



Annual Session (30 June-2 July 2015)

Opening remarks of UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women,

Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

[as delivered]

Good morning, Mr. President, distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends.

Ambassador Petersen, let me start by thanking you for your impressive work as President of the Executive Board this year. We are grateful for your advice, your support and your commitment to gender equality.

We appreciate the opportunities the senior management team has had for direct, focused dialogue and exchange with the bureau, knowing that through you we are connected to all member states. I join you in welcoming the two new members to the Board; we look forward to working with them.

We thank you for the creative, newly introduced regional briefings through which we are able to hear and respond to the specific concerns of delegations. We are also thankful for the field visits that the previous and current executive board members have undertaken to gain first-hand insights into our work.

Today we will hear from our former Executive Board President, Ambassador Gonzalo Koncke, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations on his role in leading the Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards to Panama and El Salvador, as well as leading the first bureau field visit to Viet Nam in December last year. We look forward very much to his analysis.

Distinguished delegates,

We are at a pivot point between the finale of the millennium development goals and the potential of the new post-2015 framework.

This moment is informed by the findings from critical experiences of the last decades especially the review of reports on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. We thank you again for the unprecedented contribution to this review from 168 countries, as well as regional commissions, and civil society, who also enhanced the report and the review. The strength of this work and process gave us a secure platform of evidence. At the 59<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women, you reviewed that evidence, and found that progress globally on gender equality had been unacceptably slow and uneven. In your resulting Political Declaration you boldly confronted that reality and firmly committed “to tackle the challenges and remaining implementation gaps in all 12 critical areas of concern”.

The Declaration further recognized the value and contribution of civil society, and member states committed to support them and promote a safe and enabling environment so that the Beijing Platform for Action is fully implemented and in an accelerated way.

You also pledged, and rightfully so, to “significantly increase investment to close resource gaps including through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources...” During this session, there will be a possibility to bring part of those pledges to life.

Distinguished delegates,

The principal focus of this session of the Board is the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2014-2017. Let me briefly review how we applied your precious investment in 2014.

I have already touched on a couple of the highlights of 2014 - the twentieth anniversary review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the 59<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women.

In total last year, UN Women delivered 124.8 million dollars in country programmes. This is work that we do with member states and also with our partners in civil society. The overall implementation rate of budgeted activities was 82%, exceeding the target of 75% in the Strategic Plan.

The new regional architecture has strengthened our operational presence, resulting in country programmes that are better aligned with national priorities, and thus better able to deliver.

Our implementation report is based on results from 86 countries, all across the priority areas of the Strategic Plan. We can say we are seeing systemic changes in countries, which provide a foundation for gender equality.

We have worked with key national partners, with civil society and public institutions, with UN agencies, and increasingly also with the private sector, as we serve the cause of women and girls all around the world.

Together with the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, we have reached over 90,000 women and girl survivors of violence. This again was an instance of major cooperation with civil society partners. In Brazil, a pilot intervention on recycling was carried out with beneficiaries from 189 cooperatives, reaching more than 1,100 women on in small businesses and legislation with a gender equality, human rights and women's empowerment perspective. In Pakistan, through advocacy and technical support to local governments, UN Women reached over 21,000 women workers in informal jobs bringing them improved access to registration services, food security and income-generating opportunities. In India, we trained women-only security forces, with participants from 24 countries.

We are leading the Global Study on implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security to inform the Security Council's high-level review in October. We are confident that the new evidence and global consultations we have undertaken makes the case on women's participation as being core to our operational effectiveness in all the UN's peace and security efforts. Allow me to thank you for your invaluable support to this process. From here, we must strengthen our implementation at all levels and ensure we are concretely benefitting women in conflict areas all over the world.

The Nigerian girls abducted from Chibok remain in captivity –saying a lot about the continuing lack of safety of women and girls in the world. In Tunisia, UN Women in partnership with NGOs, successfully advocated for inclusion of gender equality in its new Constitution, adopted in 2014. That Constitution is now considered among the strongest in the Arab region with respect to women's human rights.

As we deepen our understanding of what is working, we are building a portfolio of best practices to be shared.

Again in 2014, in the countries where UN Women worked:

In 7 more countries we assisted in the creation of gender equality committees in parliament.

In Three countries we supported new constitutional provisions to promote women's political participation.

In 16 countries we worked with officials to better incorporate gender considerations in national plans with strengthened planning frameworks.

In Sixteen more countries we worked to strengthen their legislation on ending violence against women and girls.

Thirteen more countries had national action plans on women peace and security. We are still counting.

The number of UN-supported peace agreements with specific provisions on the security and status of women and girls leapt from 22 per cent to 54 per cent. We can make them even stronger in action. We can increase the quality and impact in the countries concerned

Fourteen more countries had government-led, official national plans on gender equality, which lay out government commitments and policy on progress. And more – it's been a busy year.

All of these changes, together with other services, translate into real differences in the lives of women and girls.

We know this from our evaluation work, and from our regular reporting on results. We continue our efforts to improve this aspect.

We are also working hard within the United Nations as a whole. Systemic change is well under way through the system-wide accountability framework (UNSWAP) on gender equality and women's empowerment. Almost the entire United Nations system (62 entities, departments and offices) has now reported over three consecutive years on a common set of performance indicators. This should not be underestimated. Those performance indicators are steadily climbing and bringing systemic changes. By the end of 2015, almost 75 per cent of United Nations entities will have gender policies in place – historically a predictor in itself of increased performance.

We know this from close scrutiny - which our sister agencies are becoming used to - and are supportive of. Such scrutiny can be uncomfortable, but we know it is an essential aspect of a well-managed progress.

Mr President,

Our independent internal evaluation function is on the agenda for this session. My colleague Marco Segone, Director of the Independent Evaluation Office, will be presenting the details under item 3 on Evaluation so I will confine myself to a few key assertions. We view evaluation as a key accountability and learning instrument to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency, and will continue working on this with the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee and members of the Executive Board.

Independent external evaluations such as that of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) have highlighted our strong mandate, ongoing relevance and success to date in building the organization. It also guided us on areas that we need to improve.

Similarly the recent first evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the UN Secretariat gave positive and constructive feedback on our normative work and also our operational, UN system coordination linkages.

These evaluations together underline that - with your help - we are succeeding in building an organization that is recognized as a safe custodian of funds, an effective and valued partner, and a true, trusted voice that amplifies women's voices. This we take very seriously and wish to build on this reputation.

We recall the words of the distinguished delegate of Germany, this time last year, when he said:

“UN Women ... carries weight on the international scene due to its specific knowledge. ... UN Women has the legitimacy and authority to set standards, which we implement in bilateral development cooperation and national gender equality policies.”

I referred earlier to the value we place on being able to keep the Board well informed of our plans. I know therefore that our informal presentation to you in May of the proposed Integrated Budget for 2016 to 2017 has already indicated clearly to you our proposed directions, preceding the formal presentation for your consideration in September. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has reviewed and reported on this and the Regular Budget. My Director for these matters, Moez Doraid will speak further to this under item 4.

As we know so well from the national reports during the recent review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, one of the major reasons for the lack of progress in many countries is inadequate financing in women's ministries and of women's and girls' programmes in general. This under-investment has seriously impeded realization of the rights of women and girls in so many countries.

Realizing this commitment to close the gender funding gap and meet the ambition of the new post-2015 sustainable development framework requires from all of us to go to all sources where we can increase the sources and levels of funding. It requires unprecedented financing from all sources at all levels, proportionate to the scale of desired change.

Distinguished delegates,

We are doing our utmost within our resources.

We value the positive results of evaluation as endorsements of our “frugal innovation”. We succeed in this partly because in our work with civil society, they also work in a very frugal but dedicated manner. But the extent to which we are being required to increase our influence forces us to stretch beyond the current limits and seek more.

Last year was an encouraging year for resource mobilization even though we still remain challenged. There were three new records set: for the first time, we met reduced core and non-core resource targets with 330 million dollars in total income; 143 countries contributed to our core resources representing 74% of the United Nations Membership; and we appreciate the support even where the amounts are modest; and the private sector became a sizable donor, providing almost 7 million dollars.

Diversification is an essential component of our resource mobilization strategy. Innovative partnerships are already important, and will grow more so as we seek to extend our reach and leverage for change.

A recent example is our engagement with the Spanish sports team Valencia Club de Fútbol- a commitment of 1.4 million dollars over four years. Their support during the Champions League and beyond will connect us with millions of soccer fans, social media followers and sports viewers. We will also be passing on the messages for gender equality.

Our significant private sector partners who are financing our programmes include Coca-Cola, Unilever, and Tupperware. We are in discussion with many others.

In the new IMPACT 10x10x10 initiative, our HeforShe campaign has chosen 30 impact partners - 10 governments, 10 universities and 10 multinational businesses - who are using their leadership role to help us bring about systemic changes.

We are using ‘the power of one’ vested in heads of state, CEOs or rectors to achieve commitments, such as Vodafone’s pioneering maternity solutions that will lead to the end of motherhood penalty for the women working for that company; to closing the gender pay gap; increased representation of women in boards; and the resolution of the gender funding gap within UN Women and beyond.

Our Government IMPACT champions have also taken on fundamental issues. Two of our Board members, Japan and Malawi, here today, are in this distinguished group of leaders. Here are some of their commitments.

His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan has committed his country to strengthen the partnership with UN Women and to use Japan’s role in the G7 to encourage other leaders to become UN Women supporters and increase funding to UN Women; to enhance leadership

and employment opportunities for women in Japan, with public sector institutions required to increase the representation and participation of women. Japan will leverage international aid to empower women and end sexual violence in conflict. In 2015 Japan has pledged implementation of ODA in excess of 3 billion dollars to advance women's empowerment and gender equality.

His Excellency President Mutharika of the Republic of Malawi has committed to implement over the next five years the important Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act of 2015 that will address the ending of child marriages in that country. With them we are devising a programme of action to support the success of this. He has committed to increase by 30% the number of women accessing credit in Malawi. And he has committed to implement the National Action Plan on gender-based violence and the by-laws on ending violence against women and girls.

Another impact champion, Indonesia, is addressing the important issues of reducing maternal mortality and improve vital access to reproductive health services; and has committed to end violence against women and girls – including training women migrant workers—a high-risk group for violence—in financial literacy, business, and capacity building.

Sweden the first feminist government in the world - and hopefully not the last - and Iceland will both address ending violence against women. Sweden will also engage the world on closing the gender funding gap; it will support this through its ODA and will take action at home through a vigorous gender responsive national budget, as well as engaging its private sector in gender parity and representation of women.

Iceland is making a bold move to aim to be the first country to reach gender equality. It is a leading country in recorded numbers of HeForShe signatories and will champion the engagement of men and boys through activities including the “Barbershop” concept, which will be taken far and wide.

We will show the HeForShe sign up map on the last day of the Board session just to check where countries are with the numbers.

I have mentioned already how we are engaging with the private sector, and how they will be supporting work to close the funding gap.

We are also engaging with our 10 University champions across the world, with their role being to tackle violence and pervasive biases both on campus and in their wider communities, and advance women in academia. We also expect them to champion the exposition of the funding gap and to provide data and evidence on this.

These, and other activities that respond to the shape and demands of the new post-2015 agenda, will require us to keep the strategic plan - and its funding - flexible in the next few years to take us to the 2030 deadline.

Distinguished delegates,

Please let me thank you and acknowledge with respect all that you have done so far, in the complex negotiations surrounding the Open Working Group on the SDGs; in keeping alive in the zero draft the central importance of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls; in supporting goal 5 and the other gender equality related targets of the sustainable development goals, even when negotiations were difficult; in your support for gender equality and women's empowerment in the G7's Joint leader's declaration, and the new W20 initiative to promote gender inclusive growth. In addition, the African Union declared 2015 the year of women's empowerment and development.

But our work is not over. In fact, in many ways, we are just about to confront the biggest hurdles and opportunities.

In order to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2030 there must be significantly enhanced, prioritized, and dedicated investment for implementing gender equality commitments as well as mainstreamed gender equality investments across all sectors – including across all ODA.

The time for countries to put their resources squarely behind their ideals is fast approaching: in July at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, and in September, at the UN Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 agenda.

As you know, in connection with this, we have invited your heads of state to a “Global Leaders’ Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: A Commitment to Action” on 27 September, co-hosted by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and His Excellency Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China. This is an opportunity for “Stepping it Up”. This is a moment to close the gaps countries identified in their reports on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

We are asking Heads of State to speak for their countries on the changes that they expect to make and to take big bold actions that can lead to the expiry of gender inequality by 2030. We are respectfully evoking the power of one. We look forward very much to the presence of your head of state at this high-level event. Your engagement in support of this will keep alive the momentum and vitality of the “step it up” campaign, which was launched with the march through New York on International Women’s Day on March 8 this year.



Stepping it up starts tomorrow, at our pledging event, when each country will announce its commitments. We look forward to hearing the first of those commitments right here.

This is a moment that we must not miss.

Your understanding of our work, our achievements and of what we stand for, together, is more critical than ever before because you are our spokespersons.

I talked earlier about the importance of your close engagement and understanding of our work and ambition. As we move now towards the crucial milestones of this year, I hope that we can all rely on this solidarity to bring us successfully through this session, fortified in our common purpose of a 50:50 Planet by 2030, aligned on what we need to achieve it, to mainstream gender and implement goal 5 and committed to extending ourselves as never before.

Thank you.