

CONCEPT NOTE

High-Level Thematic Debate

Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

6 March 2015

Introduction

The UN and the international community have made significant progress in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, including through international standards such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and relevant instruments of specialized agencies. Progress has also been marked by the political commitments contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcome of their reviews, the Millennium Development Goals, and other internationally agreed development goals, as well as institutional arrangements such as the establishment of UN Women.

2015 marks twenty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Through efforts at the national, regional and global level, there has been steady progress towards areas that include eliminating gender disparity in primary school attendance; access to sexual and reproductive health-care services; an increase in the number of women in national parliaments in some regions; and an increase in women's labour market participation.

However, as Member States and other stakeholders engage in formulating the Post-2015 Development Agenda, it must be acknowledged that gender inequalities still remain deeply entrenched in many societies. Discrimination in law and in practice persists. Violence against women and girls remains at alarmingly high levels across all regions. Women's lack of access to and control over resources and assets and their disproportionate share of unpaid care work impacts on their ability to participate as full and equal economic actors and beneficiaries. Fewer than half of women have jobs compared to almost four-fifths of men, and a significant gender pay gap persists. Women are more likely than men to have low-paid, undervalued, and vulnerable jobs, with limited or no social protection. Women remain significantly under-represented in decision-making at all levels. Notwithstanding the significant achievements in reaching gender parity in primary and secondary education, gender inequality remains in terms of

access, learning environments, completion rates, learning outcomes and future job opportunities.

The overall questions that the High-level thematic debate will address are, what actions should be taken to target the underlying causes of gender inequality and what laws, policies and programmes should be devised to provide for women's political empowerment, and their access to productive resources and quality education - thus empowering women and girls to fully realize their potential to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development.

Background

In "The Future We Want," the Outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), Heads of State and Government and high representatives recognized that "although progress on gender equality has been made in some areas, the potential of women to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development as leaders, participants and agents of change has not been fully realized owing to, *inter alia*, persistent social, economic, and political inequalities." Leaders also reaffirmed their "commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision making."

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women is essential for effective action on all aspects of sustainable development in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the specific goals and targets that are to be adopted. Urgent action is needed to empower women and girls, ensuring that they have equal opportunities to benefit from development and remove the barriers that prevent them from being full participants in all spheres of society. Going forward, it will be necessary to draw on the lessons learned from the Beijing+20 and the ICPD Beyond 2014 reviews and forge strong links with the negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contains a stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (goal 5). The overall aim should be to attain transformative gender equality, women's and girls' rights and empowerment with goals and targets that promote, among other things, women's and girls' education, equal access to basic services, land and other resources, economic opportunities, health care, including sexual and reproductive health, political participation, and decision-making, including in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, among others.

This thematic debate will focus primarily on two aspects of promoting gender equality and empowerment of women that are important for their contribution to sustainable development - women's economic and political empowerment and their access to quality education.

Evidence shows that greater access to and control over productive resources and expanded economic opportunities for women will lead to, inter alia, greater food security, improved lives, strengthened communities, increased investments for households including in education, food and housing. In turn, these all further contribute to poverty reduction and strengthened economies. Policies that increase women's access to decent work, including women's access to a wider range of occupations, and to equal pay for work of equal value, are essential. Women also need to have an equal voice at work, including through trade union representation and collective bargaining coverage.

The number of women holding political office worldwide remains very low. Such deficit is largely influenced by social norms and beliefs regarding gender roles. Increasing information, knowledge and space to challenge these norms and practices can help shift perceptions and increase the likelihood of women actuating political aspirations. It is equally important to accelerate measures to increase women's participation and leadership in other decision-making fora including the judiciary, media, private and public sector institutions, and in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Quality education and training, that does not reinforce gender stereotypes, is a key driver of economic growth and social inclusion as well as a critical enabler for achieving gender equality. Quality education and training has been recognized as a sine qua non for women to enter the labour force and have access to a wider range of jobs. Progress on reducing child mortality is strongly linked to the mother's access to basic education and secondary education completion empowers women to have a voice and make informed choices about their lives. Removing the obstacles to girls' and women's quality education, training and life-long learning would be catalytic for breaking the cycle of poverty and activating their full potential. Moving forward, Governments and the international community will need to focus on ensuring quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for women and girls' including through monitoring and evaluating progress and removing the barriers that impede girls' and women's access to and participation in formal and non-formal education at all levels.

The two interactive panel discussions will be devoted to these components of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

Objective

The main objective of the High-level thematic debate is to provide an opportunity for participants to address challenges related to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as well as to share good practices and experiences focusing on:

- i. Measures to achieve gender equality and women's economic and political empowerment at all levels.
- ii. Increasing access to and completion of quality education as one of the most effective tools for empowering women and girls.

Format

The Thematic debate will be a one-day event consisting of an opening session, two interactive panel discussions and a closing session.

The opening session of the High-level thematic debate will commemorate the 2015 United Nations Observance of International Women's Day, under the slogan: "*Empower women, Empower humanity. Picture it.*" The commemoration will celebrate achievements, identify gaps and challenges, reaffirm political will and commitment, contribute to social mobilization, awareness-raising and revitalized public debate to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and advance gender equality worldwide.

The theme of the morning panel discussion will be: *Women's economic and political empowerment, including access to decent work, and control over economic and productive resources and active participation in governance and decision-making.*

Some questions to guide the panel discussion are as follows:

1. What are some of the most successful and transformative strategies and policies that resulted in clear advances for women's rights and women's economic and political empowerment?
2. What are the most effective ways to change social norms, beliefs and practices regarding gender roles that contribute to the significant under-representation of women in decision-making at all levels?
3. How can employers' and workers' organizations empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community, and what benefits do they derive from gender equality and women's empowerment?

The theme of the afternoon panel discussion will be: *Access to quality education and skills development as tools for empowerment of women and girls.*

Some questions to guide the panel discussion are as follows:

1. What policies and programmes support women's access to decent work?
2. How can Governments develop education and training systems that are more responsive to demand in the labour market today and facilitate lifelong learning opportunities for girls and women? What measures have been taken to increase women's entrepreneurship?
3. What are the success stories in achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education and what further actions are needed to close the remaining gender gap in access to, and completion of secondary education as well as to achieve gender equality in education? What are some related actions that, although not directly linked to education, have increased girls' access to education?
4. What initiatives exist to combat gender stereotypes in education and training, and increase the representation of girls in male-dominated fields and boys in female-dominated fields? What impact have these initiatives had and what specific recommendations could be made to successfully remove gender stereotypes in curricula, textbooks, but also through teacher training and mentoring?

To foster an interactive debate, participants are encouraged to make brief interventions, not exceeding two minutes. Complete statements can be submitted to the PaperSmart portal.

Participation

Member States will be invited to participate at the highest level. Representatives of UN agencies and entities, international financial institutions, regional development banks, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders will also be invited to attend at the highest level possible.

Outcome

The outcome will be a President's summary which will be circulated to all Member States and stakeholders. Participants are invited to make specific expressions of commitment in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. These could take the form of announcements of legislation, policies, programmes or various other initiatives to be captured in the meeting summary.

Programme

High-Level Thematic Debate

Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

6 March 2015, Trusteeship Council Chamber

Morning	
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	<p style="text-align: center;">2015 Observance of International Women's Day</p> <p>UN Women Video presentation (3.5 minutes)</p> <p>Opening remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Sam K. Kutesa, President of the General Assembly • H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations <p>Statements by Heads of State or Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia • H.E. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of Croatia • H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prime Minister of Turkey <p>Special Guests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive-Director of UN Women • Ms. Sivananthi Thanenthiran, Executive Director, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW, Malaysia) • Miss Nohelia (Youth representative, Ecuador) <p>Keynote speaker Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General, La Francophonie and former Governor-General of Canada</p>
10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	<p>Interactive panel 1 Women's economic and political empowerment, including access to and control over economic and productive resources and active participation in governance and decision-making</p> <p>Chair: H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia Opening remarks and introduction of the panellists</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, Speaker of Parliament of Uganda • Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme • Ms. Jane Stewart, Special Representative to the United Nations and Director, International Labour Organization • Dr. Naila Kabeer, Professor of Gender and Development at the Gender Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science • Ms. Aizhamal Bakashova, PA Shazet (rural women's civil society organization, Kyrgyzstan) • Dr. Patrick Ho, Deputy Chairman and Secretary-General, China Energy Fund

	<p>Committee</p> <p>Interactive exchange between Chair and panellists (Q&A format)</p> <p>Chair will open the floor to delegations and other participants for 2-3 min. remarks/interventions</p>
Afternoon	
3:00 p.m.- 5:45 p.m.	<p><u>Interactive panel 2</u></p> <p>Access to quality education and skills development as tools for empowerment of women and girls</p> <p>Chair: H.E. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of Croatia Opening remarks and introduction of the panellists</p> <p><u>Panellists</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization • Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive-Director, United Nations Population Fund • Ms. Yoko Hayashi, Chair of the CEDAW Committee • Ms. Geeta Rao Gupta, Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, United Nations Children's Fund • Ms. Mariana Mancilla, Balance Promoción para el Desarrollo y Juventud A.C., (Youth development organization, Mexico) <p>Interactive exchange between Chair and panellists (Q&A format)</p> <p>Chair will open the floor to delegations and other participants for 2-3 min. remarks/interventions</p>
5:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	<p><u>Closing session</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Sam K. Kutesa, President of the General Assembly



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

30 March 2015

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a Summary of the key messages, initiatives and proposals from the High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda, which I convened on 6 March 2015.

As I indicated in opening Statement during the thematic debate, the proposals contained in the Summary could be considered in the ongoing negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and the Third Conference on Financing for Development.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', with a checkmark to the right.

Sam K. Kutesa

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

High-level Thematic Debate
***“Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative
Post-2015 Development Agenda”***
6 March 2015
United Nations, NY

President’s Summary

The President of the General Assembly convened a High-level Thematic Debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda on 6 March 2015. The following is a summary of the key messages, initiatives and recommendations from the Debate.

Opening Session – 2015 Observance of International Women’s Day

The Opening Session marked the United Nations’ global observance of International Women’s Day, which was convened jointly by the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

During the session it was noted that since the Fourth World Conference on Women, many countries have adopted policies to advance gender equality and women’s participation in political life has increased. It was observed that 20 years post Beijing, some progress had been made, as exemplified by the two female Heads of State participating in the Thematic Debate. However, disparities still exist and greater efforts were still needed to increase the representation of women in national parliaments and cabinets or executive arms of government, among other leadership positions.

It was further noted that some prevailing attitudes in societies, particularly those of men, in all regions, continue to hamper the advancement of women and the pace of transformation has been too slow. In this regard, it was emphasized that men and boys must be fully engaged as strategic partners and allies for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It was stressed that a renewed commitment to the goals of Beijing and taking concrete actions to implement them is critical, in order to go beyond the rhetoric of speeches, international meetings, communiqués and declarations. Moreover, it was underscored that Governments have the primary responsibility, as “duty bearers”, to end the wrongs against women by, *inter alia*, repealing discriminatory laws, ensuring access to credit, productive resources and reproductive health and rights, as well as ending impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence.

All speakers in the Opening Session stressed the need to accelerate implementation of the commitments made at Beijing and urged the realisation of the gender-specific Millennium Development Goals. The formulation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with the Sustainable Development Goals, as its main component, was viewed as a unique opportunity to accelerate efforts to empower women and girls. Beyond a stand-alone goal, the need to integrate the gender perspective as a crosscutting issue in all dimensions of the new development agenda was also highlighted.

It was emphasised that gender equality and empowerment of women must be central in the intergovernmental processes and their outcomes leading to the September 2015 Summit on Sustainable Development, including the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. It was asserted that if the 20 years of experience with the Beijing agenda is combined with substantive action in the near future, it is possible to reach the goal of gender equality within the timeframe of the post-2015 agenda.

Furthermore, Member States and other stakeholders were encouraged to invest ambitiously in education and training opportunities for women and girls and to put in place the monitoring and accountability mechanisms necessary to motivate countries to action in order to achieve additional results by 2030.

Interactive Panel 1: Women’s economic and political empowerment, including access to and control over economic and productive resources and active participation in governance and decision-making

1. It was underscored that a range of constraints continue to impede women’s access to and control over economic and productive resources as well as their participation in governance and decision-making processes. It was stressed that empowerment of women both economically and politically necessitated the lifting of many barriers that constrain them, including discriminatory social norms, customs and practices as well as hindrances in accessing justice. To overcome this challenge, it was proposed that engagement of all stakeholders is critical to ensure that legal frameworks, which safeguard women’s right to participate in political life, and guarantee equal access to property, inheritance and other assets are put in place. Secondly, it is essential to ensure that the legal frameworks are fully implemented to protect women’s rights against discriminatory practices, customs and social norms.
2. Speakers highlighted that disproportionate care work, the responsibilities of child care, and other household chores have exacerbated the marginalization of rural women, including by limiting their participation in political, social, cultural and economic spheres. They noted, however, that beyond women living in rural areas, women generally work longer hours than men especially when they also participate in the paid labour market. In addition, they stressed that gender stereotypes often prevented men from sharing the burden of care work. They also noted that the time factor associated with care work, and the burden of such work leads to gender gaps in wages and earnings.
3. It was highlighted that globally, women’s participation in the labour market has stagnated over the years. According to many speakers, investments in child care and maternity and paternity leave are critical to ensuring that women can enter the labour market on an “equal footing” with men and that they can rise to the highest levels. It was noted in this regard that expansion of decent work wage employment for women will mean that women can avail themselves of better employment opportunities. It was noted further that research has demonstrated that economies with a high percentage of women in the labour force do well in terms of utilization of their capacities and in meeting their development aspirations.
4. It was underscored that small- and medium-sized enterprises provide important opportunities for women, as they inter alia help stimulate greater demand for goods and

services and uplift the economy as a whole. The need to focus on connecting women with markets through infrastructure and mobile technology that can also increase their employment opportunities was emphasized.

5. It was noted that of the 1.6 billion people still lacking access to basic energy services, 70 per cent are women. Many women, especially those in rural areas, in particular, spend long hours away from their homes in search of firewood, whose use for cooking is hazardous to their health. It was underscored that limited access to clean energy assets also inhibits their participation in income generation activities. It was underlined that owing to their education background and other factors, women are underrepresented in the energy sector, including the oil and gas industry. Gender diversity was highlighted as being among the ways in which this gap could be bridged.
6. In order to respond to the challenge of women's marginalization, including in political processes, several Member States have prepared national action plans, based on the Beijing Platform for Action, to support women's political participation through, *inter alia*, targeted interventions and special temporary measures. It was noted that feminist organizations play an important role in increasing women's political participation, knowledge and education of their rights.
7. It was emphasized that women suffer inordinately in emergency and conflict situations, but they are less involved in peace-making, post-conflict recovery, reconstruction, and peacebuilding efforts. It was thus stressed that women need to be central in discussions and decisions at these critical times as well as in developing strategies for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Recommendations and Initiatives

- i. The post-2015 development agenda should include a target on "unpaid care work" and an indicator on "living wage".
- ii. Parliaments need to ensure that gender issues are incorporated into planning and budgeting processes for concrete changes.
- iii. Equal pay for work of equal value is a principle which must be upheld. Investments in child care and maternity and paternity leave are critical to ensuring that women can enter the labour market on "equal footing" with men and that they can close the pay gap and rise to the highest levels.
- iv. Access to affordable credit by women-owned micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises should be enhanced.
- v. There is a need to focus on connecting women with markets through infrastructure and mobile technology that can also increase employment opportunities.
- vi. Additional reforms are needed to empower women with inheritance rights and access to productive resources such as land and property.
- vii. Governments should support and sensitize women to know and understand their rights, particularly during the entire law-making process. Laws should be continually monitored and reviewed from a gender perspective.
- viii. National energy policies should recognize the impact of energy poverty on women. Gender mainstreaming must be incorporated into the energy sector, including the oil and gas industry and technology and innovation utilized to improve women's capacity to work in this sector.

- ix. In their States Party reports for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Governments should go beyond targeted interventions and special temporary measures and embrace, inter alia, “certificates of compliance”, to ensure that all actors are advancing on gender equality, implementation of national action plans and addressing women’s marginalization in political participation and decision-making.
- x. Implement initiatives such as the G-20’s effort, Women-20 (W-20) Outreach Group, to achieve inclusive growth and raise the profile of gender issues.

Interactive Panel 2: Access to quality education and skills development as tools for empowerment of women and girls

1. It was noted that 493 million people, nearly two-thirds of illiterate adults around the world, are women, and 31 million girls of primary school age do not attend school. Against this background, and at the current pace, it would take until 2084 for universal education to become a reality for all. Yet, access to quality education was recognized as central for women and girls to progress, fulfilling their personal aspirations, and contributing to a transformative development agenda in which no one is left behind. It was stressed further that while legislative changes in many countries ensure that primary education is free, normative changes are needed to address discriminatory customs and to develop a culture of respect for women’s human rights.
2. Underscoring the importance of targeting interventions at the most vulnerable populations, speakers noted that adolescent girls are exposed to a myriad of challenges, including extreme poverty, early or forced marriage, early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual violence. The following were identified as important areas for targeted attention: (1) separate WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) facilities in school; (2) policy advocacy to ensure enough funding for girls’ education and legislation raising the minimum age of marriage; and (3) working with communities to change social norms and practices. It was underscored that focusing on the second decade of young girls’ lives in the transition period from primary to secondary schooling can help address their school attendance rates.
3. Speakers underscored the importance of ensuring safe and secure environments around schools, with a view to ensure that girls attend school free from fear. They mentioned the CEDAW Committee reports, which provided that 70 countries have experienced attacks against girls and supporters of girls education from 2009-2014, with year 2012 alone, comprising 360 separate attacks, which were mostly related to forced marriages and human trafficking. It was suggested therefore, that Member States should reinforce legal obligations in favour of girls’ education, ensure investigation of incidents of attacks and ensure full accountability for the perpetrators, in line with relevant laws.
4. Speakers underscored the importance of quality education, and a learning environment involving well-trained and highly motivated teachers and trainers; strong foundational (in both numeracy and literacy) as well as transferable (negotiation, analytical) skills, and teaching that transcends gender stereotyping. It was highlighted that gender segregated skills that do not match the needs of the labour market also do not translate into empowerment for women and girls.
5. It was observed that the low enrolment of female students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects and an insufficient number of women who choose

a career in STEM are among the reasons why women find themselves below the glass ceiling. It was thus suggested that broad exposure to the science and business environment can be a comparative advantage as more women try to shatter the glass ceiling.

6. It was underscored that technical and vocational training, especially in new technologies, can be a powerful link between formal and non-formal education, and together with other skills is essential for enhancing the employment prospects and opportunities for women and girls. UNESCO and UN Women partnering for Mobile Learning Week 2015 was cited as an example of high-level attention given to the use of technology as a way to strengthen the quality and access to education for women and girls and support their transition to the labour market. Speakers showcased how technology is being used in this way in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
7. It was stressed that better coordination of education and health policies is needed. A joint programme between UNESCO, UN Women, UNFPA and the World Bank on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education was cited as an example of the life cycle approach developed to promote girls' and young women's empowerment through education and learning beyond the classroom.
8. Provision of education on effective family planning and sexual and reproductive health was acknowledged as the best way of preventing unwanted pregnancies and helping girls to stay in school. Involvement of women and girls in the policy formulation and implementation processes concerning sexual and reproductive health was also emphasized.

Recommendations and Initiatives

- i. Measures must be taken that allow women avenues into STEM sectors so that they can diversify into other areas, including research and operations in companies.
- ii. Life-long learning should be encouraged as it enables women to make up for education deficiencies and provides the skills needed to participate in markets.
- iii. Information and communication technology should be leveraged to support women and girls transition to the labour market.
- iv. Robust population analysis, with disaggregated data, is needed to ensure that women and girls are not left behind in the new development agenda.
- v. Enhanced partnership with the private sector, including through internships, can help to translate educational achievement into employment.
- vi. Creation of the International Day of the Girl Child
- vii. Develop targeted interventions, such as conditional education assistance for girls to receive scholarships at an increased rate.
- viii. Increase training for law enforcement, medical professionals, judiciary, religious representatives, media and other public employees and officials to raise awareness of the ways to prevent discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Closing session

Speakers underscored that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains as relevant today as it was two decades ago, especially in the light of the challenges still facing women and girls around the world. In this regard, they called for the further acceleration of its implementation.

In closing remarks, the President of the General Assembly, *inter alia*, reiterated that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are essential to the sustainable future of humankind. He also noted that in addition to having a stand-alone goal on gender equality, gender perspectives should be mainstreamed in all sustainable development goals, targets, indicators as well as the means of implementation for a transformative post-2015 development agenda.

6 March 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing
Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a
Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda**

**Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Esteemed panellists,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the opening session of this High-level Thematic Debate on “Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda”.

I am particularly heartened to welcome the numerous dignitaries here this morning that have travelled from their capitals to participate in today’s event. I welcome Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, Her Excellency Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of Croatia, His Excellency Ahmet Davutoglu, Prime Minister of Turkey, His Excellency Igor Luksic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro, Rt Hon Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General, La Francophonie and former Governor General of Canada, and the Speaker of Parliament of Uganda, Rt. Honourable Rebecca Kadaga.

This is also the first time that the Office of the President of the General Assembly has hosted the global observance of International Women’s Day and we are proud to do so jointly with UN Women, under the leadership of Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director.

Honourable guests,

As we look back on twenty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we can see many accomplishments in the areas of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

Nevertheless, despite these successes, many challenges remain.

If we are to address the persistent issues of gender inequality and reach our future sustainable development goals, we must not shy away from having frank conversations and taking bold decisions on prevailing issues that inhibit the realisation of the commitments made at Beijing.

The deep-seated norms, beliefs and practices that contribute to gender-based discrimination must be confronted and changed. We must support a zero tolerance policy on the structural causes of discrimination against women and eliminate the laws and practices that perpetuate gender inequalities.

Sustained vigilance is needed to address critical areas such as eliminating violence against women and girls and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.

Continued commitments must also be made to eradicate maternal and child mortality; early and forced marriages; and the unequal distribution of resources within the household, based on gender.

This brings me to the story of one, Nabanja, who I met just before assuming this Office and mentioned in my acceptance speech last June. Nabanja is a married woman and mother of four children from the Kashongi village in Uganda, who acquired land with her husband some years ago.

Not long before I met her, Nabanja's husband sold that land without her knowledge; leaving her and her children with no home or means for survival. Such examples emphasize the need to put legislation into place which empowers women and guarantees their land-ownership and inheritance rights.

Access to lines of credit is another area which is of critical importance for women, particularly with regard to their engagement in entrepreneurship and non-land-based enterprises. Time and again we have seen that with access to credit, women thrive as owners of small and medium-sized businesses; such those that provide weaving, tailoring, grain milling and bakery services.

Furthermore, we must address the gender inequality that persists with regard to access to education, employment training and job opportunities and technology. We must also heed the calls for equality in women's participation, in public and private institutions, particularly with regard to decision-making roles.

Esteemed participants,

Today's event will cover a great deal of ground on topics that are of great interest to us all. In that context, I encourage speakers to share succinct remarks to foster an interactive discussion with as many participants as possible.

It is my hope that at the end of this debate we will have renewed commitment from all actors, with tangible expressions of support for the way forward in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Such commitments will be critical to realizing a truly people-centred and transformative post-2015 development agenda.

There is no shortage of evidence that when we support the fundamental freedoms of women and girls, they are able to realize their full potential to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development. In doing so, we will all reap the benefits; in our homes, throughout our communities, and across our nations.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement Delivered by HE Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey
Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative
Post-2015 Development Agenda - High-Level Thematic Debate
Trusteeship Council, 6 March 2015**

HE Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly,
HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia,
HE Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, President of Croatia,
Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address such a distinguished audience on this very special occasion as the only male Head of State/Government in this very special session, and more importantly, as the father of three lovely daughters.

At the beginning, I want to congratulate Madam President of Liberia, for Liberia being Ebola-free as of yesterday. Concerning the Ebola outbreak, Turkey continuously provided financial and in-kind assistance, especially to the most effected countries. Recently medical supplies worth \$1.2 million has been donated in three equal parts to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in January. Our Government has decided to scale up our support up to a total of \$5 million through bilateral and multilateral channels including the UN, WHO and the African Union.

Let me first start by congratulating the upcoming International Women's Day. I do reiterate on this very special day that we aspire to build a better future for humanity. We must make every effort to support women. Women and girls around the world play a determining role in social progress, economic growth and development. Advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls have a dramatic impact on the well-being of our societies and sustainable development.

As reaffirmed by the international community at the World Summit in 2005, the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and platform for action adopted during the United Nations' 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 is essential for attaining and upholding the millennium development goals. Fully cognizant of the vital importance of gender equality and empowerment of women, Turkey welcomes the establishment of the UN Entity for

gender equality and the empowerment for women, UN Women in 2010 as a historic step towards accelerating the work of the UN in this field in a more coherent, better coordinated and better resourced manner. Turkey supports UN Women and all its initiatives.

We very much welcome the decision of UN Women to open a regional office in Istanbul, which will be responsible for Europe and Central Asia. We believe that the office in Istanbul will contribute to our global efforts. I invite all ladies here to visit Istanbul in the coming days and weeks.

Dear participants, although advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are amongst the most important tasks before us today, main reasons standing in the way of empowerment of women continue to remain in many parts of the world. Limited choices, inequalities and restricted freedoms for women including in education, health, social protection, decent work, livelihood and economic opportunities, constrain their living standards. Therefore we deem the current discussion an important step in addressing existing requirements for overcoming the immense problems women still face in today's world. The society and the governments need to eradicate the underlying causes of inequalities that lead to poorer societies undermining the social structure and educational opportunities. Education of girls stand out as an area where we need to dedicate significant attention. And with this understanding, Turkey, together with Canada and Peru, pioneered the "International Day of the Girl Child" initiative at the UN. We strongly believe that ensuring the schooling of girls and closing the gender gap in education is the best way to empower girls and prevent them from being forced into early marriages.

We, in Turkey, achieved a record increase in all levels of education for girls over the last decade. The ratio of girls to boys in primary schools has reached to 101% with a 90% percent increase in the last decade.

This improvement was possible thanks to two initiatives. The first is the campaign carried out at national level in cooperation with the civil society and public administrations. The other one is the conditional education assistance, where girls receive a higher rate of scholarship than boys.

Distinguished participants, women and girls suffer not only from inequalities but also from violence in all phases of life, in many parts of the world. Unfortunately, the failure to recognize the rights of women, leads to perpetration of gender based violence. Globally, much more needs to be done to put an end to this vicious-circle. Since the adoption of the landmark UN Security

Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, there has been progress across a broad range of issues for the protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights, especially in conflict affected situations and protracted crisis. Here I salute all women in refugee camps, who had undergone these crises and escaped from this type of violence.

However, these steps are not sufficient to overcome new menaces and worsening situations including, in particular, civil wars and failing states. It is therefore important to recognize the importance of protecting women and supporting them during the conflict and post-conflict situations; to increase the participation of women and to incorporate gender perspectives in peace and security building efforts.

The international committee should pay a particular attention on how to prevent and respond to sexual based violence, which is often used as a weapon of war, a strategy to deprive human beings of their most basic rights, their safety, security and dignity. Obviously, the elimination of the root causes of conflicts is the best way to prevent this terrible crime.

Turkey actively continues to provide vast contributions to the efforts to achieve protection and promotion of women's and children's rights in conflict affected situations and in the aftermath of natural disasters. We believe that the international community should keep this issue high on its agenda and continue to work on comprehensive solutions. Violence against women is a flagrant violation of human rights, which cannot be justified on any social, cultural or religious grounds whatsoever. We should be doing our utmost to prevent this crime at all levels.

As for Turkey, we have carried out extensive legislative and practical protective work for combating violence against women. We recognize that there are still challenges ahead to eradicate the problem but we are very much resolved to maintain our efforts to this end. At the international level, Turkey is party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol. Turkey actively contributed to the elaboration of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. And it is the first country that signed and ratified the convention, which happened during my term as the Foreign Minister and Chairman of the Ministerial Community of the Council of Europe.

In order to incorporate Istanbul Convention to domestic legislation, the Law on Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence was put into force on March 20, 2012, in accordance with the provisions included in the Convention. This is a breakthrough piece of legislation as it is the first

law in Turkey that defines and tackles domestic violence by broadening the scope of the previous legislation to cover all women victims regardless of their marital status as well as other members of the family.

Distinguished audience,

Women are the drivers of development, sustainability and peace in the world. Now is the time to seriously take into consideration the enormous development impact of women's participation in all three dimensions of development, namely social, environmental and economic.

One thing is for sure: We cannot achieve the transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda without having women on board; half of the global population. Overcoming inequalities and discrimination is the very key for global sustainability and eradication of poverty. Gender inequality is the major obstacle to sustainable development. Hence, gender inequality and meaningful empowerment of women and girls should be at the center of our actions. While crafting the new development agenda in the coming months, we have the opportunity to do so. We should seize that opportunity.

Turkey renders full support to the inclusion of gender equality to the Post-2015 Development Agenda by setting a transformative standalone goal to achieve gender equality, women rights and women's empowerment and by mainstreaming gender into other goals through appropriate targets and indicators.

Mindful of the link between achieving sustainable growth and gender equality, Turkey, as the President of G20 this year, proposes to launch the Women-20 (W20) Outreach Group. We believe that, once established, the W20 will support G20's efforts to achieve inclusive growth and raise the profile of gender issues. Moreover, at the Brisbane Summit of G20, it was agreed to reduce the gap in participation rates between men and women in G20 countries by 25% by 2025. This will bring more than 100 million women into the labor force and significantly contribute to our efforts to reduce unemployment and inequality. As the President of G20, we will pay due attention in monitoring the implementation of that agreement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At every effort, whether international or national, strong participation and collaboration of civil societies are important. The inclusion of civil society, media and the private sector into decision

making and implementation of social development policies is not only useful in terms of benefiting from the expertise and resources they bring, but also in terms of its contribution to raising awareness in the society.

In Turkey, government and civil society initiatives walk together to achieve goals set by the Millennium Development Goals. As a result, Turkey was among those who mostly fulfilled national commitments and goals established in accordance with the program of action of the international conference on population and development and the MDGs.

Distinguished participants,

Now allow me to give you some figures regarding what we do and achieve in Turkey on the prevention of discrimination against women, combating violence against them and raising women's participation in labor force. One of the basic principles of the Turkish Constitution is the equality between women and men before the law. The state is responsible for ensuring that this equality is upheld in practice. A new definition has been introduced in our constitution through an amendment in 2010, which allows for positive discrimination for women so as to strengthen equality in practice.

In recent years, regulations which include discriminatory provisions against women have been eliminated in Turkey. In an effort carried out in cooperation with the UN and the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Turkish Parliament, 31 laws have been reviewed from a gender perspective and all discriminatory provisions in laws have been identified. Raising awareness is one of the most important ways to prevent discrimination against women. In this context, training activities have been provided for 183 thousand law enforcement staff, medical professionals, judges, public prosecutors, religious officers, student and communication faculties and other public officials on gender equality and combatting violence against women.

I have already mentioned Turkey's contribution to the Istanbul Convention and the importance we attach to its implementation.

Following the ratification, the law on the Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women has been put into force with provisions compatible with this convention. A sub-commission on the examination of practices on prevention of violence against women was set up within the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The national action plan on combatting domestic violence has been updated for the period 2012 - 2015. 131 Women Shelter Centers are operational as of December 2014, providing service to almost 3400 women. Violence Prevention

and Monitoring Centers provide service in 14 provinces to support female victims of violence. We consider that violations of human rights cannot be justified on social, cultural or religious grounds. We are fully committed to this paying utmost effort to prevent these murders in the society. The Turkish Penal Code penalizes such killings with aggravated life imprisonment.

With regards to women's employment, the rate of women's participation in the labor force in Turkey has risen to 38%. Within the framework of the national employment strategy, the aim is to raise the rate of women's participation in the labor force to 41% by 2023. The Women Employment Action Plan is being prepared in cooperation with the ILO. A significant improvement was achieved in women's representation rate in the Turkish Parliament in recent years. This rate was 4.4% in 2002, then it rose to 9.1% in 2007, and finally to 14.4% in 2011, which is the highest representation ever in Turkish history. We will be having another election in June and we hope this ratio will exceed 20%.

Moreover, while there were no women serving as Metropolitan Municipality Mayors in 2009, female candidates won 10% of Metropolitan Municipalities and became Mayors as a result of the local elections in 2014.

When it comes to prevention of still born babies. Turkey is among the top 10 successful countries in 2008. We spare no effort to continue this success. Furthermore, numerous mother-care facilities have been established.

Distinguished participants,

In conclusion, we hope that today's discussion and our increased combined efforts will provide a significant contribution to support gender equality as well as to redouble our efforts for the empowerment of women. A strong nation should be built on the notion of strong women and family. Therefore, continuous efforts including by men and boys towards solving women's and girl's problems are crucial. An educated, strong and qualified woman is the key to success in all spheres of life. We should continue to work to strengthen women's part in societies. This requires a multi-dimensional approach and a continuous endeavor.

I should thank, like to thank once again everyone who has contributed to this significant effort for supporting women in the world and wish all of you every success in this important mission.

Thank you very much.

6 March 2015

High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

Statement by Dr. Patrick HO, Deputy Chairman and Secretary General of China Energy Fund Committee

- Today, 1.6 billion people or 22.5 per cent of all humankind still have no access to the basic energy service, and 2.8 billion still rely on burning traditional biomass fuels such as wood, dung and crop residues.
- 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women.
- Women in rural areas often spend long hours collecting fuel wood, leaving no time for productive and income-generating activities. Their health suffered from cooking over smoky fires. Their opportunities for education and income generation are limited by lack of modern energy services.
- To alleviate such a condition, decision makers in many developing countries often aspire a one-size-fits-all style of national energy policy of grandeur based on high technologies and bought with national treasures. Perhaps they could learn from China's success story in reducing rural poverty over the last three decades by adopting a smart and pragmatic solution leveraging on the rich resources of 500 million tons of agricultural residues and 1000 million tons of domestic animal droppings that were otherwise going to waste in rural communities, for producing biogas.
- In China, by 2007, a total of 26.5 million biogas digesters were in operation, as a result of partnership between local governments and communities, providing biogas energy to 40 million households and benefiting 155 million people, 70% of which were women.
- Through the use of biogas, people's living conditions and the environment have improved, forests are protected and the labor force has more time for agricultural production. The lives of women, had been totally transformed by the biogas program before the electric grid could provide them with modern energy.
- In today's oil and gas era, in developed economies, women are severely under-represented in energy decision-making processes at international, national and local levels as well as in the business sector. A most recent survey revealed that in the top 100 UK-headquartered energy firms, only 5% of executive board seats are currently held by women while 61% of leadership

boards have no women present at all. The fossil fuels industries are still strongly dominated by men.

- But on the other hand, gender diversity has also been increasingly recognized for the potential of women in enhancing leadership, organizational effectiveness, inspiration, people development, and efficient communication. Recent research has shown that companies with gender diversity scored higher marks in innovations and creativity at the executive level, and performed much better in communication with staff and clients, and enhancing stakeholders' trust at the working level. Indeed, there has been a loud voice calling for a reform in the oil and gas industry to ensure females hold 40% of energy company middle management positions and 30% of executive board seats by 2030.
- In order to promote equal opportunities within the energy sector, gender mainstreaming should be incorporated into the overall planning and decision-making procedures at the policy and executive level, the organization and program level, and at the implementation and project level.
- Women have always been in a disadvantage position in this fossil fuel era and particularly in the oil and gas industries, having to pay extra effort to catch up with men. However, new technologies and future innovation can bring opportunities to women instead of having women to catch up with opportunities. In this new era of renewable energy, a leapfrog paradigm may enable women and men to start with equal footing and equal opportunity.
- A good example is the Solar Sister Program of Uganda which began in 2010, to reduce energy poverty by empowering women with economic opportunity, combining the breakthrough potential of solar technology with a direct sales of portable solar light through women-centered community networks to bring energy, hope and opportunity to even the most remote communities in rural Africa. Three women started the program in 2010, and today more than 300 women were working for their own businesses and communities.
- Energy policies need to be carefully designed in an integrated fashion with partnerships from Governments, business, civil society, and other stakeholders, and with a multidisciplinary approach that benefit both women and men. All of us should seek to understand the gender-differentiated needs and responsibilities of men and women, to recognize the value brought in by both genders equally for their similarities as well as their differences – and how their diverse roles can facilitate to chart a way forward for women's economic and political empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda.
- We should never forget that energy belongs to the entire human race, both women and men, and accessibility to energy is a basic human right.

6 March 2015

High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

Discours de S.E. Mme Michaëlle Jean, Secrétaire générale de la Francophonie

**Monsieur le Président de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies,
Monsieur le Secrétaire général des Nations Unies,
Madame la Directrice exécutive d'ONU Femmes,
Madame la Présidente de la République du Libéria,
Madame la Présidente de la République de Croatie,
Madame la Directrice exécutive du Centre de ressources et de recherche pour les femmes de la région Asie-Pacifique,
(Chère Nohélia,
Excellences,
Mesdames, Messieurs,**

Je pense, en cet instant, à des femmes que j'ai rencontrées et qui sont meurtries à tout jamais dans leur chair et dans leur cœur. Ces femmes m'ont raconté comment la guerre a abouti jusque dans leur ventre lorsque des hommes, – militaires, miliciens, terroristes –, les ont séquestrées, brutalisées et violées à répétition. Le viol est une arme redoutable et dévastatrice qui cible les femmes et, à travers elles, dit la haine et le sombre projet d'anéantir des communautés entières.

Je pense, en cet instant, à ces centaines d'écolières enlevées par la secte Boko Haram et dont nous n'avons plus la moindre trace. Leurs familles et nous tous, témoins impuissants de ce drame, ne pouvons qu'imaginer le pire quant au sort qui leur est fait.

L'horreur ne s'arrête pas là. Je pense, comme vous, en cet instant, à ces fillettes de 7 et 10 ans que, cette même secte, a fait exploser dans des attentats meurtriers.

Je pense aussi, en cet instant, à ces femmes victimes, au quotidien, de violences de toutes sortes, d'humiliations, de mauvais traitements dans le secret jalousement gardé de leur foyer. Je pense à ces femmes victimes de harcèlement sexuel, d'esclavage, de discriminations, au su et aux yeux de tous.

Je pense, en cet instant, à ces toute jeunes filles mutilées sexuellement, mariées de force dont on assassine l'enfance et l'adolescence.

Je pense, en cet instant, à ces femmes qui perdent la vie en donnant la vie, faute de pouvoir accéder aux soins élémentaires appropriés.

Je pense, en cet instant, à ces fillettes, à ces femmes qui chaque jour marchent durant de longues heures pour se procurer quelques litres d'eau, ce liquide vital, précieux, de plus en plus rare.

Je pense, en cet instant, à ces fillettes qui jamais ne prendront le chemin de l'école parce que le destin les a fait naître femmes.

Mais je pense, aussi, à ces mères nourricières de l'Afrique, de l'Asie-Pacifique, à ces femmes agricultrices, entrepreneuses, créatrices qui, par leur travail, font vivre leur foyer, souvent même tout un quartier, toute une communauté, tout un village, toute une région et qui ne peuvent compter, au XXIème siècle encore, que sur elles-mêmes, sur leur énergie, leur courage, leur ténacité.

Je pense, aussi, à ces femmes qui luttent sans relâche, parfois au prix de leur liberté ou de leur vie pour que leur condition, et la condition de toutes leurs sœurs, rime, partout, avec liberté, égalité, dignité.

Je pense, aussi, à nous toutes ici, qui avons dû déjouer les obstacles, bousculer les mentalités et les préjugés, pour simplement pouvoir exercer nos compétences, mettre à profit nos talents, exercer des responsabilités qui restent encore trop souvent l'apanage des hommes.

Si nous sommes réunis, ici, à New York, dans l'enceinte des Nations unies, c'est pour donner un visage, une voix, une identité, une humanité à toutes ces femmes, dont la souffrance quotidienne pour certaines, la lutte héroïque pour d'autres, l'apport incontestable pour toutes, ne sauraient se résumer à des séries de statistiques ou de pourcentages.

Si nous sommes réunis, ici, vingt ans après la Conférence de Beijing, et à quelques mois de l'adoption du Programme de développement pour l'après 2015, c'est pour donner à toutes ces femmes, à toutes les femmes un espoir, un pouvoir légitime, c'est pour leur donner, surtout, des assurances concrètes et leur offrir des décisions concrètes pour améliorer leur condition présente et à venir.

C'est dans cet état d'esprit que je me présente à vous ce matin.

Je voudrais donc vous féliciter, Monsieur le Président de l'Assemblée générale, pour cette importante initiative et vous dire combien j'ai été sensible à l'honneur que vous m'avez fait en m'invitant à m'exprimer, pour la première fois, en qualité de Secrétaire générale de la Francophonie, à l'occasion de ce Débat de haut niveau.

Quel plaisir, aussi, de vous retrouver, Monsieur le Secrétaire général des Nations unies, au poste qui est désormais le mien, et de vous redire, comme je vous l'ai exprimé hier lors de notre entretien, l'attachement indéfectible de l'OIF, l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, aux objectifs et aux idéaux des Nations unies, parce qu'en cette période marquée par tant de crises, tant de conflits, tant d'injustices, tant de menaces nouvelles, tant de défis globaux, en cette période où notre interdépendance nous oblige à réfléchir, à décider et à agir ensemble : les Nations unies demeurent, encore et toujours, cette Organisation universelle où trouvent à se réunir, à s'exprimer, à négocier, à décider tous les peuples et toutes les Nations, singulièrement dans le cadre de l'Assemblée générale que vous présidez, cher SAM KUTESA.

C'est d'ailleurs bien ainsi qu'il faut interpréter la coopération patiemment tissée entre l'ONU et l'OIF dans toutes ses missions, ainsi que l'Accord-cadre qui nous lie à ONU femmes depuis 2012. Et je suis bien décidée à mettre à profit mon mandat pour approfondir encore ce partenariat, Monsieur le Secrétaire général, Madame la Directrice exécutive d'ONU Femmes.

Que de femmes dans cette salle, ce matin, que de femmes remarquables qui, pour certaines, ont pour la première fois accédé, dans leur pays, aux plus hautes responsabilités.

Madame la Présidente du Libéria, chère ELLEN JONHSON SIRLEAF, vous êtes de ces femmes d'exception, et par-delà la joie de vous revoir, je veux vous redire l'admiration que vous m'inspirez, vous qui constituez pour tant de femmes, bien au-delà du continent africain, un modèle et un symbole, vous qui avez su faire taire les armes, vous qui conduisez avec tant de sagesse votre pays sur la voie du développement, de la stabilité, de la paix, vous qui affrontez, aujourd'hui, avec tant de volontarisme l'épidémie Ebola. Chère Ellen, je vous dire que vous n'êtes pas seule.

Je veux aussi associer à cet hommage, Madame KOLINDA GRABAR-KITAROVIC, première femme élue Présidente de la République de Croatie qui fait partie de notre espace francophone. Ainsi que Madame SIVANANTHI THANENTHIRAN, Directrice exécutive du Centre de ressources et de recherche pour les femmes de la Région Asie-Pacifique.

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je crois que nous serions toutes et tous d'accord, dans cette enceinte vouée à la recherche de la paix, pour dire que les conflits internes qui minent nombre de pays, depuis la fin de la Guerre froide, que l'embrigadement opéré à grande échelle par les groupes terroristes, trouvent la plupart de leurs racines dans les inégalités, les injustices et la pauvreté persistantes, le ressentiment également qu'elles suscitent et qu'elles nourrissent, jour après jour.

Alors demandons-nous ce qu'il serait advenu, ces dernières décennies, si les femmes avaient, dans leur colère, recouru à la violence. Si elles avaient pris les armes partout où elles sont victimes d'inégalités, d'injustices, de discriminations, de violences, partout où leurs droits sont bafoués.

Eh bien non, les femmes résistent autrement : par la volonté, le courage, la raison et la mobilisation constructive de leurs forces. Les femmes sont bâtisseuses et dans tous leurs combats, elles ont toujours à l'esprit l'intérêt général, le bien commun, le projet collectif.

Les femmes n'ont jamais eu recours à la force pour se faire entendre. Et pourtant les conséquences induites par la condition des femmes dans trop de pays, valent celles induites par les crises et les conflits.

Nous nous accordons tous, aussi, sur le fait que paix, démocratie et développement sont indissociables.

Alors, allons jusqu'au bout de cette évidence en proclamant qu'il n'y a pas de développement possible sans l'apport des femmes qui constituent la moitié de l'humanité. Exclure les femmes, c'est se condamner à ne pas réussir.

Allons jusqu'au bout de cette évidence, en proclamant qu'il n'y a pas de véritable démocratie possible, sans représentation des femmes au sein des collectivités locales, au sein des parlements, au sein des gouvernements, ou à la charge suprême. Exclure les femmes, c'est se condamner à un déficit d'idées et de perspectives.

Allons jusqu'au bout de cette évidence, en proclamant qu'il n'y a pas, non plus, d'Etat de droit possible, tant que durera l'impunité des auteurs de violences à l'égard des femmes.

L'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes, l'autonomisation économique de ces dernières, leur accès à l'éducation – à une éducation et une formation de qualité – leur accès aux postes de responsabilité et de décision, leur accès plein et entier aux services de santé sexuelle et reproductive, ne sont donc pas la seule affaire des femmes.

Tout cela se doit d'être l'affaire des femmes et des hommes et requiert une sensibilisation précoce des jeunes esprits, car ce sont là les conditions indispensables à un développement économique et social durable, à l'enracinement de la démocratie et de l'Etat de droit, au même titre qu'un environnement pacifié.

Ce sont là, surtout, des droits humains fondamentaux et inaliénables.

C'est donc à travers ce prisme que nous devons, 20 ans après, examiner le bilan de la mise en œuvre de la Déclaration et du Programme d'action de Beijing.

C'est à travers ce prisme que nous devons appréhender le Programme de développement pour l'après 2015.

Certes, il y a eu des avancées dans la réalisation des Objectifs du millénaire pour le développement, en matière de scolarisation des filles, d'accès à l'emploi et de représentation parlementaire. Mais sommes-nous en droit de nous féliciter alors que des millions de femmes, de jeunes filles, de fillettes en sont encore exclues ?

Certes, le Programme de développement pour l'après 2015 prend désormais en compte les enjeux liés aux violences faites aux femmes et aux filles, mais la prise en compte du rôle que devraient pouvoir jouer les femmes dans la gestion des conflits, des processus de paix et de justice demeure insuffisante.

Certes, il y a eu des avancées normatives ; nous avons adopté, année après année, des déclarations, des résolutions. Mais à quoi cela sert-il si nous ne les mettons pas en œuvre, si les principes et les lois qui

en découlent ne sont pas appliqués, si les structures d'accompagnement nécessaires à leur réalisation ne sont pas créées.

Bien plus ! Au moment de franchir de nouvelles étapes, nous avons impérativement besoin d'avancer. Et ne pas régresser n'est aucunement une avancée.

Alors ne cédon pas devant ceux qui voudraient, au nom de la coutume, de la culture, de la religion remettre en cause des droits et des principes chèrement acquis.

Plus généralement, ne cédon pas devant ceux qui remettent en cause l'universalité des valeurs et des principes qui honorent la famille humaine, devant ceux, aussi, qui tout en les reconnaissant les transgressent.

Ne sacrifions pas l'esprit inspiré, ambitieux et humaniste de 1948, cet élan historique qui permit aux Etats, de toutes les régions du monde, de transcender leurs différences et leurs divergences pour que soit adoptée, lors de la 3eme Assemblée générale des Nations unies, la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'Homme, « cet idéal commun à atteindre par tous les peuples et toutes les nations» .

C'est cet esprit, cet élan, cet idéal que nous devons retrouver, préserver, revivifier sans cesse, avec pour horizon, non pas le statu quo, non pas des accords a minima, mais au contraire la recherche incessante du progrès qui passe par une reconnaissance, dans les faits, de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, mais aussi par une reconnaissance des droits spécifiques de la femme.

L'objectif est ambitieux, mais il est réalisable ! J'en suis intimement convaincue, parce que grandit, parmi les femmes, mais aussi les hommes, une conscience de plus en plus aiguë des réalités, des enjeux et des défis. Parce que les femmes tirent le meilleur profit des technologies de l'information et de la communication, encore et toujours pour se mobiliser, se structurer en réseaux, échanger leurs expériences et leurs expertises, mais aussi pour faire savoir, dénoncer, et briser le silence dans lequel ont pu se réfugier trop longtemps ceux qui violent leurs droits.

Nous voyons, aussi, la société civile et la jeunesse s'engager toujours plus efficacement.

La Francophonie a accompagné cette montée en puissance en se mobilisant, déjà, en amont de la Conférence de Beijing, puis en réunissant ensuite en 2000, la première Conférence des femmes francophones ; en adoptant une Déclaration politique, en 2010, et un plan d'action, en 2013, pour lutter contre les violences faites aux femmes et aux filles ; en organisant, en 2013 et 2014, le Forum mondial des femmes francophones ; en créant, en 2013 aussi, le Réseau francophone femme-homme ; en consacrant, en novembre dernier à Dakar, son sommet des chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement à l'apport des femmes et des jeunes pour la paix, pour le développement humain et économique durable.

Mais par-delà cette mobilisation constante entre les 80 pays que nous représentons, et celle de la société civile, la Francophonie s'est attachée, tout au long de ces années, à prendre systématiquement en compte, dans tous ses programmes, les enjeux de l'égalité femme-homme, touchant ainsi, en l'espace de dix ans, des dizaines de milliers de femmes.

L'objectif est ambitieux, mais il est réalisable !

(S'il fallait encore nous en convaincre, je crois que le témoignage que nous a livré, il y a quelques instants, Nohélia suffirait à dissiper tous nos doutes.)

Alors n'attendons pas 2030 pour qu'un monde meilleur s'ouvre aux femmes et aux filles, et par là-même à nous tous.

A l'avant-veille de la Journée internationale de la Femme, décrétons que 2030 commence aujourd'hui !

Je vous remercie.



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Statement by

**H.E. Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović
President of the Republic of Croatia**

at the

**High-Level Thematic Debate of the United
Nations General Assembly**

on

**Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of
Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015
Development Agenda**

6 March 2015

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Your Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General
Your Excellency Mr. Sam K. Kutesa, President of the General Assembly

Your Excellency Ms Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia

Your Excellency Mr Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prime Minister of Turkey
Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive-Director of UN Women

Ms. Sivnananthi Thanenthiran, Executive Director, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW, Malaysia)

Miss Nohelia (Youth representative)

Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General of La Francophonie

Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly Mr. Sam Kutesa for inviting me to participate in this important debate on advancing gender equality and empowerment of women.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here with you today and to join you in the observance of International Women's Day.

It provides us with an opportunity to remind ourselves of the significant progress that has been made in advancing gender equality.

However, despite all the achievements, gender equality and empowerment of women "remains the great unfinished business of the 21st century", as Ms Hilary Clinton stated in this august body a year ago.

Therefore our meeting today also provides us the opportunity to recommit ourselves to fight for the equality of woman and girls around the world.

It is especially important to re-invigorate our commitments this year when we mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, fifteenth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

Later this year we will also adopt the new agenda for global sustainable development beyond 2015. Three dimensions of sustainable development are well known: economic, social and environmental. But let us not forget that we need to include a robust mainstreaming of gender considerations across all parts of the framework.

We also need inclusion of a transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development framework and Sustainable Development Goals as grounded in the commitments enshrined in global treaties, most notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and policy commitments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Mr President,

We all should accelerate our efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls and to realize de facto or substantive equality between women and man. We need a strong focus on achieving gender equality.

We need to address the structural causes of gender based inequalities that impede the realization of women's rights and empowerment.

Because, as is often said, empowering women is not only the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do.

For example, recently released new report by the International Monetary Fund on women in the workplace suggests that closing the gender equality gap and levelling the employment playing field would benefit not just women, but the global economy as a whole.

According to this report, the estimated gain in GDP for countries that close their gender gaps ranges from 15 to 35 per cent.

IMF managing director Christine Lagarde said about the report that "By helping women reach their full economic potential, we can also help boost growth, prosperity and stability for the whole world". So the question is what we can and should do to help women reach their full potential, not only in the economic field.

There is no doubt in my mind that women can achieve a lot when there is an environment conducive for unleashing their full potential.

During my career I have also been in the position to break the so called glass ceiling – I was the first female MFA of Croatia and the first woman Assistant Secretary General of NATO.

I believe that it is important to see more women breaking through barriers and that our aim should be that it becomes commonplace, not something special.

When questioned about how it felt to be named Israel's first woman Foreign Minister, Golda Meir reportedly said "Whether women are better than men I cannot say – but I can say they are certainly no worse".

We also have to recognize the efforts of many women who came before us, women who were real pioneers, women who had to hit that glass before us.

Let me give you one example.

Marija Jurić Zagorka, one of the most popular Croatian writers of all time, was also the first female journalist in Croatia.

When she started her career as a journalist at the end of the 19th century, it was a highly unusual career for a woman in those days, and because of that, she was humiliated and discriminated against her entire life.

She was forced to write anonymously, under pseudonyms so as to hide her gender. And in the newspaper offices, she had to hide herself at work so nobody would notice there was a woman writing for a newspaper.

This didn't stop her from being politically involved and fighting for the rights of women.

Mr President,

Gender equality means realization of substantive equality between women and men.

In order to achieve it, changes in the way we think and act are needed.

Here is one example. Although there are more women employed than ever before, very often they are worse paid than men. Studies show that in almost every country women earn less. According to the International Labour Organization, if present trends continue, it will be another 75 years before the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is achieved.

We need to abolish discriminatory laws and discriminatory practices which constitute discrimination against women, and to modify or abolish patriarchal norms, customs and harmful practise which constitute discrimination against women.

The issue of prevention of violence against women is of utmost importance.

We need to change perceptions, attitudes and behaviours that condone and justify violence against women.

Second, we need policies that are more supportive to women trying to reconcile their professional and family lives.

I have already stated that formal legal equality prescribed in gender neutral laws is not enough.

Giving everyone equal legal protection against discrimination is just the first step.

The laws have to be gender sensitive – engendered and as such they should be effectively put into practice.

It is also crucial to win hearts and minds for gender equality.

In this regard, we welcome the recent UN WOMEN's initiatives of the HeForShe campaign underlining the necessity to include boys and men in advocating women's equality and empowerment.

I believe that media and educational institution have a crucial role in this regard.

Through education and media, we can combat intolerance and prejudice, including sexism, and promote equality, diversity, understanding and acceptance.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of education.

Education is an essential investment in the future of every country. It is a crucial factor for reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

It is also an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary for their full participation.

Mr President,

Let me also briefly refer to the issue of women in leadership positions.

Women are still not adequately represented in politics, in peace talks or in senior management positions in the private sector.

There are many reasons for it, one of which is that these are still considered "men's jobs".

Globally, women tend to be locked out of leadership positions, where gender seems to matter more than ability. Women account for only 24 per cent of senior management positions around the world.

It seems that one of the major problems they face is the impossibility of breaking the glass ceiling in professional advancement.

We have come quite far in implementing resolution 1325 by which we committed ourselves to advancing the role of women in building peace and security around the world.

Although there is a growing recognition of the role of women as peacemakers, women continue to be poorly represented in peace processes.

According to some studies, women have represented fewer than 8 per cent of participants in peace negotiations and fewer than 3 per cent of signatories.

During my career I have met many women in conflict and post-conflict countries and was deeply impressed by their courage and determination.

In 2013 I visited the School of Leadership in Kabul, Afghanistan which prepares the next generation of Afghan women for university, and eventually, positions of leadership. The girls and young women I met there impressed me with their enthusiasm, focus and self-confidence.

I wouldn't be surprised if one of the girls I met there will be one of the future Presidents of Afghanistan.

Yet, these Afghan girls and women, as many other women around the world who try to break the glass ceiling in politics, will probably be faced with various obstacles, including many gender stereotypes and prejudices.

Many women might be deterred from entering into politics or running for office by the prospect of sexist attack. Luckily, there are many who are not. In Croatia, although women are still not equally represented in political and public decision-making, there has still been visible progress in this area. Since 1995, women have held the positions of deputy prime minister and ministers, including those which were traditionally allocated to men, such as the ministries of defence, finance and construction and foreign affairs. Croatia had also a woman in the position of Prime Minister from 2009 to 2011. In 1990 there were no women in the Constitutional Court and now the President of this court is a woman. Last year the first female general was appointed in the Croatian Army and she also served as the first gender adviser to the NATO military Mission in Afghanistan.

And now we have the first female President.

Although women in politics continue to face various stereotypes, the question of their political participation has been publicly recognised as a political issue. The introduction in the Gender Equality Act in 2008 of the obligation to include at least 40% of the under-represented gender in political parties' lists has also contributed to this.

We should all continue to persistently and strongly work on elimination of such attitudes from the political and public life, because they are inappropriate and damaging to all women.

We need to break down the barriers both visible and invisible that women face in their professional lives, and to increase the representation of women in political and business leadership.

And that includes this Organization as well.

Mr President,

We must ensure that women everywhere are treated equally under the law – to have equal access and right to jobs, to inheritance, property, economic opportunity, to education, to participation in political

life. But this formal equality is not sufficient. States should adopt temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women in all those areas.

We need to accelerate advancement of women in all areas of life.

And we should never be weary of fighting to stop violence against women.

We should spare no efforts for preventing and combating sexual violence in war and conflicts.

Today in my country Croatia we are seeing that women survivors of sexual violence during the war are speaking up in order to combat impunity. They are requesting prosecution of perpetrators and fair and just reparations including financial compensation.

Mr President,

20 years after Beijing, we have certainly come far, but many examples of inequalities and discrimination around the world show that we have still not come far enough.

Some might question whether gender equality is achievable at all, because no matter how much we strive, no country has yet achieved full equality for women and girls.

Our answer should be yes, it is achievable.

The only question that we should ask ourselves is when and how.

We should ask ourselves what the UN Member states have done in advancing that goal.

And we should ask ourselves what we as politicians, as diplomats, as representatives of civil societies, as men and women, can do to finish the unfinished business.

For our part, Croatia will continue to work on realization of substantive gender equality and to support women's empowerment nationally as well as one of its main foreign policy priorities, through our bilateral relations and our activities in the United Nations and other international organizations.

Mr President,

Let me conclude by thanking you once again for convening this debate.

Let us all work for the day when gender equality becomes a way of life for all.

Thank you.

6 March 2015

High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

Statement by Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka, Executive Director of UN Women

Your Excellency Mr Kutesa,
Your Excellency, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,
Your Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf,
Your Excellency Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic,
Your Excellency Ahmet Davutoğlu,
The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean,
Ms. Sivananthi Thanenthiran,
Miss Nohelia,
Excellencies, Honoured guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here amongst you all for this wonderful celebration of International Women's Day. I thank the President of the General Assembly for this occasion.

The speakers this morning have been truly inspiring.

As we look ahead this year, it is with confidence that we have our sights clearly set on the creation of a world with greater equality for generations to come.

As our Secretary-General has just said:

We cannot successfully address sustainable development challenges if we constrain the potential of half the world's population, and that is why the Special Summit on Sustainable Development should adopt a bold agenda that fully values the role of women and girls, with significant further progress by 2020 and gender equality by 2030.

How will we reach this ambitious goal of a transformed world?

There are three vital requirements: tireless political will; increased resources, and strong accountability. Gender equality is a shared vision of social justice and human rights.

Those rights are inter-dependent and in-divisible.

Those rights are enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

We propose concerted, practical measures to implement the provisions of CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, and to remove the root causes of gender inequality.

Governments are the primary duty bearers.

Governments must repeal discriminatory laws that inhibit the ability of women to obtain credit, own land, move freely, and take responsibility for their own bodies and health.

Existing laws must be fully implemented, so that, for example, violence against women does not go unpunished.

Where no laws exist in a specific area, for example to mandate compulsory education for girls and boys, they must be introduced.

Quotas and temporary special measures to support the increased proportion of women parliamentarians and decision-makers must be introduced.

Investments must be made in statistical capacities and gender statistics to support effective monitoring.

The private sector also has a very significant role to play in investing in the economic empowerment of women.

Employers must make far-reaching changes to employment terms and conditions for women:
Equal pay for equal, decent work.

All companies should implement the Women's Empowerment Principles and, for example, promote education, training and professional development for women.

Macroeconomic policies should enable State investment in infrastructure, social services and social protection measures.

They should generate decent work in the public sector for women and men and ensure women can enjoy their full range of rights at work.

The work to transform discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes includes an emphasis on men's responsibility for their own behaviour change.

Men have to dismantle the patriarchy.

They must end the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies.

They must lead on ending violence against women, on stopping unequal pay,

They must say no to marrying children.

Men can stand up against videogames that perpetuate stereotypes and teach boys about being violent.

HeForShe is a means for men to explore positive masculinity, to build a large network of supportive and likeminded people.

Through these contacts men can lead change and share their experiences.

We launched the IMPACT 10x10x10 initiative in January, targeting at least 10 leaders in each of these: University campuses and youth, CEOs of large companies, Heads of State

Just last night the State University of New York announced itself as the latest champion to join the solidarity movement.

We will know that we have succeeded when

- all women – irrespective of who they are or where they live – have equal rights, and equal access to justice, power, resources and opportunities;
- all women and girls live their lives free from all forms of violence and discrimination;
- women can make decisions about their bodies, health and sexuality, free from discrimination, violence and coercion;
- women and girls fully enjoy their rights to high quality education at all levels, equal pay, equal work opportunities and access to decent work, social protection across the lifecycle and access to quality public services;
- unpaid care work is fairly shared between men and women and no longer presents a barrier to women’s and girls’ enjoyment of their human rights and participation in social, political and economic life;
- women have equal voice, participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels, including in peace and security discussions;
- persistent gender stereotypes about women and men and girls and boys, discriminatory norms and attitudes and beliefs no longer limit opportunities and outcomes.

Mr President,

The findings of the Secretary-General’s global review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action provide important lessons for the post-2015 development agenda.

Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls must be central to the new agenda.

It must have a comprehensive goal on gender equality, and the integration of gender perspectives throughout the framework.

Today, on International Women’s Day,

I urge you all to seize opportunities for transformative action in all sectors and at all levels.

Let us make, before 2030, a world where there are no barriers to women’s empowerment and gender equality.

Thank you.

Buenos días a todas y todos, soy Nohelia de Ecuador tengo 13 años y he venido aquí a hablar acerca de las realidades de muchas de las niñas de mi región.

Nuestra realidad es que muchas niñas estamos viviendo por una serie de vulneraciones en muchos aspectos de nuestras vidas. Yo les quiero contar una historia que me hizo a mi querer comprometerme con los derechos de las niñas

MI mami no se crió con los papas y vivía con los abuelitos y le hacían, cocinar, lavar ropa que no era de ella. Cuando llegaban sus tíos ella les tenía que atender como si fuera la empleada, a ella no la dejaban salir, a mi mami le tocaba hacer el trabajo duro porque era la única mujer.

Creo que lo siento porque mi mami no es la única que ha pasado por eso existen muchos casos de niñas que están pasando por lo mismo.

Mi mami es un ejemplo para mí, ha sabido salir adelante, y me ha dado todo lo que ella no pudo tener, para que no se repita la historia que ella vivió. Ella no pudo terminar sus estudios porque no vivía con sus papas y tenía mucho trabajo doméstico, no tenía las comodidades que necesita una niña. Mi mami no es la única, hay niñas que viven con otras personas que no son sus familias. Y además tenemos miedo de que nos retiren de la escuela para trabajar o para mantener a nuestras familias, porque tienen esa creencia de que las mujeres solo servimos para las tareas del hogar.

Mi mamá me contó que hubo casos de intento de abuso sexual en mi familia, y es la realidad de muchas niñas en la actualidad. Como mi mamá hoy en día las niñas tenemos miedo de que nos pase lo mismo. Existen niñas que a causa de violaciones quedamos embarazadas a muy corta edad, además existen casos que no tenemos información acerca de la sexualidad y de los métodos anticonceptivos de parte de nuestras escuelas y familias.

Tengo una amiga que cuando el papá está borracho y llega a la casa le pega a ella y a su mamá o las insulta. A muchas de nosotras nos da miedo que nos pase lo mismo en nuestros hogares en las escuelas y en los espacios públicos.

Tenemos falta de oportunidades y por estas razones estamos pasando por situaciones de pobreza que afectan a nuestro desarrollo.

Yo quiero decirles que tomen como un papel fundamental la participación de las niñas y que escuchen nuestras demandas en sus conversaciones y en la toma de decisiones para el post 2015. Porque nosotras somos el presente de la sociedad y nuestra opinión es muy importante.

Si nuestros derechos se cumplen, cambiaría el mundo y habrá más formas de pensar, más ideas, más maneras de seguir adelante, y además de progresar ellas mismas, progresaría todo el mundo con ellas.

Y yo quiero pedirles que se comprometan con nosotras para transformar la vida de muchas niñas.

Muchas gracias



High-Level Thematic Debate: Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

Thank you to the President of the General Assembly for convening this very important debate on advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls for a transformative post-2015 development agenda.

And thank you Madame Chair - President Sirleaf - for chairing this meeting, which reflects Liberia's commitment to advancing the status of women and girls.

The UAE welcomes and fully supports the "He for She" initiative. Our Foreign Minister, H.H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was the first foreign minister in the Arab world to sign onto this initiative.

The United Nations finds itself at an important point in its history. This year marks the twenty-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the fifteen-year anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. It is also the year where several high-level review processes on Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding, and Women, Peace and Security are taking place. In addition, the post-2015 development agenda will be concluded and adopted this year.

This presents us with an opportunity to reflect on the gaps and challenges we've faced thus far, in addition to providing us with an opportunity to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are fully integrated into these processes. Only when we address gender equality and women's empowerment in a holistic and comprehensive manner - throughout all processes - will we ensure that we are closer to achieving our goal - that of gender equality.

Madame Chair,

In order for the international community to be effective in creating an agenda that is truly transformative - one that positions gender equality and women's empowerment at its center - we must ensure that we are holistic in our approach.



For instance, when looking at how to ensure and increase women's political participation, such a goal has to be pursued through multiple channels; It is not solely a key piece of the development agenda, but is also a result of effective development policies.

This includes ensuring that capacity-building mechanisms are pursued on a national level. In order for women become leaders and meaningful participants in the political sphere, governments must recognize and advocate for their participation, in addition to providing concrete opportunities for women to attain these roles. Political participation also requires recognizing women as agents of change. This could be as mediators or negotiators in peace processes, as justices in the court, as ministers in the government. We must shift the perception that views women solely as victims.

On the international level, the UN must ensure that gender considerations become a central component to all reviews and processes, particularly in the peacekeeping review process, as well as the peacebuilding review process. It is imperative that recommendations included in the Global Study for the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 give equal weight to participation, along with the three additional pillars.

In the UAE, women's political participation is one of our top priorities. Since its founding, our leadership has strongly advocated for the full and meaningful participation of women in all sectors. A key component of the UAE's development strategy from the beginning has been the engagement of women in the workforce and as decision-makers at the highest levels, recognizing women as equal partners in the development of the nation. These efforts have been spearheaded by H.H Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union and the Family Development Foundation and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood which launched the National Strategy for UAE Women's Development in 2002, to support women's contributions in all aspects of life.

The National Strategy on the Advancement of Women, which seeks to enhance the role of women and their meaningful participation in politics, education, the health sector, the economy, the social sphere, and media, while overcoming challenges that prevent women's participation.



In the UAE, women comprise 17.5% of our parliament, and we have 4 women cabinet ministers. 20% of our diplomatic corps is composed of women. Two-thirds of workers in the governmental sector are women. We still have a ways to go, but we have made great strides in our country's young history.

We must also work to ensure that economic opportunities are made available to women. In order to accomplish this, we must recognize that economic empowerment is closely linked to education. We must also design and implement a development agenda that upholds the actions and principles outlined in the Right to Development. This includes sustaining and fulfilling Official Development Assistance commitments, which lays the foundation for an effective development platform.

In the UAE, we take great pride in continually meeting and voluntarily exceeding our financial commitments for development. In 2013, we spent 1.25% of our gross national income as aid, when the global goal was set at 0.7% for developed countries.

On a national level, the UAE has been consistent in developing policies to support women's economic empowerment. There are currently 20,000 women entrepreneurs in the UAE, comprising 10% of all Emirati entrepreneurs. This constitutes a 58% growth since 2012.

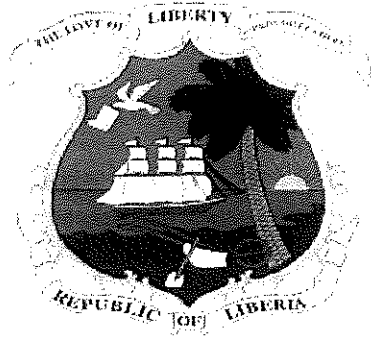
In December of 2012, the UAE passed a law calling for women's mandatory representation in all boards of governmental corporations and bodies. This makes the UAE the first country in the region to implement such a law, and the second in the world.

For the international community to develop an effective post-2015 development agenda that truly advances gender equality and women's empowerment, we must recognize the linkages that exist between empowerment and other spheres, such as education. We cannot have one, without the other. We know that when women are educated and empowered, societies as a whole benefit. We have lower maternal and child mortality rates, boys and girls stay in school longer, and more money is reinvested back into households. This all leads to poverty reduction and stronger economies. We must also recognize that the empowerment of women is achieved through ensuring access to and control over resources.



For this agenda to be truly transformative and fulfil its promises of gender equality and women's empowerment, we must bring all actors on board. This includes not only government actors, but also recognizes the important role that the private sector can play in implementing and taking responsibility for development. The private sector often brings new ideas and innovation that can lead to positive development outcomes. Governments and private sectors actors can work together to further the implementation of the post-2015 agenda.

We must create space for women to be leaders and decision-makers in the design and implementation of sustainable development strategies; we must ensure that local knowledge and individual cultures are embraced and fully incorporated into this agenda in order to create effective solutions that benefit all.



REMARKS

BY

HER EXCELLENCY MRS. ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

**AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HIGH-LEVEL THEMATIC DEBATE ADVANCING
GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS FOR A
TRANSFORMATIVE POST - 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

NEW YORK

MARCH 6, 2015

H.E. Sam k. kutesa, President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations

Ms. Phumzile Miambo- Ngcuka, Executive -Director of UN Women

H.E. Hon. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of Croatia

H.E. Hon. Ahmet Davutoglu, Prime Minister of Turkey

Ms. Sivananthi Thanenthiran, Executive Director, Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (AAROW)

Nohelia PROTECTED (YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE)

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. President of the General Assembly and Madame Executive Director, I thank you for the invitation. I could do no less than respond favorably to join you and the Women of the World in this truly monumental year.

In 1995, we came together in Beijing, 17,000 governments from all over the world and 26,000 activists to envision a world where women and Girls have equal rights, freedom and opportunity in all spheres of life. This year marks the 20th anniversary of that historic event, when we adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

At a summit in January in Addis Abba, members of the African Union promoted a stakeholders consultation on the progress and challenges relating to women advancement, In the year 2015 designated by them as the year of Women Empowerment and Development in promotion of Agenda 2063.

In February 2015, San Diego, Women Leaders of the global community declared 2015 a year for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

In Rio, World Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to ensure women's equal rights, access to opportunity and participation in leadership in the economy, security and political decision making.

In a few months, members of the United Nations will adopt a Post 2015 development Agenda which will call once again ...for more concrete action in advocating Gender Equality & Empowerment of Women & Girls for a transformative world.

There is no doubt that progress has to been made in the 20 years since Beijing more girls are educated, rural women have found their voices, more women hold professional position, more women are chief executives in the private sector, more women are in parliament, and in exceptionally high percentage such as in Rwanda, more women are vying for high political office and some of us have finally broken the glass ceiling.

Yet, as the San Diego Conference points out, the current pace of change has been much too slow, much too slow so that at the current pace; it will take 81 years to achieve gender equity in the work place where we have the highest echelon remains largely male and It will take 75 years to reach remuneration between men and women for work of equal value and more than 30 to reach gender balance in discussion making.

This simply is a clear manifestation of an unjustworld that seeks to leave no one behind. It is not enough to make nice speeches, hold international meetings, issuecommunique and declarations,. Women leaders have said unequivocally, it is time for equality and have issued a call for action, to achieve planet 5050 by 2030.This call seeks a commitmentto address 12 critical areas of concern - essentiallycall for the protection, education and training for women and girls;ensuring access to information and the factors forproduction; especially for rural women; removing the constraints that lead to participation, in decision making at all levels in the society.

As we continue negotiation for a post 2015 development agenda, our call for women empowerment and equality must go beyondrhetoric, must set the

goals that are realistic and achievable and design the monitoring and evaluation systems that motivate countries to action. This was the success of the MDGs, the spirit of progress and competition in the achievement of goals. Let us do the same in the next global goal for women.

Liberia has a history of turbulent times but in 2013 for the first time in two decades we celebrated ten consecutive years of peace and two successful general elections. Then came 2014 and we were hit by Ebola, an enemy that threatened all the gains of the past 10 years. Once again the Liberian people rose to the task. Today we can report that there are no new cases anywhere in the country for over ¹³8 days.

When the next five years celebration of Beijing takes place in 2020, I would have served and left a better country than I found. I want to thank all of you who provided the motivation and support that enabled me to break the glass ceiling. I hope that we will all work toward ensuring that the African Union does not return to male domination.

Thank You

6 March 2015

High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

Statement by Ms. Sivananthi Thanenthiran, Executive Director, Asian – Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW, Malaysia)

**Your excellency, Mr Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly
Your excellency, Mr Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations
Excellencies, distinguished speakers and honourable members and delegates**

I am deeply honoured to be invited to speak to this assembly on the issues I am passionate about and the organisation that I work for – the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) has been championing for the past 21 years.

I consider myself to be privileged to work alongside women's rights activists, who everyday, go out and do their best, and even do battle – simply because we believe that we as women are equal human beings, and equal citizens, and endowed with equal rights before the law.

All that I as a woman enjoy today, were hard-won, by women before me and I acknowledge their work, their sacrifices and their dedication.

I also acknowledge leaders on the world stage who were present at the United Nations, and though coming from different contexts were able to work together and forge a vision for the world which continues to be inspirational even today and presented us with: the 1993 Vienna Declaration, the 1994 Cairo Consensus and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. It is of course our deepest hope that these are the inspiring standards that member states in the United Nations will continue to adhere to, and be able to forge ahead to greater inclusivity, equality, justice, peace and sustainability.

You who are present here have the same great opportunity, as the leaders in that generation, to present a post-2015 development framework which will inspire generations to come. If you think that the world is indeed a broken place, you are able through this process, to put in place solutions which you think will be able to build the world we want.

I also consider myself fortunate enough to be able to experience through the work we do across 17 countries in Asia Pacific and with regional partners across the Global South, the complex challenges that women face. Amidst this diversity one stark, lone truth stands out. Though indeed more girls are in school, more women are in university, in Parliament and in the workforce; yet, substantive gender equality still remains a distant dream for most women and girls. It remains most distant for those

women who are poor, lesser educated, live in rural and hard-to-reach areas, and belong to marginalised groups. These women still form the majority of women in the world today. These are the women we should aim – never to leave behind – in the next 20 years. But despite the chaos of the world we live in, women and girls continue to creatively imagine their futures.

Let me share with you one such story which comes from a travelling journal which we did with the Asian Rural Women's Coalition. Thirteen-year-old Lina lives in a place of abject poverty- in the rural village of Desa Tegalampel in East Java. Her father is a landless agricultural labourer. Lina's dreams were almost shattered when one day her mother suggested that Lina should be married in order to live a more comfortable life. "It's poverty that makes people want to quickly marry off their children so they no longer need be responsible for them," Lina told us. Her own mother was married at the age of 11, and had Lina when she was just 12 years old. Lina wanted to break the chains of this tradition. She felt that if she had an education, there would be better life opportunities for her. Lina also chanced upon a CSO led reproductive health education programme where she learned about reproductive health and rights as a teenager. It was from that programme that she learned that it was her right to decide when she would get married. After convincing her parents to call off her marriage, inspired by the experience, Lina and her friends created a youth community campaign against early marriages to empower other girls in the community. They call it langit biru which means 'blue skies' because it symbolises hope.

Despite 20 years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, isn't it a travesty we continue to live in a world where girls are prohibited from going to schools – some are abducted or perhaps even shot, for seeking an education. Women and girls form the majority of the one billion who are hungry and malnourished because they not only lack access to productive resources, but because culturally, they eat last in the house when there is already very little food in poor households. Poverty and hunger results in micronutrient deficiency, which directly affects mental/cognitive growth and functioning; under-nutrition results in anaemia, wasting and stunting. This has long-term effects on overall well-being and health of women and girls – it is estimated that half of all pregnant women worldwide suffer from iron deficiency anaemia, and this is made worse by repeat pregnancies. Anaemia is one of the contributing reasons for high maternal mortality. At the same time, this limits girls from fully realising their potential and impacts educational, health, and social attainments.

Women are also unequally impacted by the effects of climate change and are on the frontlines in coastal communities, on sparse agricultural lands, where water and other natural resources are dwindling because they are, of course, the natural resource managers for their households and their families. Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities and girls and women are at increased risk for dropping out of schools, violence including sexual violence, exhaustion and ill-health due to the impact of climate change.

In recent times we have also witnessed the unparalleled rise of religious fundamentalism and extremism in all parts of the world. This has led to attempts to roll back significant policy successes in women's rights both at the national level, as well as the international level where governments cite religious and cultural traditions in order to curb the realization of equality for women. This is a relatively new phenomenon. Because twenty years ago, when all member states agreed to Beijing, to

Cairo and to Vienna, we were all still belonging to different faiths, and different cultures. But twenty years later, women's rights and human rights have suddenly become incompatible with our faiths and cultures. Moreover in many of these fundamentalist contexts, women's human rights defenders, who remain critical to protecting and preserving human rights, are vulnerable to extreme violence and sadly – even death. Safety and equal access to justice must also be ensured for women's human rights defenders.

In recent months we have experienced that it is becoming difficult to discuss issues of human rights, especially of sexual and reproductive health and rights – because these topics have become divisive and troublesome to handle during inter-governmental meetings. Clearly some special interest groups have that luxury of dismissing these troublesome realities of women. We, on the other hand, do not have this luxury. Our NGO partners report that: in Pakistan, 75% of women living in rural areas deliver at home and do not have access to emergency obstetric care. In Mongolia, 75% of maternal deaths occur among nomadic herders, unregistered migrants and unemployed women. In India, 92 women are raped every day and 1 in every 4 married women experience physical or sexual violence by their husbands. In Nepal, 27% of married women have an unmet need for contraceptive services. In Bangladesh 128 out of 1000 adolescent girls give birth. We need each and everyone of you to be able to stand up for women and girls not only your countries but for all women and girls across the globe. We cannot do this without your support.

We must be cognisant of the fact that sexual and reproductive health and rights are inextricable from economic, socio-cultural and political rights and must be recognized as necessary ingredients to achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and sustainable development. Without autonomy over bodies, we cannot achieve autonomy over our lives.

Every individual must have the right to decide whom we can love, whom we can have consensual relations with and when, and whom we can enter into marriage with and when.

We must have the right to decide how many children to have if at all, when to have them and how frequently.

We must have the right to a life free from all forms of discrimination and violence regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

These are indeed challenging times for all of us. But challenging times require us to be bold and to be able to vision a future beyond the current turmoil. It requires all of us to rise out of our comfort zones, and commit to forging a path for the future. In all recent post-2015 negotiations member states have constantly come forward to say that they are looking for a transformative agenda; an agenda which will be able to harness these challenges and yet deliver development solutions to the issues we see proliferating our landscape. How will transformation occur if we are not able to traverse difficult issues? How will transformation happen, if we allow all member states to sink down to the lowest common denominators, rather than aspire to the highest ideals? How will transformation take place if we are not able to identify a comprehensive set of actionable indicators which is able to translate the hopes for a visionary agenda into reality?

We, too, as women's rights organisations share your desire for a transformative agenda. For us to address these challenges adequately we must be able to bring not only economic change but also social and cultural change to the societies we live in. We must be able to expand our minds and our hearts to include the most marginalised populations into our vision.

A country's sustainable development indicators are best reflected in how it takes care of its most marginalised communities and is able to include all key stakeholders, especially those with critical voices. We call upon all governments to join us in our efforts for creating a just, equal and equitable world which takes into consideration the needs of all its constituencies and values all people. We need a development justice model that will deliver sustainable, just and equitable development.

6 March 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing
Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a
Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Speakers and Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to thank your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, distinguished panellists and all of you for your participation and valuable contributions.

As we conclude our debate today, I wish to highlight some of the key messages from our discussions.

Many participants emphasized the critical importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in attaining sustainable development.

Indeed, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Goal 5 in particular, were described as an “ideal opportunity” to accelerate efforts to empower women and girls.

However, beyond a stand-alone goal, many emphasized the need to integrate the gender perspective as a crosscutting issue in all dimensions of the new development agenda.

The value of education, including lifelong learning opportunities and vocational training for women, was emphasized. Girls must have access to education and be encouraged to study, including in non-traditional areas, such as science and technology, as one of the ways to “shatter the glass ceiling”. We must also tackle the challenge of violent attacks against girls accessing education to ensure they are able to study, free from fear.

Participants called for an expansion of decent work opportunities for women to improve their livelihoods and contribution to sustainable development. Speakers noted that economies with a high percentage of women in the labour force are ones that use their capacities the best. In this regard, the need to ensure access to affordable credit by women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises was underscored.

Participants stressed the need to take measures to enhance women’s access to and control over economic resources, as well as their full participation in governance and decision-making.

Many speakers noted that the tenuous situation of women, girls and children in conflict areas is of deep concern, as is the notable absence of women in leadership roles in conflict prevention, management and resolution efforts.

The need to protect sexual and reproductive healthcare rights was further highlighted as a fundamental right that must be upheld. In this context, policies that enhance reproductive health education, can contribute to women's empowerment.

Discriminatory laws and practices, social norms, customs, and unequal access to justice are barriers that continue to hold back women. The importance of addressing these structural causes of gender-based inequalities was underscored by many speakers.

Speakers went on to note the unique and cumbersome hurdles faced by poor, less-educated and otherwise marginalized women. The challenges of women in rural settings were highlighted as being especially formidable by many participants, who noted that the time-consuming nature of acquiring basic household necessities often means that rural women are further hindered from participating in political and economic life.

Women are often responsible for a disproportionate amount of the care work done in the home, including raising children. It is essential to recognize the vital importance of unpaid work.

The importance of paid maternity leave, guarantee of employment after childbirth and reliable childcare were emphasized by many participants as being critical to enabling women to meet their full potential outside the home.

Distinguished delegates,

As we conclude our debate today, let me again thank you all for your valuable contributions on this critically important topic. I will transmit a President's Summary containing the key messages and proposals made for advancing gender equality and empowerment of women to Member States and stakeholders in due course.

I thank you for your participation and kind attention.