reporting to them which created ownership and drive to improve on performance indicators. This was accomplished with strong leadership from the Executive Director, financing and human resource commitments and partnerships with several UN system entities, including UN Women, with which WFP signed a MOU.

Carole Wainaina, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management emphasized the role of strong commitment to gender equality at the leadership level is one of the most important drivers of opening the doors for women. She indicated that statistics demonstrate that the conversion rate of application is very high for women, i.e., once women apply to top jobs, they have a strong chance of being selected, however, not enough women apply for office in the first place. The challenge is to build a strong pipeline and encourage women to take on leadership roles.

Mbaranga Gasarabwe, Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security, highlighted the special risks women face, such as rape, sexual assault, when undertaking assignments in unsafe environments. To encourage more women to take these roles, first their safety must be guaranteed. The Assistant Secretary-General noted that the culture and approach to security must be examined and safeguards for women further bolstered and strengthened. This will encourage more women to come forward and take on the challenge of positions in high-risk environments. The Assistant Secretary-General noted that the system must work on mentoring younger women who are in junior levels to prepare them for future leadership.

Aisa Kirabo Kacyira, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN-HABITAT highlighted that there is a synergy between the mandate of UN-HABITAT and gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-HABITAT endorses the position that there must be a standalone goal on gender equality, and all other goals and targets must be engendered. The Deputy Executive Director also informed IANWGE about the upcoming HABITAT III Conference and encouraged IANWGE to contribute to this conference to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in the preparatory processes and outcome. In this connection, there is an issues paper that was prepared and shared with the HLCP. Furthermore in preparation for HABITAT III, at national level, country level reports on urbanization and shelter are being prepared, and at the regional level UN-HABITAT is partnering with Regional Commissions to analyse the status of sustainable human settlements in various regions.

The Network was grateful for the unprecedented high level participation from the various UN entities. As a Network it was important to hear from the Principals how as a system the entities can work collaboratively and in a coherent way to contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It was encouraging that the Principals recognize gender equality as a cross-cutting issue and a priority across mandates as well as the important intersection of the Beijing+20 commemoration and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda as a historic opportunity to examine the gaps and set priorities for IANWGE going forward. Calls were made for the IANWGE to continue to support Member States in the definition of the SDGs with focus on the gender goal, and within the parameters of their entity-specific mandates, to continue to push for the integration of gender perspectives across all targets and indicators of the new development agenda.

The Network also appreciated that the Principals highlighted the positive impact that the UN-SWAP has had across the UN system and the extent to which it has acted as a catalyst for strengthened gender mainstreaming. The UN-SWAP had proven effective in ensuring that entities are moving forward in the right direction. Strong leadership and commitment and the identification of owners of Performance Indicators within the entities was stressed as a key strategy to promote effective implementation and reporting of the UN-SWAP. There was strong support for the continued implementation of the UN-SWAP including at the regional level. The importance of developing mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration to support small entities, with less internal capacity to accelerate implementation, was highlighted.

On the way forward, participants expressed the need for ensuring that if principals are invited to participate in the session, a right balance is ensured between raising the profile of IANWGE (by inviting the Principals) and having a technical discussion that can lead to important exchanges of information, joint initiatives, etc. Also, there should be a clear criteria or discussion on how the Principals are selected for participation so to ensure a balanced representation.

2. Third year of implementation of the UN-SWAP

UN Women presented a summary of the preliminary results of the third-year implementation of the UN-SWAP. In 2014, 62 entities (including the Secretariat, its departments and offices) reported on the UN-SWAP (up from 55 in 2012). The reporting results show that the UN System continues to make progress. Of all ratings for all indicators, between 2013 and 2014, the system showed a 9 percent increase in gender mainstreaming and implementation. Entities with a gender policy performed better across all indicators. An area that requires improvement is equal representation of women at all levels in the UN system.

Given the request from participants to have more time devoted to discussions on the UN-SWAP a two-hour free-flowing session was organized at the margins of the annual session.

A number of participants lauded the work of the UN-SWAP team led by Ms. Aparna Mehrotra. There was strong recognition that the UN-SWAP has acted as a strong catalyst to propel action to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women within their respective entities. Concern was expressed that several common areas of weak performance for the UN-SWAP will prevent entities from meeting all requirements by 2017, namely, resource allocation and gender parity and architecture. Further assistance for developing capacities in these areas was requested. In addition, further assistance and sharing of good practices for the area of Performance Management was requested.

Entities were requested to start considering what they see as the future of the UN-SWAP framework after the 2017 deadline. For example, should the indicators and rating system stay the same or change. It was suggested that a short online survey may be an effective way to capture these opinions. Finally, requests were made for the continuation of reporting letters from UN Women's Executive Director to the heads of all entities and the development of an interactive community of practice with a strong online presence.

3. Intergovernmental dialogue towards the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda and the Third United Nations Conference on Financing for Development

On behalf of UN Women, Sylvia Hordosch and Somali Cerise briefed the Network on the work related to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, while Zohra Khan focused on the United Nations Third Conference on Financing for Development.

On the post-2015 development framework, it was noted that so far there was broad-based support for the 17 SDGs, including the gender equality goal, with some concern that there may be too many goals to implement. G-77 in particular had been supportive of the Open Working Group package, however, Western European and Others Group were in favour of clustering the goals. Member States also had different interests, with some Member States favouring strong slant towards human rights and accountability while others are more focused on poverty and resilience issues. The zero draft outcome would be available in May. For UN Women, the priority was to examine the package as a whole and ensure that it makes reference to sexual and reproductive health, unpaid care work and access to resources. The IANWGE as a collective was called to continue to support gender mainstreaming throughout the post-2015 development framework, including accountability.

UN Women also reported on the process of development of indicators for the post-2015 development agenda. In mid-January the UN agencies were asked by the Statistical Commission and the Co-Chairs of the post-2015 development agenda negotiations to prepare a preliminary list of indicators. UN Women and UNFPA co-led this process for goal 5 and participated in other discussions for other goals. The Statistical Commission convened an Expert Group Meeting in February to further examine indicators and proposed a new inter-agency expert group on SDGs. There was general support for this new body to be established, but what remains unclear is the make-up of the group and balance between Member States and the UN system. As next steps all proposals on indicators and the proposal of 2 indicators per target would be shared with national statistical offices and Member States. IANWGE members were encouraged to work with the technical colleagues that participate in the Technical Task Team to ensure that all indicators regardless of the area are disaggregated by sex and age.

On progress towards the Third UN Conference on Financing for Development, the Network was informed that Norway and Guyana were co-leading the Financing for Development negotiation process with a special focus on mobilization and effective use of resources such as development assistance and private finance. Gender equality considerations had been included in the second informal discussion based on the [Elements Paper](#). In the drafting session, gender equality was highlighted by 99 Member States. Iceland on behalf of 20 countries offered a strong statement on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Only 2 out of UN agencies present referenced gender equality. The Network was called upon advocating for gender equality with Member States and internally within their entities to ensure gender equality concerns were infused in all these important intergovernmental processes.

Several participants thanked UN Women for the updates on these key intergovernmental processes and requested that UN Women continue to disseminate and facilitate information exchange on these important processes. Participants echoed that while a standalone goal on gender equality is crucial, gender equality must be mainstreamed across all goals, targets and indicators which pertain to their own respective mandates. Participants also stressed the importance of coordinated messaging in order to engage with Member States in a coherent way to influence the negotiation process. In this respect, it was suggested that UN Women's Geneva focal point could serve as a liaison for coordinating with Europe-based agencies on the post-2015 efforts. IANWGE members stressed the urgency of ensuring robust financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women and requested UN Women to continue to proactively share information about the state of play at the headquarters on the road to the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in September.

4. The IANWGE 2015: Strategic direction going forward

The Network shared their views on IANWGE's work and strategic direction going forward. Participants stressed the IANWGE should focus on follow up to the outcome of the CSW59 as a priority, and to jointly continue advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women in all parts of the post-2015 development framework, including for a standalone goal, and the incorporation of gender sensitive targets and indicators in the other goals; in the financing for development process; and the means of implementation and accountability (monitoring and review). There was a call for the IANWGE Secretariat to continue to keep entities abreast of the developments within the important inter-governmental processes and on the status of the negotiations. There were also calls for inter-sessional focused meetings and regular electronic briefings on the different aspects within the process toward the post 2015 development agenda.

On the UN-SWAP implementation, its full and effective implementation would continue to be a priority. UN Women would continue to work with the system to work towards improved performance in all areas of the UN-SWAP.

In terms of challenges, the Network emphasized there were limited capacity and resources at the country and regional levels to fully implement the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. Furthermore, the lack of statistics and disaggregated data was an additional impediment.

UN Women announced the forthcoming update of the mapping of all staff across the UN system working on gender equality and the empowerment of women. This would allow IANWGE to capitalize on existing gender expertise from across the UN system.

In terms of capacity building, it was noted that several gender training courses and resources were available, but remained underutilized. In addition, there was a need to mainstream gender equality into human resources policy for staff development. The need to appoint senior management champions who can advocate for gender equality within organizations and empower gender focal points was also highlighted by several participants.

With regards to the format of IANWGE annual meetings, there were diverse views about the ability to balance the participation of Principals with that of the technical experts (i.e. IANWGE members). Some participants stated that they would like IANWGE meetings to remain a space for interactive dialogue and knowledge sharing on technical areas going forward and asked that meeting times be extended to facilitate more opportunities for discussion.

A decision was taken to revert to the two-day format from next year (2016) with inter-sessional meetings at regular intervals to facilitate dialogue and coordination on priority issues complemented by regular electronic interaction.

Part II. VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

Agenda Items considered virtually: Summary of Progress Report of Task Forces and Standing Agenda Items

a. Standing Agenda Item on Women and Peace and Security

2014 was a year of reflection, consolidation of progress and stronger focus on the implementation of the normative gains made in 2013 and earlier in preparation for the 2015 High-level Review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. It was also a challenging year marked by increased violence, mass displacement flows and related humanitarian catastrophes. There was a proliferation of armed conflicts, including Northern Nigeria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Gaza, and Ukraine, the number of forcibly displaced reached its highest figure since World War II, and the rise of violent extremism has been accompanied with deliberate attacks on women's rights, including their rights to education, public life, and decision-making over their own bodies.

The Standing Committee played a key role in initiating preparations for the High-level Review and the related global study mandated in Security Council resolution 2122 (2013). A technical sub-committee was set up which has provided guidance and support in the identification of a lead author, the establishment of a high-level advisory group, the development of a working outline for the study, the launch of a global civil society survey on the global study, the as well as in the holding of Global Open Days on women, peace and security in mission settings with a focus on the 2015 High-level Review. 2015 provides an historic opportunity for the international community to revisit the women, peace and security agenda, current approaches, and their real impact on the ground. The Standing Committee will be instrumental in ensuring key findings and recommendations emerging from the review process will be translated into entity-specific policies, strategies, guidance, trainings and work streams.

Overview of 2014 activities

The Standing Committee continued to serve as an important mechanism for bridging policy and programming work, sharing knowledge and coordinate action across the pillars of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related commitments on women, peace and security, and to ensure synergies across related reporting processes. Beyond new initiatives related to the preparations of the High-level Review and global study, work remained focused on: a) taking forward reporting on the 1325 indicators; b) coordinating the preparation of the SG's annual reports on women, peace and security and related Open Debate of the Security Council, and c) accelerating delivery on UN commitments and targets as framed in the UN strategic results framework on women, peace and security and the SG's Seven Point Action Plan on Gender-responsive Peacebuilding. In addition, Members of the Standing Committee continued to support more systematic inclusion of women and peace and security commitments across the work of the Security Council, including by providing technical briefings to new Security Council members.

Achievements, good practice examples as well as gaps and challenges are highlighted in the SG's 2014 report (S/2014/693). The report updates on the state of implementation in the areas of prevention,

participation, protection and relief and recovery and puts forward a set of policy recommendations for the consideration of the Council and the Member States. It brought greater light to emerging concerns and priorities which motivated a special focus on displaced women and girls at the Security Council open debate held on 28 October 2014. Several Member States quoted directly from data and findings in their national statements,¹ again illustrating the value of a stronger evidence-base and improved analysis of trends. The findings of the report also informed the presidential statement, S/PRST/2014/21 adopted at the debate,² which, along with discussing the increasingly grave situation of female Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) further expounded upon the effects of violent extremism contribution to these rising numbers.

Priorities and planned activities for 2015

- **Preparing for the 2015 High-level Review and Global Study on WPS:** Both the review and the study that were mandated in resolution 2122 (2013), OP 15 and 16, will require strong system-wide engagement. It is expected that the global study will help mobilize and accelerate necessary action and point the way to a more systematic way forward through new analysis and data, case studies, collection of good practice as well as concrete evidence-based recommendations. The High-level Review will be held under the presidency of Spain in the Security Council in October 2015. The Standing Committee will play a key role in taking forward the recommendations of the review and the study.
- **Contributing to related high-level processes:** Strategically use the convergence of the high-level reviews of UN peace operations, peacebuilding architecture and of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 to advance the women, peace and security agenda by contributing to and supporting opportunities for information exchange and identifying strategies for taking forward gender-specific findings and recommendations.
- **Improving alignment of UN implementation and monitoring frameworks on WPS:** Beyond assessing performance against the 2014 targets of the Strategic Results Framework and the commitments of the SG's 7-Point Action Plan, the ongoing review will address issues related to alignment, relevance, feasibility of data collection, coordination and accountability for performance with the aim of harmonizing and strengthening UN implementation and monitoring frameworks beyond 2015.
- **Furthering development and reporting on the SCR 1325 indicators.** The focus in 2015 will be on reviewing and revising methodological guidelines, establishing an on-line database and seeking support for populating outcome indicators that require data collection at the country-level.
- **Coordinating preparation of the SG's 2015 report on women, peace and security and related Open Debate of the Security Council.** The report, mandated in S/RES/2122 (2013), OP 16 will submit the results of the global study to the Security Council.

¹ To access all statements, including country statements, made at the Open Debate, please go to:

<http://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/security-council-debate-women-peace-and-security-october-2014>

² For UN News Story on the Open Debate, please go to:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49186#.VO3i7y4YEeI>

b. Standing Agenda Item on matters related to CEDAW Committee

2014 was a productive year for the CEDAW Committee which adopted two general recommendations, completed seven individual communications, examined the periodic reports of 24 States parties, and adopted one inquiry report under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention. In addition, the Committee convened a two half day general discussion on girls'/women's right to education, to serve as a starting point for elaborating a general recommendation on this topic.

Since the last briefing, the State of Palestine has acceded to the Convention and Tajikistan has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, bringing the total number of States parties to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to 188 and 105, respectively. In addition, Serbia has accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee. There are now 69 States parties that have accepted the amendment.

During its 58th, 59th and 60th sessions, the Committee considered the reports of 24 States parties, including four initial reports. Many areas of concern were raised by the Committee in its concluding observations following the review of these 24 States parties. Particular focus was placed on violence against women, harmful practices, and access to justice, education, discriminatory family laws and disadvantaged groups of women, including women affected by conflict situations, women with disabilities, rural women, migrant women, as well as refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women.

As usual, representatives of United Nations entities, including the Inter-Agency Group on CEDAW Reporting and many of you here, as well as national human rights institutions and NGOs attended the sessions, participated in informal meetings and shared information to facilitate the Committee's work. Avenues to further expand this cooperation were explored by the Committee with members of the Inter-Agency Group on CEDAW Reporting (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO and UN Women) on 7 November 2014 during the 59th session of CEDAW.

The Committee continues to elaborate general recommendations to promote understanding of the Convention's substantive content and the specific nature of discrimination against women. On 3 November 2014, the Committee adopted joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices. This is the first ever general recommendation/comment jointly adopted by two treaty bodies. The GR recalls the obligation of States parties to both Conventions to prevent and eliminate harmful practices inflicted on women and girls, such as female genital mutilation, crimes committed in the name of so-called honour, forced and child marriage, polygamy, virginity testing, widowhood practices and infanticide, in addition to body modifications such as fattening, neck elongation and breast ironing, and to pay attention to practices such as women and girls undergoing plastic surgery to conform to social norms of beauty. The GR also states that harmful practices are deeply rooted in social attitudes according to which women and girls are regarded as inferior to men and boys and are often used as a way of controlling women's choices and expressions, in particular their sexuality.

On 5 November 2014, the Committee adopted general recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women. The GR stressed that violence against women is one of the major forms of persecution experienced by women in the context of refugee status and asylum and that States parties have an obligation to protect women from being exposed to a real, personal and foreseeable risk of serious forms of discrimination, including gender-

based violence, irrespective of whether such consequences would take place outside the territorial boundaries of the sending State party. It states that gender-based violence and persecution are recognized as legitimate grounds for international protection in law and in practice and may include the threat of female genital mutilation, forced/early marriage, threat of violence and/or crimes committed in the name of so-called honour, trafficking in women, acid attacks, rape and other forms of sexual assault, serious forms of domestic violence, the imposition of the death penalty or other physical punishments existing in discriminatory justice systems, forced sterilization or political or religious persecution for holding feminist or other views. The GR also notes that women are more likely than men to seek to change their nationality to that of their foreign spouse, which puts them at a greater risk of statelessness if there are gaps in nationality legislation. In addition, seemingly neutral nationality requirements can also discriminate against women because they have more difficulty in meeting requirements such as economic self-sufficiency or property ownership.

In addition, the Committee is in the process of drafting general recommendations on women's access to justice and on rural women. It is hoped that both general recommendations will be adopted this year. The Committee also embarked on the elaboration of a general recommendation on girls'/women's right to education, following the half day of general discussion that was held on this topic on 7 July 2014. A first draft of the general recommendations is currently under preparation. The Committee is also finalizing a concept note on gender equality in the context of disaster relief and climate change, with a view to preparing a general recommendation on the topic. OHCHR, UNICEF, UN Women, FAO, WFP and UNISDR have been particularly active and supportive of the general discussion as well as the Committee's work on these draft general recommendations.

The Committee further decided to hold a half day of general discussion on disaster relief and climate change during its 63rd session in February 2016.

Additionally, the Committee adopted a statement on the situation of women in Gaza and addressed an open letter to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, both in July 2014. CEDAW also adopted a statement on ICPD Beyond 2014 review process.

During its three most recent sessions, the Committee took final decisions on seven communications under article 2 of the Optional Protocol, adopting inadmissibility decisions in five cases and Views finding violations in two cases; one concerning visitation rights of an abusive partner and one relating to discriminatory provisions of codified customary law in inheritance matters. In addition, the Committee adopted findings in relation to one inquiry under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, finding grave and systematic violations by a State party of rights set forth in the Convention. The Committee also decided henceforth to publish its inquiry reports, even in the absence of the consent of the State party concerned.

Through its periodic review of hundreds of periodic reports from States parties culminating in the adoption of concluding observations with concrete recommendations, the follow-up procedure, the elaboration of general recommendations, and its growing body of jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the Committee has provided guidance and constructive feedback on how to improve the situation of women worldwide. However, much more is needed to bring about substantive equality of women and men on the ground. I would therefore be interested to hear your views on how this Network could strengthen cooperation with the Committee in promoting women's rights and gender equality and support States parties in implementing the Committee's recommendations.

c. Standing Agenda Item on Violence Against Women

Update on the United Nations Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women

Launched in 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General's [UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#) campaign aims to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources for preventing and ending all forms of violence against women and girls in all parts of the world. Throughout 2014, the UNiTE campaign continued to mobilize the UN System, partners, and individuals to inspire action around the issue.

The campaign continued to provide the UN system with a globally acknowledged framework and common advocacy platform, adding significant value to system-wide and agency-specific efforts to position and maintain the issue high on public and political agendas. The campaign provides a coordination structure for joint programmes and initiatives at the national and regional levels, which have increased substantially since the start of the campaign.

The UNiTE Campaign continued to prove a powerful vehicle for social mobilization, reaching new audiences, building on its strong and diverse constituencies and enhancing the visibility of its brand, including its association with the colour orange. It continued to build innovative partnerships with a range of stakeholders, including sports associations, faith-based organizations and corporations, capitalizing on key moments such as the FIFA World Cup in Brazil to raise awareness of violence against women and girls. It engaged young people, and young men in particular, through its partnership with the International Muay Thai Federation, which is aimed at challenging harmful masculinities and fostering non-violent relationships.

The UNiTE campaign continued to recognize 'Orange Day' (the 25th of each month), as a monthly moment to mobilize for action around violence against women and girls. Monthly themes served to highlight the campaign's global advocacy efforts to call for the prioritization of violence against women and girls in the Sustainable Development Goals, and to mobilize governments and citizens to demand a world where gender equality is a reality, by demonstrating the intersectionality of the concerns reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action through the lens of violence against women and girls.

Campaign activities in 2014 culminated in a call to action to 'Orange Your Neighbourhood' for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, November 25, and the following 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The UNiTE campaign invited the UN System, governments, civil society organizations and individuals to organize orange-themed events to draw attention to the issue and inspire action. The call to 'Orange Your Neighbourhood' served to encourage people to organize activities to bring the campaign to the local level, reinforcing the message that all people in society have a role to play in efforts to end violence against women and girls. The initiative was launched in New York through a series of events, including the Official Commemoration of the International Day to End Violence against Women, which included the signing of an historic Memorandum of Understanding between UN Women and the City of New York.

Iconic landmarks around the world including the Sphinx and the Pyramids in Egypt, the Empire State Building and the United Nations Headquarters were illuminated orange in recognition of the occasion and vibrant and creative activities took place in over 70 countries, from bicycle rides, film screenings and flash mobs, to policy dialogues and capacity development workshops, which engaged a broad range of participants, from parliamentarians, to market stall sellers, school children, and members of the business community. Over 100 million people were reached through social media, sparking a global conversation and creating considerable momentum around the issue.

Update on the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women remains the only global inter-agency grant-making mechanism exclusively dedicated to addressing all forms of violence against women and girls. Established in 1996 through General Assembly Resolution 50/166, the UN Trust Fund brings together as many as 21 different UN agencies together in making grant decisions. It is administered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) on behalf of the United Nations system. To date, the Fund has awarded US\$ 103 million in grants to 393 initiatives in 136 countries and territories. Its active portfolio includes 90 projects, covering 73 countries and territories with a total value of over US\$ 54 million.

In 2014, the UN Trust Fund continued to support national, regional and cross-regional initiatives that work to systematically prevent and address violence against women and girls. The UN Trust Fund focused resources on three priority areas: preventing violence against women and girls through empowering groups especially at risk of violence; expanding survivor access to services and building the capacity of service providers to respond effectively to the needs of women and girls affected by violence; and strengthening the implementation of laws, policies and action plans addressing violence against women.

The implementation of UN Trust Fund-supported programmes benefited over 1 million women, girls, men and boys in 2014. In total, over 700,000 women and girls were involved in programme activities, including 89,802 survivors of violence, 38,102 women and girls living with HIV/AIDS and 4,385 women human rights defenders. In addition, these programmes engaged 208,658 men and boys and strategically reached over 22 million people through awareness-raising, social media campaigns, radio and television shows, theatre and other forms of educational entertainment.

A commitment to and strategic implementation of a results-driven resource mobilization strategy enabled the Trust Fund to increase its overall resources for grant making significantly in 2014 and meet its target of raising US\$15 million. The financial contributions and political support of a range of bilateral and private sector partners were critical to the Trust Fund's success. During the year, the Trust Fund strategically focused on expanding and diversifying its range of donors to ensure the sustainability, reliability and growth of its financial envelope. By fully harnessing the potential of new partnerships with the corporate sector and with an immediate focus on fashion and the arts, the Trust Fund was able to raise its visibility, extend its outreach and begin to build an individual giving portfolio.

In 2015, the UN Trust Fund will continue to actively respond to the evolving context provided by the post-2015 development agenda in setting a new a course for the coming years that is true to its founding vision and agreed commitments. Within this context, the Trust Fund will be guided by a new strategic plan for 2015-2020 focusing on three core areas of work: grant-giving; evidence-based programming on violence against women and girls; and providing leadership in global advocacy calling for a significant increase in global giving to prevent and address violence against women and girls.

The UN Trust Fund's Report to the Commission on the Status of Women is now available online in all official languages: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2015/6

d. Task Force on Gender and Trade

Three members of the Task Force on Gender and Trade - UNCTAD, the World Bank and ITC - organized on 20 January 2014 a session on '[Women and Trade in Africa: Realizing the Potential](#)'. The session was held on UNCTAD premises in Geneva and was attended by over 100 representatives of the Geneva-

based diplomatic, academic and civil society community. Participants heard that there is enormous potential for African countries to increase their trade regionally and globally and women could play a key role in exploiting this potential if the obstacles they face are recognized and addressed. Trade also can serve as a powerful tool for women's empowerment and inclusive development in Africa. By looking at a number of country experiences, experts from the three organizations highlighted that inequality in incomes and employment opportunities, and restricted access to productive resources, services, training, market information and market networks remained persistent problems for women in Africa. This was despite the notable improvements in female participation in education and political activities that have been recorded in the same countries. Moreover, experts noted that trade integration did not automatically reduce existing gender disparities. Designing policies to recognize this should be a key priority in setting the global agenda for trade and development after 2015.

Activities organized by members of the Task Force on Gender and Trade to which UNCTAD participated

UNCTAD contributed to the [Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment](#). Through the Knowledge Gateway, UNCTAD's analytical work on trade and gender reaches and benefits a global audience.

Activities conducted by UNCTAD of relevance for the Task Force on Gender and Trade

(i) UNCTAD conducts research at the country level on the impact of trade liberalization and facilitation on gender equality and women's wellbeing. These country case studies stand out not just because they render women in the economy visible, they also offer countries concrete and extensive policy guidance on how trade policy can promote gender equality. Three studies were published in 2014. The study, [The Fisheries Sector in the Gambia: Trade, Value Addition and Social Inclusiveness](#), by using both a quantitative and qualitative approach, provides an overview of the existing structure of the fisheries sector in the Gambia, including its gender dynamics, and examines the constraints and potential associated with the expansion and further export orientation of the sector. The study, [Who is benefitting from trade liberalization in Rwanda? A gender perspective](#), examines the gender impact of trade liberalization in Rwanda by looking at the direct effect of exports on employment, as well as the effect of imports on female welfare and government spending. The third publication is a report titled, [Looking at trade policy through a 'gender lens'](#), also available in [Spanish](#) and [French](#). It presents the findings of the seven country case studies on trade and gender conducted by UNCTAD between 2010 and 2014. The countries reviewed were: Angola, Bhutan, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Lesotho, Rwanda and Uruguay. National workshops were held in [Kigali, Rwanda](#) and [Montevideo, Uruguay](#), to present findings and recommendations from the country studies. The national workshops were organized with the support of the UN Country Offices and were opened by the UN Resident Coordinator (Montevideo) and by the chief of the UN Women Office (Kigali).

(ii) UNCTAD developed a teaching manual on trade and gender. The manual is meant to provide an up-to-date learning resource on trade and gender issues to all stakeholders - researchers, policy-makers and civil society representatives - involved in research, policy formulation and advocacy in this area. The manual consists of two volumes: [Volume I, Unfolding the links](#), discusses the conceptual, theoretical and empirical links between trade and gender; [Volume II, Empirical analysis of the trade and gender links](#), introduces different quantitative approaches and methodologies to analyze these links empirically. The second volume is accompanied by a CD with application files which the learners can use for hands-on practice.

(iii) UNCTAD developed an [online course on trade and gender](#) addressed to the academia, government officials, civil society representatives and the private sector. The objective of the course is to provide participants with the knowledge needed to analyse the two-way relationship between trade and gender, and ultimately to produce gender-aware policy recommendations. To this end, the course combines theory on the interaction between trade and gender with empirical evidence. The first edition of the course started on 19 January 2015 for a eight-week period. 186 applications were received, out of which 104, from 51 countries, were accepted. The possibility to make the course available to all UN staff to strengthen the secretariat's expertise in this area of work, is being considered. For this to happen, a much shorter version of the course should be developed.

(iv) UNCTAD has actively contributed to the debate on the role of gender equality in the post- 2015 development framework. It published the Policy Brief, [Trade, gender and the post-2015 development agenda](#). The aim of this policy brief was to highlight some linkages between gender and economics, especially trade, in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and propose future targets and indicators for the areas covered by MDGs 3 and 8. Indeed, only if women are economically empowered can they benefit from the opportunities arising from expanded trade. In turn, trade can play its role of “enabler” of development if flanking economic and social policies are in place. Coherent economic and social policies are needed.

Future activities of the Task Force

In light of the increasing attention dedicated by the international community to the interdependence between trade policies and gender equality and women's empowerment, the purpose and scope of the Task Force on Gender and Trade would benefit from a new revival in order to further strengthen the relevance of the trade and gender debate in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

In addition, to ensure higher visibility and broader dissemination of the activities carried out by the members of the Task Force on the topic of trade and gender, an ad-hoc cluster page could be created as part of the platform of the Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment and used as a one-stop repository of publications on the topic.

e. Decisions on other Task Forces

The **Inter-Agency Working Group on Rural Women** was operational until it did get institutionalized into a joint programme titled “[Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women](#)”, which is being implemented together with the three Rome-Based Agencies (IFAD, FAO and WFP). The programme was launched in October 2012 and designed to be implemented until 2017, with a possibility of extension to 2019 (due to late resource mobilization). This was a way to substantiate the collaboration around building a responsive policy environment for rural women. Currently, under the leadership of the Government of Canada, an informal “Group of Friends on Rural Women” continues to meet with interested Member States and provides updates on Canada's development assistance related to rural women, and it is a forum through which the participating UN Agencies in the joint programme report on progress.

The **Inter-agency working group on gender and migration** paved the way for UN Women's active participation in the Global Migration Group – which UN Women will chair in 2016. The Global Migration Group (GMG) is an inter-agency group bringing together heads of agencies to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to

migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. <http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/>

UN Women also currently chair the Gender and Human Rights Working Group within the GMG which includes more than 7 agencies, among them: UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHCR, IOM, ILO, UNODC, and WHO. Because of our work through these two key networks, there is no need to maintain a separate IANWGE task force. The inter-agency work on migration has got therefore institutionalized through the broader commitments of key agencies to the GMG.

Annexes:

a. Agenda

Chair: Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women

Vice Chair: Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women

Secretariat: Moez Doraid, Director of the United Nations System Coordination Division of UN Women

Date: 10, 12 and 13 March 2015 (8:15 to 9:30 a.m.).

Venue: United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 7 (CB)

Tuesday 10 March 2015: 8.15 to 9.30 a.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Dialogue with the Chair: Accountability for the UN System's Work on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Focus: Progress report on the third year of the UN-SWAP implementation

- Update and new developments
- Next steps: Priorities for 2015

Thursday, 12 March 2015: 8.15 to 9.30 a.m.

3. Key Intergovernmental debates in 2015

a. Post 2015 Development Framework: update and way forward

b. The way forward the Third International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 13 to 16 July 2015

Focus:

- Road map: Challenges, key messages and opportunities for inter-agency coordination
- Way forward

Proposed outcomes: Agreement on common priorities to influence the negotiation processes and outcomes, in particular as it relates to ensuring robust financing for gender equality in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

Friday, 13 March 2015: 8.15 to 9.30 a.m.

4. Dialogue with the Chair

Focus: Identification of priority areas for interagency collaboration during 2015 and strategy on how to grant effective and coherence support to Member States in ensuring gender is placed central in the new development agenda

Virtual agenda: Follow-up to inter-sessional activities.

Progress reports pertaining to standing agenda items, task forces and working groups are shared virtually through the IANWGE extranet. We invite the chairs to provide the respective report of progress 2014 by 25 February latest. All reports will be posted in a dedicated extranet page which will be available closer to the date. Reports and the background documentation will be distributed through the extranet page. We expect reports from:

- Women and Peace and Security. The 15th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). Substantive preparations, challenges, entry points and key messages
- Violence against women: UN trust fund to end violence against women and Secretary-General campaign UNiTE to end violence against women
- Matters related to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
- Task Forces:
 - Joint Programme on Rural Women (FAO, WFP, IFAD, UN Women)
 - Gender and Trade (UNCTAD)
 - Gender and Climate Change (UNDP – UNESCO)
 - Gender and Migration (UN Women – IOM)

b. List of participants

Chair: Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN women

Vice Chair: Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women

Secretariat: Moez Doraid, Director of the United Nations System Coordination Division of UN Women

Assistant Secretariat: Patricia Cortes, the United Nations System Coordination Division of UN Women

UNESCO	Irina Bokova Director-General
UNFPA	Babatunde Osotimehin Executive Director
OIOS	Carman L. Lapointe Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
DPI	Cristina Gallach Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information
OSAA	Maged Abdelaziz Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa
WFP	Amir Mahmoud Abdulla Deputy Executive Director
UNICEF	Yoka Brandt Deputy Executive Director
UN-HABITAT	Aisa Kirabo Kacyira Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director
DSS	Mbaranga Gasarabwe Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security
DM	Bettina Bartsiotas Assistant Secretary-General, Controller
OHRM	Carole Wainaina Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management
ECE	Christian Friis Bach Executive Secretary
DESA	Sibel Selcuk
DPI	Jaya Dayal
ESCAP	Nanda Kairikiksh
ESCAP	Cai Cai
ESCAP	Grace Puliye
ECLAC	Pamela Villa Lobos
ECA	Thokozile Ruzvido
ECE	Monika Linn
ESCWA	Samira Atallah
FAO	Brave Ndisale
GenderNet	Patti O'Neill
GenderNet	Emily Esplen
ILO	Shawna Olney
ILO	Rafael Crowe
ODA	Amy Dowler
IFAD	Maria Hartl
IFAD	Choncharok Viravan
UNFPA	Enshrah Ahmed
UNFPA	Ana Elena Badilla
UNFPA	Seynabou Tall
UNFPA	Eva Johansson
UNFPA	Luis Mora
UNFPA	Sheila Roseau
OSAA	Ndidi Anyaegbunam
UN Women Training Center	Clemencia Munoz
UNRWA	Carlos Hernandez

UNRWA	Jasmin Reitzig
UNESCO	S. Gulser Corat
ITU	Kadiatou Sall-Beye
IOM	Theodora Suter
OIOS	Christa Lex
OCHA	Njoki Kinyanjui
WHO	Veronica Magar
UN-HABITAT	Jo Berg
UNFCCC	Fluer Newman
ITC/ILO	Joanne Lortie
UNAIDS	Malayah Harper
UNHCR	Michelle Cervantes
UNCTAD	Simonetta Zarrilli
UNDP	Randi Davis
UNDP	Raquel Lagunas
UNDP	Neus Bernabeg
UNEP	Janet Kabeberi-Macharia
UNEP	Linda Kaseva
UN Global Compact	Ursula Wynhoven
WIPO	Juliette Guillemot
UN Women	Aparna Mehrotra
UN Women	Michele Ribotta
UN Women	Sharon J. Taylor
UN Women	Patricia Cortes
UN Women	Monica Dyer
UN Women	Sara Callegari
UN Women	Shivangi Shrivastava

Via Teleconference

OHCHR	Saori Terada, Lucinda O'Hanlon and Veronica Birga
WFP	Sonsoles Rueda
ECLAC	Ms. Ana Freiga
UH Habitat	Angela Mwai