

Informal briefing on UN-Women COVID-19 response

Remarks by Deputy Executive Director Åsa Regnér

- Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,
- It is my pleasure to share with you today UN Women's response to COVID-19 during the past year. **This is the first time we are sharing a comprehensive overview of the results we have supported from the global to local levels.**
- As the number of global cases of COVID-19 rise by the day, with over 103 million infections and 2.2 million deaths globally according to the World Health Organization (WHO), **the lives of women are directly and increasingly impacted.**
- At the outset of the pandemic, declared by WHO on 11 March 2020, UN Women responded immediately. UN Women has mobilized action to **bring attention to and address the gender dimensions of the pandemic from the global to the country level, leveraging its triple mandate of normative support, United Nations coordination, and operational activities.**
- In particular, UN Women focused its efforts to ensure a **robust and united response from the UN System from the highest levels**, while highlighting that women and girls were, and continue to be, disproportionately impacted.
- Across all thematic areas, UN Women has provided extensive **policy advice, support to service delivery, and convened key stakeholders to improve UN and National Governments' responses to COVID-19 to deliver for women and girls.**
- Through its membership in the **United Nations Sustainable Development Group**, UN Women contributed to ensure a strong focus on gender equality in the **UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.**
- The framework is the basis for the **United Nations Response and Recovery Fund for COVID-19**. UN Women successfully advocated for the second round of calls for proposals to establish a 30 percent funding target for proposals to focus on the gender dimensions of the response, based on the **Gender Equality Marker.**
- **Translating the global framework to the country level**, UN Women invested in more than 100 **rapid gender assessments**. These have resulted in the UN Women contribution being explicitly referenced in 85 out of 108 of the UNCT Socio-Economic Response Plans.
- UN Women's COVID-19 Response Report outlines our response in different areas – from **Data, to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, to Economic Resilience, to Women's Leadership** – including in humanitarian contexts.
- Before we turn to more concrete examples from Asia Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, would like to share with you a few **highlights of UN Women's responses** in each of the thematic areas:

On Data

- Through its inter-agency and programmatic work, **UN Women has emerged as a global leader in the promotion of gender data to inform a gender-sensitive response to COVID-19.**
- UN Women and UNDP launched the **COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker**, which monitors policy measures enacted by governments worldwide to tackle the COVID-19 crisis, and highlights responses that have incorporated a gender lens.

On Violence Against Women and Girls

- In response to the increasing cases of VAWG worldwide, UN Women shaped a global conversation on the **Shadow Pandemic of Violence against Women and Girls.**
- Strong support came from the Secretary-General, who **linked the pandemic's increase in violence against women and girls with his global call for a ceasefire**, stating that, "Many women under lockdown face violence where they should be safest: in their own homes." This call to action received the endorsement of 146 Member States.
- Within the European Union/UN **Spotlight Initiative**, UN Country Teams responded by repurposing \$21 million to address the impact of COVID-19. The **UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women** allocated an additional \$9 million for civil society organizations to help them adjust to challenges arising as a result of the pandemic.

On Economic Resilience

- The economic impact on women has been severe. **UN Women has supported efforts in 64 countries** to enhance social protection and promote economic resilience and shared responsibilities in the context of care.
- UN Women has also continued **to strengthen its partnership with international and regional financial institutions** – who have a key role in financing the COVID-19 response.

Leadership and Governance

- In the area of leadership, UN Women acted swiftly to **ensure that women government and civil society leaders had a voice in building back better.**
- UN Women has ensured that women's voices informed national and regional responses to COVID-19 by **promoting their informed leadership in 44 countries and regions.**

Looking ahead

- Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

- As COVID-19 continues to impact populations across the globe, **UN Women will build upon its policy advocacy, convening and technical support for a gender-sensitive response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in the coming year.**
- With this, I turn to my colleagues from our Regional Offices in Asia-Pacific and the Americas and Caribbean for a more detailed look at the response on the ground.
- Thank You.