

Opening remarks by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN Women, to the Executive Board Second Regular Session 2016

Date: 01 September 2016

[As delivered]

Mr. President, Members of the Executive Board, distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

Let me start by thanking Ambassador Mohamed Khaled Khiari for his leadership and commitment during his year as President of the Executive Board. I also thank the whole Bureau for their hard work throughout their term of office. I recognize that your appearance here during the Board sessions is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’. Your support for the President and for UN Women goes on throughout the year.

We know that it is people who make the difference in any organization. They turn routine work into something inspiring and highly productive. Today I want to share with you news of key staff appointments and promotions at UN Women. This is a remarkable group of dedicated and richly experienced leaders with truly diverse backgrounds.

Ms. Joelle Tanguy (USA/France) has been appointed as the Director of the Strategic Partnerships Division. She has key experience in resource mobilization in both public and private sectors.

Ms. Lene Jespersen (Denmark) has been appointed as the Deputy Director of Operations, in the Division of Management and Administration.

From our own UN Women talent pool, Mr. Moez Doraid (Egypt) has been appointed as the Director of the Management and Administration Division.

Ms. Aparna Mehrotra (India) has been appointed as the Director of the UN System Coordination Division.

Ms. Diana Ofwona (Kenya) has been appointed as UN Women’s new Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

We congratulate Ms. Izeduwa Derex-Briggs (Nigeria) who has been appointed as UN Women’s new Regional Director for East and Southern Africa.

And finally to round off this impressive team, Ms. Miwa Kato (Japan) has been appointed as Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

I would like to thank and recognize Ms. Kristin Hetle for her five years of service to UN Women as the Director of the Strategic Partnership Division, as she enters her very well deserved retirement. Kristin has led our work in the areas of civil society engagement & advocacy, external relations and resource mobilization.

Distinguished delegates, we now have 14 years and four months in which to achieve Agenda 2030. We are sharply conscious of limited resources, the need to be ever-smarter in use of them, and the use of innovation to achieve scale and impact in a cost-effective manner.

The agenda of this Second Session provides the opportunity to consider and move ahead with innovative approaches in many areas of our work and planning.

The challenge of the gender funding gap is rooted in the persistence of deep-seated prejudice against women and unconscious bias. This has led to chronically limited investment in women across the world, at all levels, and in varying situations, including denied earnings. Everywhere, we continue to struggle for equal pay. Women work just as hard as their male counterparts, yet on average earn 24 per cent less. Women entrepreneurs, whose small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of so many economies, lack access to finance. When men become fathers it enhances their remuneration. They are funded for fatherhood. Yet the reverse is true for mothers.

Our work on gender-responsive planning and budgeting, undertaken in 76 countries worldwide, tells us that the budgetary funding deficit for approved national plans can be as high as 90 per cent. To fund only a fraction of a national action plan handicaps potentially game-changing work for nations before it even starts. This is a pattern that together we know needs to be changed, starting with the discussions we will have today.

Together we know that, globally, UN Women has not yet attracted the scale of funding that enables us to transform the lives of women, and change society for the better, at the scale that our plans make possible. Our hope is that this year's Structured Dialogue on Financing report takes the next steps in addressing this deep rooted gender funding gap challenge. It analyses where UN Women's funds are coming from; the quality of the resources we receive; and how efficiently and effectively we are using these monies in order to implement the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan.

The overall picture is positive. We are growing in line with our 2016 – 2017 Integrated Budget. Our programming is robust and getting stronger. Driven in large part by the Flagship Programmes, we are increasingly focused on broader, long-term transformative initiatives.

This evolution fully responds to the recommendations of the meta-evaluation that will be presented to you by my colleague Marco Segone tomorrow.

The structured dialogue on financing is vital for our future. There is a growing funding gap in both regular and other resources. The high-level roundtables that we propose to convene are a key strategy to support the individual flagship programmes. We look to you, our Member States, led by this Board, for commitment to co-convene these round tables, and to champion the flagship programme that most closely aligns with your development objectives. My deputy Yannick will make a brief summary presentation on the detailed rationale for this.

Distinguished delegates, this is a time for us to maximize our collective strengths. We look forward to your review, feedback and endorsement through this Dialogue.

Naturally, the preparations for our new Strategic Plan 2018-2021 are closely linked to the strategic thinking behind the Dialogue. During this session we will present our proposed roadmap. The new strategic plan will build on lessons learned from the midterm review, and will be fully geared towards the achievement of the SDGs.

For the first time, we have an expiry date for gender inequality-- 2030. All our work is geared to this. The new strategic plan is essential for significant progress to be made by 2021, which is the end of the next cycle. In this, 2020 is an important milestone. It not only represents the first five years of the 2030 Agenda but is also the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. It will be a critical time to take stock and realign priorities towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

In preparing the plan, we will be guided by the new QCPR. We will work closely with other UN agencies to ensure that our objectives are mutually supportive and that we truly deliver as one for women and girls. In order to support these objectives we must make the most of our ability to coordinate and to become greater than our component parts. This is all the more important when resources are scarce.

Tomorrow we will discuss “UN Women’s Contribution to UN System Coordination of gender equality and women’s empowerment”, which was the subject of a specific corporate evaluation exercise. The evaluation underlined the importance of coordination as a central aspect of UN Women’s mandate. It also found that many factors affecting our ability to implement this aspect of the mandate actually lie beyond our control. But they do lie within your support.

This is a space where you can assist. For example, we invite you to reinforce us in your capacity as members of the Boards of other entities. You can ask about each entity’s performance in the UN-SWAP, and encourage more collaboration. You can convey the message of the value of coordination and partnership with UN Women and the gain for everyone when we do that, of reduced competition for resources.

We are proud that UN Women has received the fifth unqualified audit opinion on its Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2015. This is indeed very good news.

This fruitful expenditure can be evaluated at country level. As I am sure our distinguished Bureau members will confirm after their field visit, there is nothing like seeing UN Women’s work at country level to bring the evaluation findings to vivid life. Similarly, tomorrow’s briefing on Morocco and UN Women’s operational response will show how we are impacting women’s and girls’ lives.

We continue to produce results despite our dire financial situation. This mandate and the urgency of our cause continue to motivate all of us at UN Women to accomplish as much as we can.

In line with the ambitious 2030 Agenda, we continue to aspire to, and to work for, the 3-digit contributions that could help us change the lives of millions of women and girls and transform the world in the process. It is only when we are much better funded that we will be able to operate at the scale that changes millions of lives irreversibly. We rely on you to support us in

this. You know us best and you are our greatest supporters. You can ensure that more nations and partners understand why gender equality is an essential investment for humanity.

One of our responsibilities is to support and encourage women's leadership everywhere in the world, including our own United Nations. This gathering is uniquely well qualified to understand the importance of ensuring that the UN leads by example in promoting gender equality.

We now have an interesting situation: we have 10 candidates for the next UN Secretary-General: five men and five women—a gender-balanced slate. There never was so great an opportunity to appoint a woman Secretary-General and demonstrate the UN's full commitment to ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed across all areas and at all levels. We have six of our Member States here today directly involved in this process, as members of both the Executive Board and the Security Council.

A woman and feminist Secretary-General could provide strong leadership and be an inspiration for far-reaching steps for an inclusive world through the implementation of Agenda 2030.

We know that inspiring gender equality and women's empowerment is a necessary condition for ending poverty, inequality, and achieving peace that lasts, shared prosperity and climate justice.

This is the time: for us, for the United Nations as a whole, and for the world, to put gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of the changes to which we all aspire.

Thank you.