

Launch of the UN-Women and International Gender Champions publication:

"Raising women's voices in intergovernmental forums"

2 May 2017 New York United Nations Headquarters

The high-level panel discussion and launch was chaired by the President of UN-Women's Executive Board H.E. Ms. Lana Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, and was addressed with a keynote by the President of the General Assembly H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson. UN-Women Deputy Executive Director Ms. Lakshmi Puri outlined key findings and recommendations of the publication and was followed by statements by H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations representing the International Gender Champions – New York as well as H.E. Ms. Laura Elena Flores Herrera, Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations representing the Group of Friends for Gender Parity.

Representatives from across the United Nations, Member States, including 13 Permanent Representatives and many other delegations commended and welcomed the timely launch of this publication.

The critical importance of women's leadership and participation in intergovernmental forums and in the Governing Bodies of the UN system was broadly acknowledged. Speakers highlighted the persisting limitation on women's political participation globally, despite being anchored in international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the General Assembly Resolution 58/142 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The publication was acknowledged for providing concrete steps to move from commitments to implementation and realize tangible results. The importance of sex-disaggregated data was underscored as pivotal in making informed decisions. Specific measures including setting targets and quotas, along with reporting obligations and a monitoring framework, were key towards realizing the goal of gender balance. The speakers also appreciated the information about existing measures applied by UN entities with regard to training and capacity building, financial support, advocacy and networking, and communication strategies. Interventions echoed the observation that the promotion of gender equality should be undertaken at all levels – national and multilateral (both in the case of representation at intergovernmental forums and at UN senior management), as the low participation of women in intergovernmental forums reflected women's under-representation -- as ministers -- at national level.

Speakers made recommendations addressed to member states, the secretariats of UN governing bodies and senior officials to drive action to improve women's participation and achieve gender balance in government delegations and in international decision-making processes. The publication "Shaping the International Agenda: Raising Women's Voices in Intergovernmental Forums" will undoubtedly build knowledge on this critical matter.

The International Gender Champions Initiative was welcomed by many speakers and further traction is expected to result from the newly established collaborations. The representative of the

International Gender Champions reiterated that it is the personal responsibility of each of the champions to initiate the change that they want to see. The Group of Friends of Gender Parity equally underscored the timeliness of this process as there were urgent changes needed within the UN itself, in particular the realization of having more women in senior management positions. It was noted that the Group of friends is supporting the United Nations Secretary General's policy on gender parity which is a top-down approach to achieve the objective of gender parity. The publication gives concrete recommendations to different actors at all levels, which can be a bottom-up approach to meet the top-down process.

The UN-Women Deputy Executive Director highlighted the importance of acceleration of existing initiatives and scaling up efforts on gender parity throughout the development system. It is simply not acceptable to continue progress at the current pace, she said. The implementation of the 2030 agenda, and the relevance of the UN will depend on how – and how soon – the development system at large, including Member States and the United Nations system will succeed to implement full gender parity and participation of women at all levels.

Some Member States and UN entities made interventions from the floor. Several Permanent Representatives expressed pride in being an International Gender Champion or Group of Friends on Gender Parity and made pledges to achieve gender parity, while some expressed their commitment in joining the networks.

The practice of building up a pipeline of qualified candidates was encouraged, given the conscious or unconscious existing gender stereotypes that still hinder women's participation in leadership and decision-making. Some delegations reminded the "leaving no one behind" mantra and recommended the mindful inclusion of women with disabilities, women of lower classes, young women while other delegations acknowledged the significant work of UN-Women to involve men. However, it was also noted that the sustainability of efforts to reach parity is never a given as the number of women may decline again after parity was reached, as experienced in some Member States political landscape.

A proposal to have a **General Assembly Resolution on gender parity during the next General Assembly High-level week in 2017** outlining specific actions for both Member States (actions to promote gender balance and improve women's participation at the national level and in their delegations to intergovernmental forums) and the UN Secretariat (in particular, on the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data for delegations attending meetings as well as facilitators, chairs and other leadership positions in Committees and negotiating groups) was discussed. Another suggestion was to organize a **high-level meeting on gender parity during the General High High-level week** to raise awareness on the issue as well as to get High-level (Heads of State/Governments) commitments to promote gender balance and gender parity.