



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Entity
for Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women**

UN Women Executive Board
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Opening Statement of UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

[Check against delivery]

Mr President,
Members of the Executive Board,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends.

After one year as Executive Director of UN Women, I would like to start today's session by referring to some of my highlights and proud moments:

- The 58th Commission on the Status of Women – where Member States decided to support a standalone gender goal – now part of the Open Working Group's final report.
- Strong voices protesting the ongoing pandemic of violence against women. HeForShe will officially launch this Saturday, a solidarity platform for men and boys, and through the COMMIT initiative more than 63 countries and the European Union have announced specific measures.

- With our support, Syrian women demanded a place at the Geneva II talks, united their voices, and continue to work for a peaceful, democratic and inclusive Syria.
- Unprecedented participation in recent elections in Afghanistan, where UN Women supported training and support for 154 female provincial council candidates.
- The launch of the Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Reparations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, and the Global Study into resolution 1325.
- Institutionalization of our Civil Society Advisory Groups, with **37** globally keeping us in tune with women's needs at the very grassroots.
- Our Beijing +20 campaign is mobilizing thousands, with events in every region with and by civil society, and member states, from Malmo in Sweden to Apia, Samoa. And the country reports on implementation are coming in, with 151 received already.
- A joint memorandum of understanding was signed last week with the African Union Commission that consolidates our partnership.
- As a system and as an individual entity we have thought carefully about 'fitness for purpose', with input to the Secretary-General's report.
- An active role played by UN Women and the UN country team in the peace process in Colombia.

Mr President,

Everywhere I go I feel a sense of real urgency,

a recognition that we are at a turning point for gender equality,

and a recognition that we must seize the once-in-a generation opportunity presented by the convergence of the work on post-2015 development goals and Beijing+20.

For women everywhere - whether displaced from their homes, victims of violence, or newly elected legislators – UN Women is there as hard-won human rights gains are threatened.

In this time of crises around the world, we must remember that educated, employed, empowered women are the best drivers of growth, the best hope for reconciliation, and the best buffer against the radicalization of youth and the repetition of cycles of violence.

In June, just after our last session in New York, we launched a global mobilization campaign in the context of **the 20th anniversary** of the **Fourth World Conference on Women**. It will culminate at the Global Leaders' Commitment Forum in September 2015.

Distinguished delegates, we **rely on you to ensure a record participation of Heads of State** at this event.

We are gathering hard facts from Member States on progress made in the last 20 years.

So far, a **record 151 of 193** Member States have **completed their national report** on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Let me **thank** all of you here who have done this, and **urge completion** from others. We must keep up this good momentum.

This reporting will give us a global assessment of progress and challenges for each of the 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action. Regional reports will be made by commissions following conferences taking place before the end of the year.

Mr President,

The hard facts are hard to hear. Early indications from the reports are that progress towards gender equality may be held back by external factors.

Rising inequalities, financial and food crises continue to have deeply negative consequences for the most marginalized groups.

Environmental degradation has disproportionately affected women.

Violent conflict affects the livelihoods and safety of women and girls, who are increasingly and alarmingly targets for aggression.

Distinguished delegates,

Your reports tell us that you are seeking to address these failings.

Some encouraging examples drawn from the early analysis of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action include:

- social protection measures such as pensions, family and child allowances to address women's poverty
- addressing the economic barriers to girls' education for example by providing bursaries
- quotas and temporary measures to increase women's participation in public life; and
- legal reforms to remove discrimination in areas such as family law and property rights.

We will feed these results into the Report of the Secretary-General and use them to lobby for change.

Where we have evidence and evaluation we can push harder.

This also applies to ourselves. As we work to drive change in others we must have our own house in order.

It is clear that the UN system must operate at a much higher standard when it comes to representation of women, gender-responsive resource management, and disaggregation of data.

This is the second year of reporting on the implementation of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as "UN-SWAP". Almost all UN entities participated.

We are now seeing progress in 14 of the 15 performance indicators, including **notable advances** in gender-responsive auditing, performance management, programme review and knowledge generation.

29 entities, departments and offices now have gender policies- a key driver for strengthened accountability. An additional 13 are planned within this year.

But many indicators still show **unsatisfactory results**, including evaluation, resource tracking, gender architecture and parity, capacity assessment and coherence.

Mr President,

Some three years after our establishment we have also looked carefully at our own structure and engagement - an important aspect of our own 'fit for purpose' goal - with follow up planned as an outcome of our senior staff retreat in August.

This year we conducted the **first UN Women global workforce survey**, and shared the results with all staff last week.

The survey, which had a very high response rate of over 70% of staff, demonstrated a remarkable level of **engagement and motivation**, as well as areas for improvement.

Both the retreat and the survey help us build on the commitment to the mandate and indicated areas of institutional strengthening that will support implementation.

Findings from the meta-evaluation that you will shortly be discussing pinpoint further organizational efficiencies that will have immediate impact, as well as other practical steps to be taken through **human resources** to support wellbeing and internal communications.

We have to be fully ready to implement the **post-2015 development agenda**.

Since our last meeting, the **General Assembly's Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals** released its final outcome document.

UN Women is pleased with the report, which proposes a **strong goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women**.

We must maintain and consolidate gains made for women and girls as the intergovernmental process continues. We will work with Member States and civil society to support this.

This is particularly the case on issues such as:

- ending child, early and forced marriage;
- reducing and redistributing unpaid care work
- and guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights.

These issues are absolutely critical.

Targets across the framework must be aligned with human rights standards.

I would like to **thank Member States**, for your commitment to gender equality during the Open Working Group process, and for your continued support as we move towards 2015.

The first five years of the post-2015 development agenda's implementation are going to be crucial.

We propose to capitalize on the mid-term review of our Strategic Plan to ensure that the results framework supports effective implementation.

At national level, our country offices will support Member States to ensure:

- that the localization of the new goals, targets and indicators is gender-sensitive;

- that relevant data is available to monitor gender equality commitments including by rolling out the standard indicators approved by the UN Statistical Commission; and
- that investments made are focused on transformative initiatives.

Globally, we must **front load energy and investment** in these early years.

We will also draw on the reporting and analysis for the Beijing+20 review to identify implementation gaps, pick what to prioritize **and advocate strongly** for action.

Our **alliances and coordination** with you, the Member States, and all our partners, **especially civil society**, are essential to maintain progress made and further build on the proposed targets.

Mr President,

Evaluation is a principal item on today's agenda – literally and figuratively.

Last year, UN Women invested US\$1.2 million in decentralized evaluations. Shortly this Board will review the meta-analysis of those evaluations. This gives us the strategic evidence base to make this organization stronger, more results-oriented and even more effective.

Let me share with you the **central finding**:

Our programmes are relevant to international and national priorities, and they achieved planned results despite constrained funding and complex environments.

This good news follows the **unqualified audit opinion** for UN Women issued in July this year by the UN Board of Auditors.

I want to take a moment to celebrate these two strong endorsements of our operations, and reiterate our **commitment to full accountability**.

The evaluation report tells us there are four key areas to strengthen:

- **results-based management and knowledge management systems**, in order to guide decision-making and to fully measure outcomes and impacts on women's lives;
- **organizational efficiencies**, for example simplifying contract procedures and streamlining human resources processes;
- **involvement of men** as active programme participants in changing social norms, and **engagement of the private sector** as appropriate; and
- the **UN coordination role at the country level**.

Later today colleagues will outline how we propose to act on the evaluation findings and recommendations. There is already **close convergence** with our current planning.

Civil society plays a vital role in **directly involving men** as partners and stakeholders. Later this year in New Delhi, activists will meet at the **2nd MenEngage Global Symposium** to take forward the Beijing agenda, and agree what needs to happen to fully engage men and boys. I will report on the outcome at the Board's first session in 2015.

This Saturday 20th September will see the launch of our **HeforShe** campaign, another effort to engage men in support of women. We will have men who are role models and prominent in our society.

Engagement with the private sector is another area of intense focus: to raise funds and to influence corporate practices, and to ensure equality for women in the work place.

The Private Sector is also a critical actor for economic empowerment. The business community are partners to mobilize understanding and support. They are on the front line: making the changes that will count.

The **Private Sector Leadership Advisory Council** was launched with this vision in mind. Its first meeting, held in June, adopted terms of reference that highlighted **economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and the UN Women funding gap**.

We are prudent in our approach: we undertake careful risk analysis when evaluating potential partnerships.

Due diligence is important in this regard: it allows us to assess the risk and provides guidelines for ethical considerations.

My friends,

We do not – and must not – work only with the people we like or with whom we feel affinity. Part of our mandate as a new-generation UN entity is to **work outside the conventional development “comfort zone”**.

The global movement of **solidarity** that we are building **includes everyone**.

The **evaluation meta-analysis recommendations** on convening coalitions, building partnerships, and strengthening our coordination function explicitly recognize how vital these areas of our work are.

They also push us to ensure continuous engagement with our partners and stakeholders, and to communicate better the **added value of our coordination role**, especially at country level.

It is clear that the achievement of our goals will require an exponential growth in **partnership**.

A crucial element in this is our **thriving relationship with civil society**. When we last met I reported that we had civil society advisory groups in all regional offices and in 27 countries. Since June this network has grown to 37, and 5 more groups are being set up.

Mr President,

Sometimes it feels as if humanity takes one step forward only to fall several steps back. New waves of conflict and violence in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere, unprecedented numbers of displaced populations, and the Ebola outbreak, strengthen our resolve to find ways to empower women despite the circumstances.

In each of these crisis points, it is women and girls bearing the brunt.

Later today you will hear about the implementation of our **humanitarian strategy**. We are working closely with the UN system and partners to integrate gender equality into all facets of humanitarian action. The human rights of women, girls, boys and men must be equally promoted and protected, with equitable and safe access to services.

Our work in **supporting women to reverse the ravages of war and build peace** is growing in strength and impact. Earlier I highlighted our work with Syrian women.

We also continue to support **South Sudan Women for Peace**. In the **Central African Republic** we supported the documentation of gender crimes and training to peacekeeping forces to prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

Tomorrow you will hear more on the significant results achieved in **Colombia**, promoting inclusive development with women and key players, supporting women's leadership and participation in peace building, and building a gender perspective in humanitarian response.

In addition, the current government has approved strong normative and legal frameworks that are taking effect. For example, the political representation of women in legislative bodies has increased to 19.94 % in the recently elected Congress. We are proud of UN Women's efforts in the Colombian peace process.

Distinguished delegates, we are increasing the pressure for accountability.

On August 1, I was very pleased to launch, with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, the Guidance Note of the Secretary General on **Reparations for Conflict-**

Related Sexual Violence. Reparations are not just about justice. They are also about empowerment.

We are increasing the recognition of the **central place** for **women's voices**, participation, and leadership in **sustainable peace and security**.

Last week we launched the **Global Study on Security Council resolution 1325, adopted in 2000**.

Six more resolutions have been adopted since then and over **40 states** have developed National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security.

Too often, we have **failed to translate these principles into practice**. Real impact must be the only indicator of success.

Turning to a current crisis: The **spread of Ebola** and its effect on communities is **strongly gender differentiated**.

Women account for between **55 to 60 %** of cases throughout West Africa as a whole, with **female nurses** representing **the majority** of the medical personnel who have died from the virus - a direct reflection of the roles of women. In **Liberia**, women account for **70%** of Ebola cases.

Overall, UN Women is contributing to ensuring that **national and regional responses to the Ebola crisis take the needs of women and girls into account**.

Key areas of support in **Sierra Leone, Liberia and elsewhere** include:

- community outreach and information sharing;
- analysis and evaluation of gender disaggregated data; and
- support to economic recovery efforts, focusing on livelihood support for women, social protection, and access to comprehensive healthcare and education for girls.

Excellencies,

Everywhere, **education** is a game changer.

Because of its impact on the poor, it is critical for young women and for all women. We will work with UNESCO and other relevant agencies and partners to create opportunities for young girls who have missed out on learning, so that they get a second chance in life.

We remain very concerned about the **220 schoolgirls** kidnapped by Boko Haram in **Nigeria**.

Bring back our girls!

Mr President,

The current changes for the worse in the world are raising the stakes even higher.

We are undaunted by the challenge...

but nowhere near sufficiently resourced.

Despite strong support from many of our donors, the lack of a critical mass of funding throttles our ability to take successful initiatives to scale.

Our resources remain well below the Secretary-General's original minimum budget of US\$500 million. As you know, in 2012 and in 2013 we struggled to exceed 50% of this goal.

The latest projections for 2014 are bleak: US\$ 154 million in core contributions and early indications of approximately US\$ 120 million from non-core contributions.

With gender included in 13 of the proposed 17 targets in the post 2015 agenda, it is self-evident that **aspirations are currently far outstripping commitment.**

We need a **radical rethink** that puts our funding on a **realistic footing.**

As part of this I welcome the opportunity to engage in a first **informal discussion** with the Members of the Board on the financing of UN Women later today.

I thank the Member States for initiating the **structured financing dialogues** with our sister UN agencies and organizations.

My strong hope is that these dialogues are **frank and fruitful** – and that they will make **resources predictable, sustainable and flexible.**

I welcome your proposals of how to achieve a **broader and more diverse donor base.**

Before I close, I would like to recognize with respect and affection **John Hendra's** huge contribution not only to UN Women, but to the broader UN system.

Highlights include the regional architecture and strengthening of the field; taking a leading role in developing UN Women's policy work on the post-2015 development agenda; speaking out on unpaid care work financing for gender equality, ending violence against women; and engaging men in these conversations.

He has played a key role in the UN Development Group, ASG Advisory Group, as Co-Chair of the UNDG MDG Taskforce, and as a member of the SG's informal senior coordination group on

post-2015. We warmly thank John at this, his last session of the Executive Board, for his 3 and a half years with UN Women, and the invaluable contribution he has made to gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment.

I take this opportunity also to recognize and thank another senior member of staff who retired in July. Saraswathi Menon, "Saras" was Director of Policy. We will miss her great energy, enthusiasm, tenacity, intellectual questioning and problem-solving approach.

Mr President, members of the Board, friends.

This is a **crucible moment for UN Women**.

Our establishment is complete; the regional architecture is in place; we have grown into our intergovernmental role.

We are positioned to catalyse the elements of private enterprise, civil society and public policy-making.

The world is showing its **need for change** as never before. And UN Women is daily gaining recognition as the voice, and as the agent for that change.

So I ask you today, to take the last step,

and **invest in this moment** .

Invest in us. Invest in women.

Thank you.