



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

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Second Regular Session 2012

**Statement of UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet at the Second Regular Session of UN Women Executive Board. New York, 5 December 2011.**

[Check against delivery]

Madame President,

Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to be with you today at this second regular session of the UN Women Executive Board. We have a focused agenda for this session. The major item for us is consideration of UN Women's first ever Institutional Budget. In addition, we will review the proposed programme of work for the Executive Board for 2012.

I want to speak with you today about our budget in its broader context, and share with you the thinking that lies behind it. I also want to express from the outset our appreciation for the work of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which provided us with both its inputs and its support.

You are all aware that we approach the end of the first year of UN Women's existence. A year can be a long time, but we nonetheless remain a new organization in the making. We have presented budgets in the past which were, in effect, stop-gap measures designed to see us through the period of establishment. They were budgets of necessity.

By contrast, I am very happy that what we present to you now is our first budget built on our Strategic Plan. It is also, importantly, our first budget prepared with the engagement of UN Women's newly appointed senior management. It is a strategic tool which reflects the strategic intent of UN Women's mandate, as laid out in the founding resolutions of the General Assembly,

and UN Women's Strategic Plan (UNW/2011/9) as approved by you, our Executive Board. It is, for us, UN Women's genuine founding budget.

Good budgets serve first and foremost as a statement of policy and vision, a financial translation of strategic intent. This budget lays out how we will achieve results and impact for gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is about an organization that achieves results through high quality technical expertise, leveraging resources, partnerships, brokering knowledge, advocacy and influence, and building capacity.

It is about UN Women focusing first and foremost upon changing the lives of women and girls on the ground. It is about catalyzing action to make a difference in their everyday experience, with our particular emphasis on their political and economic empowerment, grounded in a framework of human rights. It is a vision of a UN Women that reflects best practice in every aspect of its business, with prudent and sound financial stewardship, transparent use of funds, and that invests in its human resources as its most important asset.

It is my intention that our discussions in the Board should be open, frank and collaborative. This is how we will work together effectively. It is in that spirit that I tell you that we are under no illusions in UN Women as to the scale of the task before us to make that vision come true. UN Women continues to strengthen our operations and this budget represents a step forward. It reflects our stated and shared intent to become the sort of organization that delivers the results that countless women and girls, and the world, expect of us, and that we expect of ourselves.

## **Achievements**

While we are a new organization, we are already showing results. In the context of developments in the Arab Region, we have been able to quickly identify essential expertise and experience from across the world to Egypt and Tunisia, providing access to good practices in promoting gender equality in institution building, including electoral reform and constitution formulation.

UN Women's Progress of the World's Women report this year focused on access to justice. It secured widespread attention in the media, and among a range of actors. Our normative role remains strong, and we are starting to see how that normative function combines with our operational and policy work to produce something better and more impactful. For example, UN Women, together with UNDP and a number of Members States, organised a High Level Side Event on Women's Political Participation at the General Assembly. This brought together female Heads of State and Government and women ministers from all regions of the world.

The Joint Statement from the event, a statement I signed together with others, was referred to in many statements in the General Debate of the General Assembly, and inspired a new resolution calling for stronger action on women's political participation which has been adopted by the Third Committee. UN Women has also taken strong steps to position gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of discussions for food security. To move forward, we are

partnering with the three UN food agencies based in Rome on an action plan to further the economic empowerment of rural women.

Madame President,

Distinguished Delegates,

Even in the comparatively newer area of coordination we are seeing results already. A system-wide action plan is now prepared in draft, following consultations we convened between June and November across the UN system. This includes clear and concrete indicators against which different parts of the UN system can assess themselves and be held accountable for their performance in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. This action plan will go to the Chief Executives' Board in April 2012, and will provide us with a stronger foundation than ever before for promoting gender mainstreaming and accountability in the UN system.

UN Women is also moving forward in support of UN systemwide coherence and Delivering as One, with a focus on Delivering as One for Women. Last month in Montevideo, at the Delivering as One meeting, I made a strong case, and witnessed strong support, for prioritizing women's empowerment and gender equality in UN Development Assistance Frameworks by UN Country Teams. The spirit of teamwork and unity was encouraging, and it paves the path for improved effectiveness of the UN, and stronger results for women and girls.

I am also pleased to report that gender equality and women's empowerment are highlighted in the agreement reached last week at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan. UN Women worked closely with partners, including civil society, in preparation for the Forum in which I chaired a special session on gender.

These examples give a sense of what we are doing and what we want UN Women to be. They reflect an organization that works closely with its partners, supporting and encouraging them to do more and to do it better. They show that with the right approaches, and approached the correct way, there is a real appetite in the UN system for us to collectively do better, and an appreciation for the part UN Women can play in supporting the system as a whole to do so.

As we have been achieving results, we have also been making progress in putting in place the building blocks of an effective organization. For example, we have started to strengthen our field presence, put in place a new management structure and brought together previously separate parts of the UN system working on gender under both single leadership, and under a single roof in one office. Importantly, I feel able to say to you that I no longer lead a loose federation of four separate entities.

## **Budget**

Madame President,

Allow me to turn now specifically to how this budget responds to that vision of UN Women as a dynamic and effective organization. All good budgets are a financial translation of what we hope to achieve, and that has been our intent in formulating what we present today in the document you have before you (UNW/2011/11).

Our Strategic Plan lays out a number of priorities, both in terms of development and of management results. It also described as its highest priority the restructuring and upgrading of UN Women's effectiveness on the ground at both regional and national levels[1].

Based on our assessment of the resources necessary to achieve the results laid out in the Strategic Plan, UN Women is proposing an Institutional Budget for 2012-2013 of \$140.8 million. This budget proposes to devote 86.3 percent of total resources to development activities. To be clear, this budget is an increase compared to the budget for 2011, but this is not, we believe, an appropriate baseline for a new organization. That was a transition budget. This is our first budget as a new organization.

This increase arises primarily from the funding of additional posts on the Institutional Budget, 139 in total. Around a third of these reflect functions which are already being carried out, either through positions covered under the Programme Budget, or covered by Special Service Agreements. In these cases, moving the posts to the Institutional Budget allows us to place core functions onto a proper financial foundation, to provide a more transparent reflection of the use of funds, and to offer fairer and more competitive contracts for these functions, allowing access to stronger candidates.

Three-quarters of these new positions are in the field, exactly in line with the Strategic Plan's stated priority. They will bring the number of UN Women country presences with minimum Institutional-Budget funded capacity to 55 by the end of 2013.

This concept of minimum capacity is informed by the Field Capacity Assessment exercise undertaken at the end of last year and the start of this one, about which you have been informed at our previous meetings. The conclusion from that exercise was a simple one. For UN Women to be able to deliver on its mandate in any country, it needs a certain minimum capacity.

This does not mean that we have a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, we recognize that we have a complex mandate that combines both our own programmatic areas, and the responsibility to coordinate and add value to the work of partners on gender equality, particularly our partners within the UN family. Our mandate also demands that we build capacity and support the strengthening of national systems and institutions and South-South and triangular cooperation to advance women's empowerment and gender equality. To do all of this, we need, as a minimum, three professional staff, including one who can act as a representative at a comparable level to the membership of the UN Country Team.

We seek this level not because it is a matter of status. Instead, we believe that there is a basic level of experience, expertise and authority that is required to drive leadership in the area of gender equality among a range of partners. We need adequate staffing to catalyze stronger results and to deliver what is expected of us. We cannot seek to coordinate our partners, or to make the case to donors to support activities, if our staff are always the most junior at the table and lack the qualifications to do the job we expect of them.

Madame President,

Distinguished Delegates,

This budget is only a first step. We are committed, resources permitting, to bringing UN Women's capacity to bear wherever it is requested by national partners. We are committed to strengthening national capacity. We know that this will take time, and that meeting all the demands for our support is something we cannot expect to achieve in the short or even medium term. But we are building slowly, and setting a precedent here for how UN Women will grow and operate over time.

The remaining one quarter of the new positions are in UN Women's Headquarters. And here, again, you will recognize the themes I laid out, and which reflect the priorities of the Strategic Plan, as the guiding basis for the changes we propose. So you will see positions that support our role as advocate.

We are seeking to strengthen our capacity in resource mobilization, with the intention not only to leverage financial resources for UN Women, but also to leverage all sorts of resources, financial or otherwise, both for UN Women and for our partners. There are provisions for strengthening our finance and budget capacity, so that we can provide exemplary stewardship of the funds entrusted to us. You will see strategic positions for human resources, so that we can

have a workforce that can rise to the challenges and demands of our new mandate. And in the policy area you will see capacity for the Strategic Plan's priority areas, with new positions for research and data, and for political participation of women.

In all these areas, the foundation upon which we build, left over from the four predecessor entities that were incorporated into UN Women, has significant gaps. I have said many times that UN Women's mandate is not simply the amalgamation of the four predecessor entities. The expectations upon us, and our Strategic Plan, go well beyond that. The capacities we inherited were not designed to deliver the results we are now tasked to deliver. That is why we consider this our first real budget as UN Women. It is our baseline, within which we establish our starting point and lay down the absolute minimum capacities we need, to do what we have been asked to do.

Overall, while this represents an increase in the budget, it is also prudent. We have revised down our own income estimates for the biennium from \$900 million to \$700 million, appreciating that, despite extremely encouraging successes in fundraising, the economic climate affects us as it affects others. It pushes us to strengthen partnerships across the board — with governments, civil society and the private sector as we strive to do more with less. Nonetheless, we have grounds to be optimistic on resource mobilization.

Today, our financial resources are greater than the four predecessor entities combined budgets. But equally importantly, we are making headway in broadening our donor base. Where in the past the contributions to the four predecessor entities were dominated by just two main donors, we now have numerous donors providing a major proportion of our funding. Five countries provide contributions above \$10 million dollars, several more are close to reaching that mark, and I am hopeful that more nations will become double digit donors.

More excitingly, not only in terms of dollars but in terms of what it represents, is the emergence of new donors that are marking their commitment to our mandate with contributions. These include the Republic of Korea, and more recently the United Arab Emirates, Nigeria, Indonesia, Gabon and India. I am confident and grateful for the support we are receiving from around the world. And I strongly appeal to Member States to further translate their commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment into an increased contribution for UN Women for 2012 and beyond.

### **Effectiveness and Efficiency**

Madame President,

Let me turn now to the important issue of efficiency and effectiveness, something I consider a top priority. Since UN Women was established, there have been two major corporate initiatives designed to improve the way we conduct business. The first was the Field Capacity Assessment, which guided our understanding of the way we will operate at country level.

That initiative has informed the budget which we are presenting today and the significant expansion of presence at the field we plan to achieve. The second, the regional architecture review, is ongoing, and will guide our understanding of how we can better operate at the regional and country level, and the ways in which we will connect the different levels of the organization to deliver the best results.

The third will be the organizational efficiency initiative, to become more streamlined and efficient. While this budget lays out some areas in which we have achieved cost savings, such as on rent or in areas of IT, we are very clear that while these represent a good start, they are modest. In many ways there are unique challenges that come from the pursuit of efficiency in an organization that is both new, but also comprised in large part of entities that came before it that had different business practices and cultures.

It is in the full and open recognition of this that I have called for the organizational efficiency initiative. This is a priority effort that we are undertaking to simplify, harmonize and strengthen systems, policies and procedures. The initiative will look at all aspects of how UN Women conducts its business. It will examine finance and budget processes, to explore ways to reduce administrative burdens, particularly in the field, and to pool capacity where possible. It will review human resources and propose ways in which UN Women can better invest in its staff to develop the capacities necessary to deliver the results of the Strategic Plan.

We expect the initiative, about which I will keep the Board informed, to instigate work in areas where we can further improve, such as financial and budget management, reporting and audit, strengthened internal governance structures, information technology, and communication and knowledge management.

The regional architecture review will be integrated with the organizational efficiency initiative to identify how functions which are currently spread between Headquarters, regional and country levels could be either streamlined or consolidated. We will report to the Executive Board on the findings and recommendations of the regional architecture review.

However, where we can identify steps we can take immediately, we will take them. As one of these immediate steps, I have started the process of moving regional capacity closer to the field, by shifting our regional functions for the Arab States to Egypt.

### **Next steps**

Madame President,

Distinguished Members of the Board,

We have presented a document that reflects our mandate and Strategic Plan, and the vision we have of the sort of organization we must be to respond to those. We see this as our first budget, and as reflecting the minimum capacity we require. We have highlighted our desire to improve in terms of organizational efficiency, and have put measures in place to address these priorities.

We look forward to your comments, questions, suggestions and ideas, both in this meeting and as we continue to work together. UN Women is its staff and our partners around the world who share a commitment. A commitment to deliver on the promise of the equal rights of men and women as inscribed in the United Nations Charter. You, as members of our Executive Board, are central among those partners. I thank you again for your support, and I look forward to our discussions.