



**Executive Board of the  
United Nations Entity for Gender  
Equality and the Empowerment of  
Women**

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**Statement of the Under-Secretary-General/ Executive Director to UN Women Executive Board**

**Introduction**

Excellencies, colleagues, good morning, and allow me to join our [President/ Vice President] in welcoming you to the Annual Session of our Executive Board. I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to our new Board Members, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands and New Zealand, and to His Excellency Sr Juan Manuel MORENO BONILLA, Deputy Minister for Health, Social Services and Equality of Spain.

During this session we will discuss our report on progress made in implementing our Strategic Plan during 2011; our report on UN Women's regional architecture, laying out changes which we believe will make UN Women more effective and efficient, in particular at country level; our report on UN Women's evaluation function; and proposed changes to our Financial Regulations and Rules.

That is a lot to cover in three short days. But this is a Board with a track record of conducting business rapidly and effectively. Looking back at 2011 and the major decisions on the Strategic Plan, budgets, Financial Regulations and Rules, and many other things, it is clear that the UN Women Executive Board hit the ground running. We should reflect on those achievements, and commit ourselves to maintaining that productive and efficient spirit going forward.

**Report on Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2013**

Mister [President/ Vice President],

During 2011 we laid the foundations for a unique, effective and dynamic organization. As you all know, UN Women was established in the recognition that gender equality is at the heart of everything the UN does, that the UN must do more, and that the UN must do what it does in a more coherent and coordinated way. The General Assembly demanded that UN Women be a

new kind of UN entity, uniting in one organization both normative and operational functions, with a mandate that was truly universal, and working through the UN system as a whole to achieve and support results. It also required us, where necessary, to undertake our own programmes to achieve results for women and girls, because their rights and empowerment are urgent.

Looking back on one year of operations, we are proud of what we have achieved. Many predicted, quite reasonably given the time it can take to achieve change in the UN, that it would take many years for UN Women just to consolidate successfully the four previous entities that were merged into it. Yet today, UN Women is a coherent, unified organization, that has already started not only to build on the results of the entities that went before it, but also to achieve results in areas of its mandate that were new. This is reflected in the Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan.

These results collectively represented the thrust of our efforts in 2011. They reflect our contribution to women having a voice in the momentous developments in the Arab Region. They show how we leveraged substantial additional resources for gender equality through influencing planning processes and supporting budget exercises. And they demonstrate the way we catalyzed major strides forward in interagency coordination on gender equality in the UN system.

These results sit alongside results of a type that do not fit so easily into the results frameworks of the Strategic Plan, but which are equally important in the context of UN Women's universal mandate. Much of this work falls within the realm of advocacy, and I have personally been extremely engaged in promoting the norms and standards which we represent in the countries I have visited, developed and developing alike. For example, I returned this weekend from a trip to Paris where, among other things, I met with OECD Finance Ministers and took the opportunity to impress upon them the importance of women's economic empowerment to economic recovery. There is no country that can truly claim to have achieved gender equality, which is free of any last vestige of discrimination, or where no women has ever experienced any of the varied manifestations of disempowerment, whether in the public or private spheres, and we seek to reflect this in the way we work.

Let me elaborate on results on the ground, the priority of our Strategic Plan. Consider our work in political participation, for example in Morocco, where UN Women's support helped increase the number of women in Parliament from 10 to 17 percent, or in Mexico where our Fund for Gender Equality contributed to national efforts leading to a more than doubling in the number of women mayors. Our work in economic empowerment, in OPT where the Women Run School Canteens programme helps women entrepreneurs produce healthy school meals for school children was scaled-up by the Ministry of Education to 35 centers to feed nearly 70,000 children. Consider our work in ending violence against women and girls, for example in the Solomon Islands, where UN Women supported the establishment of Family Violence and Sexual Offences Units, with violence coordinators now stationed in every province. Within our work in peace and security, UN Women advisors were active in the UN teams including in Darfur, Libya, and advocated for women's voices and involvement in post-conflict elections in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, South Sudan, Haiti and DRC. These examples are merely indicative of the

ways in which, across the world, across the range of issues that matter for women and girls, as well as for men and boys, we are making a difference. There are many more results described in the report, along with analysis of progress made in achieving the results of the Strategic Plan's results frameworks.

My report describes results in interagency coordination. For example, we convened the UN system to agree for the first time a System-wide Action Plan, known as the SWAP, with a robust accountability framework for gender equality and women's empowerment. The SWAP covers results based management; human and financial resources; capacity development; oversight; evaluation, monitoring and reporting; and knowledge generation and management. I know this is something many Board Members have been eagerly anticipating.

I had the pleasure in April this year of presenting the SWAP to the Chief Executives Board, where it was enthusiastically endorsed. Many of you are familiar enough with the UN system to know that securing systemwide agreement on anything is challenging enough, but securing agreement on an accountability framework is even harder. For some of our colleagues in the UN system it meant for the first time going beyond viewing gender equality as synonymous with gender parity in staffing, to actually thinking about gender equality results. It also meant responsiblising senior managers for gender equality results, making it more difficult to consider gender mainstreaming something which could be delegated to junior staff and then forgotten.

Most importantly, we have seen that the space clearly exists for us to play our interagency role in the way we had hoped, and that resistance within the system is perhaps not as daunting as many feared. This is a lesson also echoed at country level, where we found UN Women's leadership of Gender Theme Groups welcomed by our UN colleagues, and where we maintained our active role in a range of joint programmes. I saw it personally at a meeting on Delivering as One in Montevideo, where Resident Coordinators from Delivering as One pilots and other countries were invited to bring one UNCT member with them to take part in our discussions, and I arrived to discover that the majority had selected their UN Women counterpart to accompany them. And it is also why we need to be assertive and bold to drive home these advances in systemwide coordination through the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, building upon the SWAP and reaffirming UN Women's coordination role.

While it is not mentioned in my report, I would also like to share some additional more recent news. UN Women recently became the newest member of the H4 plus, a partnership between UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and UNAIDS, to improve women's and children's health. Although this is not a core area of our Strategic Plan, we know that gender and women's empowerment are critical to health outcomes. Our role will be to strengthen the gender perspective in national planning processes outside the health sector in the targeted maternal and child mortality high burden countries; support legislative and regulatory arrangements against early marriage, and other aspects related to women's empowerment; advocate at national and global levels for actions to enhance women's empowerment especially relating to increased education opportunities for girls and women; and provide visibility to women and children's health issues and the work of H4+ with sectors other than health sectors.

We also recently had the good news that UN Women received unanimous endorsement from the Heads of Agencies of UNAIDS Co-sponsors to join UNAIDS as a full member and their newest Co-sponsor. We expect a formal announcement once the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board gives its endorsement in early June.

It is particularly encouraging for me that our colleagues working in areas like health are appreciative of what UN Women has to offer their work. We intend to build on these sorts of engagements across the range of development issues in the coming years.

My report describes results in the intergovernmental context. UN Women was active in intergovernmental developments, from gender-focused events like the Commission on the Status of Women, of which we are the Secretariat, to ensuring the prominence of gender in agreements such as that from the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV) in Istanbul, preparations for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, and the Busan Outcome Document. However, our experience at the 2012 Commission on the Status of Women has brought home to me that we need to better complement our role in servicing intergovernmental processes with one of proactively providing inputs into those processes to facilitate the work of Member States in reaching the strongest possible agreements for gender equality and women's empowerment, in line with our mandate. This is something we will be looking to strengthen this year.

My report describes results at the management level. During our first year, with your invaluable support, we laid the foundations for an efficient and effective organisation. We developed our Financial Regulations and Rules, four budgets, our Strategic Plan and the Strategic Framework, all of which were inter-governmentally approved. We completed staffing changes at headquarters, including notably the establishment of a new Senior Management Team which rapidly took up its duties to lead our work. 34 Country Offices' capacities were strengthened based on a Field Capacity Assessment which was undertaken at the start of the year. This included the competitive selection and fielding of 28 UN Women Representatives. Results-based plans were prepared for all UN-Women country offices, linked to results-based budgets, greatly improving the foundation for results and reflecting the Strategic Plan's focus on the country level.

My report describes the wide support, both financial and political, that we have enjoyed. UN Women celebrated its first anniversary with some 114 governments contributing to core funds. While previously just two donors provided the majority of the funds, today half a dozen donors provide contributions of more than USD \$10 million. In 2011, contributions to UN-Women totaled \$235 million, representing a 33 percent increase from 2010. None the less, we did not hit our ambitious targets for 2011, even if any growth is an achievement in the current climate. We have scaled back our targets for 2012 and '13 compared to that mentioned in the Secretary-General's proposal in recognition of the difficulties many donors are facing, taking it back to a bare minimum to carry out our mandate. None the less, our revised target of \$700 million for those two years will still require intensified fundraising efforts. If we fail to meet these reduced targets it will call into question our ability to deliver on the mandate and Strategic Plan our Board has laid out for us. We have been fortunate indeed with our friends, but some of those

friends could go further in providing financial commitments that more closely match their political commitment.

Lastly, my report also describes our challenges. It recognises the need for us to work with partners to find better approaches for addressing systemic drivers of economic exclusion. It shares our realization that while situations of transition offered opportunities for women, they often disappointed, with women's voices excluded after the promise of change had led us to hope that events would unfold differently. The systematic exclusion of women from peace negotiations remains persistent and stubborn. We are considering ways, together with our partners, to address some of these challenges. For example, we are strengthening partnerships to address the systemic drivers of economic exclusion with actors such as the World Bank, recognizing that systemic change demands even deeper and broader partnership. We are using targeted special measures and policies to increase women's participation in peace processes, and increasing availability and quality of gender expertise for peacemaking and mediations processes, including through rosters and trainings to assist with identifying and preparing women candidates for deployment. But we do not yet have all the answers, and in a complex and diverse operating environment we remain flexible to respond to national and regional priorities.

At the management level, we are addressing the variations in capacity across the organization, alongside legacy issues such as challenges around contract types which have led to an over-reliance on short-term contracts for full-time functions. Overly centralized decision-making causes delays and transaction costs. The challenges described in the report have not all gone away, and we continue to work on them. Some of these issues drive the changes to our regional architecture that we will discuss at this session. Others are addressed under my Organisational Effectiveness and Efficiency Initiative, about which I will say more shortly.

I have demanded of my organization that it adapts and develops at a pace to match change and developments for women and girls in the external environment. I have pushed my staff to think differently. I believe they have delivered the progress I described in my report to you. UN Women is not a finished product. But in the space of a short, hectic, and rewarding year, we have an organization, one which is unified, focused, and already resting on a foundation that can serve it going forward. Your support as our Executive Board members has been vital, and will remain so. It will make possible achievements that go beyond those of 2011; go beyond UN Women, as we work through the UN system to improve the return on investments you make across that system, so that they deliver more for women and girls; and even go beyond the UN itself, as we work with our partners and with Member States to empower women and girls, from their political participation to their economic empowerment, to take their rightful place in a world that so desperately needs their fullest contribution.

## **Regional Architecture**

Mr. [President/ Vice President],

Let me turn to our new regional architecture, which we are sharing with you at this session. UN Women's regional architecture is an integral part of our continued efforts for institution building and organizational efficiency representing the last critical step of the development of UN Women's organisational structure. The functional analysis of Headquarters in 2010 and the

Field Capacity Assessment in 2011 will now be complemented by the Regional Architecture Review, putting us in a position to have a structure which operates effectively and efficiently at all levels.

It follows the direction the Executive Board has set out for UN Women in the Strategic Plan and the approved Institutional Budget (2012-2013) to strengthen our capacity in the field to achieve results at country level and ensure better linkages between the normative and operational work. Through the regional architecture we continue the direction and implement what we have agreed together.

The process was guided by five principles. First, we wanted to decentralize authority to the field, because it is apparent that the transaction costs of overly centralized decision making are huge. Second, we sought maximum impact from UN Women's existing resources and synergies with other organizations. Third, we needed to serve UN Women's coordination function in the UN system. Fourth, we wanted to assure quality and accountability across all levels of the organization. Fifth, we needed a structure which would ensure coherence for UN Women's role, messaging and mandate.

What we are presenting to you explains the solution we have arrived at after careful consideration, including consultation with member states, partners and staff including a review of the experience of partners with the UN and other organizations, notably UNFPA who have recently been through a similar process.

You will find the details of that solution in the report, but allow me to summarise. UN Women currently has fifteen sub-regional offices: we will combine this capacity and concentrate our resources into five regional centres, located in UN hubs. These regional centres will have two primary functions. First they will be the first level of oversight for country offices, performing functions such as the managerial review and approval of workplans, or approving payments that go beyond the delegated authority of country offices. By moving a large element of oversight responsibilities to the regional level we believe we will reduce transaction costs significantly, saving the organization time and money, and ultimately making it more efficient.

Second, regional centres will offer technical, policy and operational support to country offices in priority areas of the Strategic Plan. For example, we are already putting in place one regional evaluation officer for each of the five regions. We believe that having technical support capacity closer to country offices will make that support more responsive and better tailored to the specificities of certain regions.

Regional centres will also be important for UN Women's knowledge function. The Regional Centres will report to Headquarters, where ultimate oversight will remain, but at a higher level. And regional centres will be an important bridge to key regional organizations and support our inter-governmental and normative work at headquarters by feeding important lessons learned and insights from regional and country level.

In addition to regional centres and country offices, UN Women will also have a small number of Multi-Country Offices located where Regional Centres would have difficulty to fully service due

to large geographic coverage or for specific geographic context like Small Island States. . These Multi-Country Offices will function exactly as Country Offices except that their Representatives are responsible for UN Women's work in more than one country, and their Programme Plans incorporate initiatives supporting member states and UN Country Teams in more than one country. Multi-Country Offices will report to Regional Centres in the same way as Country Offices.

Some of you may recognize that this is an approach that we are currently piloting successfully in two of our regions, Latin America and Arab States.

In an ideal world we would have liked to have presented these changes to you in a single package, rather than across the two sessions. But the reform of our regional architecture is the final, essential element of our new structure, and it cannot wait. At the same time, we have done this in a careful and considered way, including with a significant consultative process. We have made efforts to identify how our structures would relate to those of our partners, particularly our partners in the UN system.

So while we need to do this fast, it is more important that we do this right. We are also utilizing our existing capacities and resources within our organization. A significant amount of resources required to implement the regional architecture, including posts, have already been approved by you in our Institutional Budget with which we are able to proceed.

That is why I appreciate the space you have given me and continue to give me to move forward in making these changes. I look forward to your views and feedback so that we may refine our implementation plans which we are currently working on and also to your approval of the additional budget we would require when it is presented to you later in the year.

Implementing this change is a significant undertaking. We estimate it will take about twelve to eighteen months. It will have corporate implications, including changes in some staff functions. We have made significant efforts to involve staff in the process, and the majority see the changes to the regional architecture as an opportunity and a necessity to further improve our organization to serve women and girls around the world.

## **Evaluation**

The broader process of ongoing change at UN Women involves strengthening various functions that are essential to our mandate. The evaluation function is among the most important of these. It is key to our learning lessons as an organization, being evidence based, robustly questioning the assumptions we make about the approaches we employ, and helping us know not only whether we are achieving results, but whether they are the right kind of results. As you will recall, UN Women has an independent Evaluation Office which reports to me. We are strengthening that capacity by placing regional evaluation specialists in each of our regions.

The report describes our new Evaluation Strategy, which addresses both the ways in which we will strengthen evaluation of our own programmes, and the ways in which we will contribute to gender-sensitive evaluations across the UN system. This last aspect is important to us, and we are proud that UN Women has been chairing the UN Evaluation Group since early 2011, something which has provided a foundation for a range of contributions to systemwide

evaluation efforts. This ran alongside work with other partners in evaluation, notably regional partners such as the African Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) of the African Evaluation Association, among others.

The report also summarises key findings from evaluation in 2011. These included observations such as the uneven application of gender mainstreaming across the UN Secretariat, and in particular the weak focus on gender equality results, and that UN Women's approach to partnership has sometimes been overly focused on short-term project objectives and not on longer-term programmatic goals. The lessons from these evaluations are informing not only specific action in areas of the programme, but also our broader change processes in UN Women as a whole.

None the less, the report shows that we have some way to go to meet the standards that we aspire to. The evaluation function is a part of our organization where our newness is particularly apparent, and it will take some time to develop to where we would like it to be. Our completion rate for planned evaluations is low, and while sixty percent of evaluations were rated as good or above, this is not as high as we would like. Similarly too many evaluations do not result in a management response, and those management responses that are generated are not sufficiently reviewed and tracked to ensure that they are actually leading to action and change. The implementation of the new evaluation strategy, including the development of a new Evaluation Policy to be presented to the Executive Board at the 2012 Second Session, will address a number of the areas of weakness identified in the report. A new system is already in place to track management responses with the results from this system being reported to senior management. We are institutionalizing monitoring, evaluation and research plans which should make our planned evaluations more realistic, resulting in a better fit better what we plan and what we do.

### **FRRs**

Let me turn briefly to the subject of the revision of the Financial Regulations and Rules. I realise that the Board has already considered the FRRs and that the discussion on them was detailed and comprehensive. However, with the implementation of the International Public Service Accounting Standards (IPSAS) at the start of 2012 it became necessary to make some adjustments, primarily in terms of harmonizing terminology. Those of you who participate in multiple Boards will be familiar with IPSAS and its rollout across the Funds and Programmes. You have available to you the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions who have reviewed the revisions, which I am sure will make clear to you the nature of these changes and facilitate a clear and efficient discussion.

### **OEEI**

Mr [President/ Vice President],

Lastly, and relating to all the issues I raised above, I would like to update you on progress on my Organisational Effectiveness and Efficiency Initiative. As you know, at the end of last year I identified a number of areas which required urgent attention in order to address some of UN Women's most pressing capacity challenges. A number of these arose from a series of regional meetings held with UN Women staff across the world, where they were invited to identify those aspects of UN Women's business processes which most hindered the achievement of results.



Others arose from observations of senior managers, including myself, at Headquarters, as well as observations from an interim audit report. Overall, it reflected my, and my senior managers, acknowledgement that there are critical aspects of UN Women's business processes that require attention, and that this is urgent.

During 2012 we began work on a number of areas of the Organisational Effectiveness and Efficiency Initiative. These included initiating a review of our business processes including both operations and programming processes to ensure their simplification, reduced transaction costs and greater delegation to the country offices. For example, we are allowing recruitment of certain types of posts such as national officers to be completed at the regional level, and allowing higher levels of financial authority at country level. We are revising our operational policies and procedures which were mostly inherited from UNDP through UNIFEM to ensure that they respond to the needs of UN Women Country Offices and our operational modalities, including how we work with civil society organizations. We are reviewing service-level agreements, particularly with UNDP, to explore options for reducing costs. We also recently signed up to the International Aid Transparency Initiative, IATI.

However, we need to accelerate and systematize our work in this area better. To that end I am appointing a Special Advisor to act as project manager for the initiative, and moving the initiative into a new, more heavily projectised phase, with specific project components for addressing priority areas for improvement, including human resources, an ATLAS system review, internal communication and a number of aspects of the change process for the reform of our regional architecture. The financial requirements for this next phase will be presented to you in the context of discussion of the change management funds at the Second Session.

## **Conclusion**

Mr [President/ Vice President],

All of these agenda items are important, as is all the work of our Executive Board. Everything we do here is essential to UN Women continuing to improve and grow to meet the ambitions of an ambitious mandate. But allow me to conclude by talking briefly about your role beyond the Executive Board.

All of you here are friends not only of UN Women as an institution, but also UN Women as a mandate, exemplifying intergovernmental commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels. We have coming up a number of vitally important discussions and decisions which cannot achieve their objectives without properly taking into account the role of gender equality. We have the Rio+20 Conference where the reflection of the centrality of gender equality to sustainable development needs to be properly reflected in the Outcome Document. We have discussions of the post-2015 development architecture. We have the upcoming Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. And of course we look forward to the 2013 Commission on the Status of Women.

We in UN Women look first to our Board Members, our closest friends among the Member States, to be ambassadors not only for UN Women, but also for gender equality in all these processes. We will continue to strive to play our part in supporting Member States to arrive at

decisions and conclusions. But we see ourselves doing that as partners with you, as we do with all aspects of our work.

Thank you again for the foundation that you have provided to us. Thank you also for the work that you will do here during this Annual Session. I look forward to a successful meeting.