

Opening Remarks by the UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at the Second Regular Session of the UN Women Executive Board

9 September 2019

[As delivered]

Madam President, distinguished delegates, guests and colleagues, good morning. I am very pleased to welcome you to the 2019 Second Regular Session of the UN Women Executive Board.

I would like to offer my condolences for all those whose lives were lost or affected by Hurricane Dorian, whether in the Bahamas, Canada, or anywhere else that we may not know about yet. We know from this experience that we are facing a major challenge. It is a drastic reminder of the importance of the work that lies ahead in the Climate Summit later this month.

I would like to welcome the newly elected representative for the African Group to our Bureau, Ms. Susan Mwangi, Minister Counsellor from Kenya, and to thank the former representative, who was Kenya's Deputy Permanent Representative, Ambassador Koki Muli Grignon, for her dedicated work for UN Women. We wish her well in her future endeavours.

As this is also the last official session to be presided over by Ambassador Penelope Beckles, I would like to thank her for her sincere dedication as the President of the Executive Board, and for her invaluable advice and support.

Last week she helped us celebrate the 45 women Permanent Representatives that we now have in New York – a trend of women in senior leadership that we hope will continue to grow.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the whole Bureau for their tireless work throughout the year and at each session, facilitating decisions, chairing meetings and encouraging dialogue between UN Women and Member States.

Please join me also in welcoming our new colleagues: Mr. Daniel Seymour, who previously was Director for Humanitarian Action Crisis Response Office, and is now our Director for the Strategic Partnership Division; Ms. Sabine Freizer in her new capacity as Chief of the Leadership and Governance Section; and Ms. Sarah Hendriks, who is currently Director of Gender Equality, at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, who will join us in October as our new Director for Policy and Programme. We will introduce her in person at the next Board.

2019-2020 is a period of strategic adjustments for UN Women, as in 2020 we will be 10 years old and begin a new decade of "UN Women 2.0". This period of change includes aligning our work with UN reform processes. It includes our own change management process and right-sizing of UN Women. And it includes the evaluation of progress made in the 25 years since the

Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, with a massive intergenerational mobilization campaign under the theme, “Generation Equality”, where we intend to engage a record number of young people for gender equality and mobilize a new generation of gender activists to drive the much-needed change, everywhere.

As far as the preparations for Beijing +25 are concerned, we thank you and we welcome your efforts to produce the comprehensive national reviews. To date, we have received reports from 147 countries. We still urge the countries that have not submitted to please submit your reports. We look forward to hearing from each and every Member State.

Regional and country offices are also supporting comprehensive, multi-stakeholder preparations at national and regional levels, and the regional commissions are conducting regional reviews. These reviews will provide the basis for the Secretary-General’s report to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which will guide your discussions at CSW64 on ways to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The reviews will give us vital information on the biggest barriers still holding back substantive gender equality and on promising opportunities, so that we can form “Action Coalitions” to tackle these at a large scale and well beyond UN Women. These Coalitions will be launched at our Generation Equality Forum, starting on 7-8 May in Mexico and culminating on 7-10 July in Paris, France.

The Forum will be an intergenerational celebration, building for the future, bringing together the young generations of women’s rights activists with the visionaries who helped to craft the Beijing Platform for Action. We expect that the impetus of the Forum will carry into the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly in September 2020. Making gender equality everyone’s business is an intended outcome of the Beijing +25 celebrations. We will talk more about this tomorrow in a special session on Beijing+25.

Twenty-five years ago, in Beijing, there was no investment plan for the Beijing Platform for Action. We now know that ambitious plans can only have the desired impact if they are fully resourced.

Over the last year, we have seen modest but positive momentum for resource mobilization. This year’s Structured Dialogue on Financing report shows that in 2018 UN Women achieved its highest revenue to date: US\$ 404.7 million – an increase of 7% over 2017. This growth was primarily driven by an increase in Other Resources (9.8%), while Regular Resources grew by nearly 2% in a climate where other entities are seeing decreases.

We also saw an improvement in the predictability of resources, tracked through an increasing share of multi-year agreements. Twenty-nine countries have made multi-year commitments to UN Women, with Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom doing so above US\$15 million a year. This is the most encouraging sign, and we are very grateful for this trend and for the

increasing trust that our partners place in our work, something which is also confirmed by the MOPAN assessment.

In 2019, we have already reached our non-core target, thanks particularly to contributions from the European Commission, and we hope to continue increasing earmarked resources.

We also need more donors to help step up our Regular Resources. This is key to our ability to implement our Strategic Plan and the UN Development System reform, and to leverage the enormous potential of the Beijing+25 mobilization. I would like to acknowledge several governments, including France, Germany and Luxembourg, for their increase in Regular Resource contributions in 2019. For Member States that have not yet made Regular Resource contributions in 2019, I urge you to consider doing so, to keep up the momentum of three consecutive years of Regular Resource growth. For those that have already generously contributed, I ask you to consider an additional contribution.

We have a current pressing funding gap of US\$7 million dollars for 2019. And we are US\$56 million dollars short of the US\$200 million you endorsed in the Integrated Results and Resource Framework.

We have noted the encouragement from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) to strengthen our fundraising efforts, and the Committee's positive opinion with regard to our Integrated Budget.

We also seek your support to meet the revenue projections proposed in the Budget 2020-2021. This Budget strikes the right balance between realism and ambition. It is in line with the projections we made for the full implementation of the Strategic Plan. I call on you to endorse the Budget and to provide the necessary support and leadership for its effective implementation.

I am pleased with the official start of our new Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships, Anita Bhatia. So, I now have my two DEDs. Welcome, Anita. Anita's work will take forward our efforts to diversify our sources of funding.

The meta-analysis of evaluations conducted in 2018 confirms the need to protect and sustain the policy gains and to make sure we influence the social norm changes. We are committed to taking these lessons on board and to further improve results-based management.

We have also welcomed the findings and recommendations of the corporate evaluation of UN Women's contribution to Humanitarian Action. It shows that UN Women is well positioned to work in this area and to influence and support the 'big players' in the manner in which they deliver for women and girls, enabling them to deliver significantly. The evaluation continues to be central to our planning and working towards results.

We continue to actively engage in all workstreams as far as the UN Reforms are concerned. We liaise in particular with other agencies – UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF – to ensure alignment in our approaches and put gender equality and women’s empowerment at the heart of UN reform.

We continue to advocate for smaller agencies, such as ours, to be able to fully engage in key processes (such as the appraisal of Resident Coordinators), building our staff capacity to implement the UN reform recommendations, and continuing our strong push for gender parity, including through the implementation of the enabling environment guidelines.

I would like to draw your attention to the Secretary-General’s Global Call for nominations for the positions of SRSO and DSRSO in UN Peace Operations.

We have done extensive outreach and we continue to do so in support of the Call and need your support to encourage qualified women from all regions to apply. This is an important opportunity to bring women to the UN System at a high level.

I also welcome the Code of Conduct to prevent Harassment including Sexual Harassment for UN system events and call on all Member States to support it.

A key part of alignment with UN Reforms is taking steps to strengthen our own institution.

Our change management process is directly in support of and aligned to the UNDS repositioning and I refer you to my [online statement](#) for the full details on this topic. Briefly, the change management process will strengthen UN Women through: improving field capacity and providing high quality policy advice and programme support to national partners; enhanced coordination with the UN system at all levels, informed by country-level Cooperation Frameworks and leveraging entire UNCTs in support of gender equality; and coordinating partners with significant capacity to effect far-reaching changes, starting with the Action Coalitions that we will be launching next year during Generation Equality.

We are committed to supporting girls and women, even where UN Women is not physically present, and to ensuring that we do not duplicate but catalyse, support and help scale up the impact of the entire UN system in this area and through implementing partners. And in particular, we are committed to working in a coordinated fashion with civil society.

Our coordination and policy mandate is being strengthened and our programme focus is being streamlined to be about fewer and scalable and sustainable programmes. The net result of these changes is a strengthened field presence, a more systematic approach to determining where UN Women needs to be, and different ways of engagement with UNCTs, and our international and national partners.

We have started an internal prioritization exercise that will culminate in the midterm review of the strategic plan in June 2020, which will include portfolio reviews. At the heart of this exercise

is shifting our approach, to more leveraging of partnerships, within UNCTs and beyond. We will continue to update you on our progress in this area.

As we approach the UN General Assembly this month, we look forward to joining the Secretary-General, Member States, civil society and young advocates like Greta Thunberg at the Secretary-General's timely and urgent Climate Action Summit. The Summit includes an initiative that recognizes the vital importance of advancing gender equality. It has never been more important to advance this work. For climate action to get more traction and be effective, we need a critical mass of governments and other stakeholders to sign on to this initiative.

And on 22 September, the eve of the Secretary-General's Summit, the governments of Costa Rica, Spain and Peru, in collaboration with UN Women, will be organizing a high-level event, to be opened by the President of Costa Rica, showcasing women's leadership in climate actions. I hope that you will join us in supporting this gender-responsive climate action.

I would also like to remind you of the upcoming 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, which kicks in from the 25th November. Again, we count on your support to us not just here but all over the world, in all your different countries.

I thank you for your support as we continue to implement the changes and adaptations that are aimed at making us the most impactful organization we can be, and a stronger convener of game-changing, action-oriented partners and coalitions that can together tackle the violence of men against women, entrench the inclusion and participation of women, eliminate discriminatory laws, redistribute the burden of care and secure the investments needed to advance gender equality.

We thank you for your continued support.