



## UN-Women Second Regular Session 2017

**Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh**

**Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations**

Opening Remarks

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Distinguished delegates, special guests, I am very pleased to welcome you to the Second Regular Session 2017 of the UN-Women Executive Board.

Please allow me to acknowledge and welcome the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Madame Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, present with us this morning.

I also welcome to the podium Deputy Executive Directors, Ms. Lakshmi Puri and Mr. Yannick Glemarec, Chief of Staff, Ms. Khetsiwe Dlamini, the Director of the Management and Administration Division, Mr. Moez Doraid, the Director of the Programme Division, Ms. Maria-Noel Vaeza, the Director of the Policy Division, Ms. Purna Sen, as well as Secretary of the Executive Board, Mr. Jean-Luc Bories.

I would like to begin by speaking in my national capacity. The UAE model hinges on the empowerment of women. We know that our country will only succeed if the entirety of our population is empowered to contribute to all aspects of society. This is why the UAE has been a key partner of UN Women since its founding. The UAE understands the critical role that UN Women plays in leading global efforts on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

The strong partnership between the UAE and UN Women culminated last year in the launch of a UN Women Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi under the patronage of our First Lady, Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak. This is the first office of its kind in our region. Through this office, we hope to strengthen UN Women's work in accelerating efforts to deliver for women and girls around the world.

Over the years, UN Women has demonstrated its ability to leverage its unique and effective tripartite mandate by delivering on norms, providing an operational response at country-level, and coordinating the UN system on gender equality. During the joint and individual field visits to Nepal and India, respectively, I saw firsthand how UN Women's normative intergovernmental work in New York is implemented at an operational level on the ground.

I also saw how this operational experience is integrated into the cycle of developing norms, refining policy, and improving operational response through UN Women's internal thought leadership process.

This field visit demonstrated the immense impact that UN Women has on the ground – and the ever-growing workload that UN Women has undertaken to advance gender equality and empower women around the world as we inch closer towards Agenda 2030.

As UN Women's responsibilities and areas of intervention have grown with time, I am struck that UN-Women relies almost entirely on voluntary financial contributions to sustain its work: 2 percent of UN-Women's budget comes from the UN regular budget, and 98 percent from voluntary contributions. With only thirteen years left until our 2030 deadline to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, it is critical that UN Women be adequately resourced to address gender inequality and accelerate progress.

There is an enormous demand around the world for UN Women's immense expertise and experience. We need to ensure that UN Women's ability to drive change is not constrained by a lack of resources that would enable a scaling up innovations and best practices.

The UAE believes in UN Women's ability to drive progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. We remain steadfastly committed to supporting UN Women in championing the rights of women and girls everywhere.

This is my third and final chairing of the official session of the Executive Board as President. It has been an eventful year, and I have treasured this experience, as well as the sincere dialogue and the exchanges with the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Directors, and other colleagues at UN-Women.

Following my Presidency, I will continue to serve as an advocate for UN-Women, and to prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment in all of my work. The UAE will remain a strong supporter and partner of UN-Women.

I have consistently advocated for UN-Women's membership in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Assistance, in which UN-Women has yet to be accepted as a member. It is critical that UN-Women's expertise be utilized in ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are key considerations in all aspects of humanitarian assistance.

Further, I will continue to advocate for better and more sustainable funding for gender equality. The survey report of the functions and capacities of the UN Development System released in June – as a response to OP 19 of the QCPR – revealed that there is an alarming funding gap on gender equality, which will hinder the achievement of gender equality by 2030.

However, my responsibilities as President are not yet finished. Throughout this fall, my fellow Executive Board Presidents and I will continue to strive for strengthened collaboration among the Executive Boards, as recommended by the QCPR, increased coherence of their working methods, and the harmonization of their official agendas. We will not be doing this alone. We are planning to set up an informal inter-Executive Board task force to discuss the working methods of the Executive Boards, to ensure their coherence with UN System needs. We will be working on that with you.

At this session, I am confident that we will endorse the new Strategic Plan of UN-Women for 2018-2021.

This is not a Strategic Plan that continues business as usual. As you all know, 2015 brought significant normative changes, particularly the adoption of Agenda 2030. The United Nations system is now in the process of responding to those changes to ensure effective, coherent, and integrated methods in supporting Member States in achieving sustainable development.

We all know that despite the normative advancement and strong mutual understanding, the progress to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women continues to remain uneven and slow.

The UN-Women Strategic Plan is firmly grounded on the normative developments of the past years, is guided by the QCPR, and represents a comprehensive strategy to turn the normative progress and our shared objective of realizing gender equality by 2030 into concrete action.

I have been following this development process closely. I have personally participated in workshops and meetings with UN-Women and kept close contact with my fellow Presidents of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UNICEF.

I have witnessed what has been a collaborative, consultative, and transparent process.

- UN-Women has organized 9 informal briefings on the Strategic Plan throughout the spring and summer of 2017, two half or full-day workshops, as well as joint informal consultations with the other agencies.
- UN-Women circulated the Strategic Plan in a draft form to Member States and integrated their comments as much as possible, and kept with agreed language as often as possible.
- UN-Women has consulted with civil society, academia, and private sector companies, both at Headquarters and field levels.
- At Headquarters, UN-Women consulted with 17 representatives of civil society organizations, with the private sector through National Committees, and with other UN Agencies through the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.
- I have also been briefed that UN-Women held weekly teleconferences with representatives of all sections at Headquarters and the field, especially with the Regional Coordination and Planning Specialists.
- UN-Women has also worked closely with the other agencies, funds and programmes and has often taken the lead in coordination efforts.

This document will lead UN-Women's work for the next four years, always in full coordination and approval with host Governments.

I believe that we have a document that strikes the right balance among the positions of the different members of the Executive Board.

I would like to thank you all in participating in these extensive consultations and in giving your valuable inputs, and I look forward to the discussion today.

Tomorrow, we will present you with two reports, the report of the Joint Field Visit of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, WFP and UN-Women to Nepal, and UN-Women's Field Visit to India.

I participated in both field visits, which provided me with an eye-opening experience. It was impressive to see the dedication and professionalism in which UN-Women implements programmes on the ground and how UN-Women translates the shared ambition to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

I was impressed by the commitment of UN-Women staff and by the innovative and transformative programs that they are running. I was touched by the strong women in Nepal and India who are making a difference in their own countries with the support of UN-Women.

I am convinced that the participants of these field visits came back to New York better equipped to work on these issues here at headquarters.

This is why I am of the view that UN-Women should organize its own field visit on an annual basis and not in an Ad Hoc manner. Through the Bureau and with the support of the Executive Board Secretariat, I have introduced draft decision 2017/8 on this matter, which I hope will be approved by the Board at this session.

Finally, I would like to remind all of you – my fellow Members of the Board – not to leave the discussion on gender equality in this room. I encourage you to act as champions of gender equality in important intergovernmental processes. It is our opportunity and our obligation to stand as advocates and positive voices for UN Women, for gender equality, and for women's empowerment.