



Address by Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the Second Regular Session of the UN Women Executive Board, New York, 15 to 16 September 2015.

[As delivered]

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

Let me start by thanking Ambassador Petersen for his impressive work as President of the Executive Board this year. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with you throughout this year. Thank you for your strong commitment and innovative ideas, which have increased our interaction with Member States, and thank you too for the field visit.

I would also like to extend my deep appreciation towards the whole Bureau. Vice-Presidents, thank you for your unfailing commitment and your hard work.

I would like to address something that is no doubt in all our minds: The migrant and refugee crisis. This unprecedented scale of displacement, insecurity and abandonment has created acute loss of safety and instability for men, youth, women, children and the elderly. It affects both those who have escaped and those who are left behind. It is a chronic, long-term situation that will be with us for years and will affect much of our future work.

The United Nations is calling for humanitarian assistance and protection for over 80 million women, men and children.

We know that insecurity and conflict brings women greatly increased vulnerability to violence and to exploitation, for example by smugglers. It brings ruptured health services, and skyrocketing death rates in childbirth. UNFPA estimates that 12 per cent of the women travelling are pregnant.

We applaud the efforts of nations and institutions, of individuals and communities, to support the needs of the asylum seekers. We also note that more help is still needed.

Let us remember that everywhere in the world women and adolescent girls are among the first responders in crises, holding their families and communities together. We see this many times

in times of crisis. In conflicts, they ensure that their families access services and remain safe. But now they need our help.

We are now on the threshold of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We always knew 2015 was going to be a make-or-break year. I thank you, the Member States, for navigating us through the various processes, starting with the Open Working Group and the agreement leading to the Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you for ensuring a positive outcome in Addis Ababa at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July. I thank civil society for its sustained engagement and contributions, which also inform the new agenda.

We now have a development agenda with a gender equality Goal 5 at its centre, as well as reinforcing targets threaded throughout that underpin all the other goals.

We would not have achieved this without the solid evidence base that you provided, drawing on the extensive reviews of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the reviews conducted for the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Based on reports by 167 Member States, by regional commissions and commentary by civil society, these together illuminated successes, areas of slow progress and outright regression. That was brought to a landmark stock-taking moment in March at the Commission on the Status of Women. The reports reinforced the analyses of the Millennium Development Goals – that there can be no lasting progress without gender equality and women’s empowerment. Together, their inescapable evidence shaped the way we contributed to the new agenda.

We are very pleased with Goal 5, which deals with key barriers to gender equality and women’s empowerment and points us to the action required. Clearly to achieve Agenda 2030 we must achieve substantive, transformative and irreversible gender equality and women’s empowerment. This means making choices that focus on universal, strategic, bold structural changes—changes that must also be rights-based.

We know that business as usual and incremental improvements will not deliver the future we want. Only far-reaching and bold changes will do. Goal 5 provides that platform for game-changing initiatives. It is loaded with possibilities and is a perfect menu for immediate and transformative acts.

Goal 5 says we must end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls.

We could start with stronger enforcement of existing laws and repealing discriminatory laws in more than 100 countries, this being our collective normative role.

It says we must eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual violence and other types of exploitation. This is our shared normative, advocacy and programmatic mandate.

It refers to elimination of all harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. This is a shared fight for the rights of girl children.

It recognizes unpaid care work and calls for it to be reduced and redistributed. This in large part could be addressed through access to affordable child care for millions of women, and paternity leave for the 80 per cent of all men who become biological fathers. Here men and boys have a chance to stand up and be counted.

It also says that we must ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making, especially in political, economic and public life. Political parties, elected representatives and all leaders can take this up and join the campaigns of the women's movement for gender parity.

And it calls for ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. The far-reaching violations of rights and the bodies of women and girls in peace and conflict times dehumanizes them. In extreme cases it turns women into the sexual slaves of terrorists. Women need family planning services.

All of these strong yet do-able actions can become game-changers if we act together, and boldly.

The achievement of the inclusion of these targets was already remarkable, within a remarkable year of intense negotiation. Thank you for bringing all these processes to fruition, and creating this moment of potential that we now face together.

The UN Summit begins on 25 September and brings the formal adoption of the sustainable development goals. In December in Paris we bring the much-needed progress on climate change.

The urgency of Agenda 2030 requires UN Women to be well-prepared to deliver on its mandate. In our first five years of existence as UN Women, with your help, we have established UN Women as the standard-setter on the normative front. We have also established ourselves in the coordination of the whole UN system. The UN-SWAP has become entrenched in the UN system.

Our advocacy role has brought issues to the fore, from ending violence against women, to the gender funding gap and unpaid care work. We now continue to build more strength and capacity in programming. We have consolidated our focus on the key activities for the organization with 12 flagship initiatives that have been discussed by all of us simultaneously in every country office of UN Women. These are designed to build alignment and readiness. All are transformative and high impact. Their identification was based on our relative strength and our capacity to bring others into the fold. Our preparations culminated in a retreat that engaged all our offices in a coordinated response to the post-2015 agenda. We are fit for

purpose.

We will hold a technical informal meeting in the first weeks of October, during which we will present the flagship programmes to you.

I am proud to say that the staff of UN Women are a force to be reckoned with. No matter how small, our offices carry the full weight of our mandate and authority. They are staffed by skillful, knowledgeable and wise women – and sometimes men – who are proving themselves as trusted advisors and leaders, connected to a network of technical expertise, and civil society collaborators. We have a strong footprint across the world with presence in key countries. The latest addition was the opening of the liaison office in Japan.

We intend to make an early start on implementing the SDGs. Next year, at CSW60, we will be cementing the agenda for women at the heart of the new SDGs. We will take our first big step towards 2030. By then we plan to have in place a tool for measuring and tracking progress on the SDGs and Goal 5 in particular. We want to be able to show the world what changes Agenda 2030 is making or missing as we reach 6, 9, 12 months into that journey to 2030.

Our focus will be to measure transformative action and to ensure change that lasts—change that is substantive and universal—so that we will make 2030 a year to report on accomplishment for millions of girls growing up now.

Together we have created the opportunity to make the 15 years transformative. Of course the post-2015 agenda will not deliver the future we want without resources. As you so rightly observed and stated in the CSW59 Political Declaration, we need “significantly increased investment to close resource gaps.” This still eludes us.

It is a continuing frustration that the level of rhetoric for gender equality, and the level of ambition expressed, is not evidenced in financing.

Distinguished delegates, much of this session’s agenda deals one way or another with money: Our integrated budget estimates for the next two years (under Item 2), and the structured dialogue on financing (under Item 4). It is, of course, the reality check on our ambition.

We have said it before: We need to be not only fit for purpose and to be funded for purpose. At best this has to start here, as you discuss the Integrated Budget for 2016-2017. This time period covers the last two years of the Strategic Plan for 2014-2017. And it is the first two years of the new 2030 development agenda, which in our view must signal the big change.

Though this is a 15-year marathon, we urge that we must be like sprinters, taking off fast right from the start, setting a leadership pace, and with the resources to last the course and create a crowd-pulling effect.

The Budget that we will present is primarily designed to sustain our regional architecture in programme countries, supporting 462 posts, two-thirds of which are in the field. This is where we intend to make our biggest mark in the next two years. Overall, 84 per cent will be for development and field activities, 13 per cent for management requirements and three per cent for United Nations Coordination.

The budget projections build on the incremental income growth of the last four years and move us closer to the original vision of an annual USD 500 million figure for UN Women to fulfil its mandate.

UN Women is truly grateful for your support and for the mandate you have given us. This session is a moment when we invite you to make history and invest in ways that will change the world. This is within reach.

UN Women's core funding position relative to the whole UN system reflects a tension between demonstrating a truly daring vision for gender equality and women's empowerment, and doing business as usual. From our experience, having only a modest level of funding from the Member States who founded us, makes it harder to convince other donors to fill the gaps.

We must not miss the chance to make 70 years of existence of the UN achieve radical change. That change is from treating women's issues as side issues or peripheral to the business of the UN, to making women and girls the missing and much-needed majority, and the answer to creating a world that respects the rights of all people, that is prosperous and that is able to look after the planet, our home.

We are focused on the roadmap to 2030. In our HeForShe campaign we are reaching out to a new constituency of men and boys. In our UNiTE campaign, civil society, state and local governments and the UN system continue to raise the bar.

On the sidelines of the UNGA, we start the journey to 2030. On 24 September, civil society thought-leaders will be meeting for a consultation with UN Women on the roadmap to 2030. Business leaders and philanthropists are meeting on resource mobilization and closing the UN Women funding gap on 26 September. On 27 September we will have the first historic meeting of Heads of State and Government, co-hosted with the Government of China, together with Mexico, Kenya and Denmark. This leaders' meeting is to commit to the implementation of Goal 5 and closing the gaps identified in the Beijing 20 reviews. It will be the first time that we ask the highest leaders in each land to be there to take personal responsibility to change the trajectory of gender equality substantively and decisively.

The choices on empowerment of women are political choices and are not inexpensive. They require the top leadership, as is the case with all make-or-break decisions in every nation.

We are asking the leaders from then onwards to maintain gender equality and women's empowerment, Goal 5 and the Beijing Platform for Action as their top priority, vital for realizing

all rights for all people and for progress for all humanity. We are asking them to monitor what is happening in their countries and share lessons, progress and challenges.

We know that more than 80 Heads of States and Government have already confirmed their participation from all the regions of the world. This historic meeting is about sharing strategic actions to be taken for each country.

We will document all the presentations, together with additional information that might be too detailed to be presented in the limited speaking time. Additional support to UN Women is most welcome. We ask you to make sure that leaders come with ground-breaking, tangible commitments that will make it possible to reach Planet 50:50 by 2030, and that will show significant results by 2020.

We are hoping the leaders will say:

- We commit to end unequal pay in our countries. We need pay-parity by 2020.
- We commit to ending child marriage because it cannot go on for another decade.
- We commit to providing childcare and elderly person care options to millions more women who will be able to go to work, and paternity leave so that fathers have an opportunity to be fathers, and in that way part of unpaid care is addressed.
- We commit to ending violence against women and engaging men and boys in this effort, in a deep way, and to adopt a policy of zero tolerance to gender-based violence.
- We commit to generating and fostering decent jobs for women, taking advantage of the care economy opportunities and jobs in different sectors (e.g. agriculture, infrastructure projects, technology).
- We commit to taking proactive steps to increase representation of women in economic, political and other public areas.
- We commit to the education of adolescent girls, and second chances for those who dropped out earlier and lifelong learning.
- We commit to ensuring universal access to reproductive health services and to end unmet needs of family planning.
- We commit to repealing discriminatory legislation and to enacting new laws that truly free women to be equals and implement existing laws.
- We commit to ending the gender funding gap, starting with the UN Women funding gap!

Distinguished delegates, I hope my wish is not far-fetched - because that is Goal 5.

Our UN Women team, civil society and governments are ready for all of these. We believe all are achievable in the next 5 to 15 years.

If all of these done together, by a tipping point number of countries globally, they can be the game-changers that we seek. We remain optimistic, even as we recognize that we are still

dealing with many pervasive difficulties. After all, not investing in women is expensive in the short and the long run.

I know civil society and women's organizations in particular have been ready for this for years and are fit for purpose. We too are ready to take this agenda forward in a significant manner, and to remove structural barriers. We count on you.

Thank you.