

**United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-seventh session
4 - 15 March 2013
New York**

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

**Key gender equality issues to be reflected in the post-2015
development framework**

**PUTTING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE CENTER OF THE
POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

by

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Madame Moderator, Irina Velichko, Anita Nayar, Dr. Caren Grown, ladies and gentlemen.

I'm very pleased to be here today to share with you some reflections about the post-2015 development framework, and how we can ensure gender equality and women's rights are at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda.

I am speaking today on behalf of UN Women. I also co-chair the UNDG MDG Taskforce with UNDP, and am a member of the Secretary-General's informal senior coordination group of four ASGs. Ms. Amina Mohammed, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on post-2015 Development Planning, was to have been on the panel today. She has been called to a regional consultation, but I will try to also cover some of the points she would have raised.

My remarks today will focus on three key areas: where we are now in this process; some reflections on lessons learned from the MDGs that we need to take forward into the post-2015 agenda; and what a post-2015 agenda that has gender equality at its heart might look like.

As you know, this is **an extremely involved process**. I don't think we could have created a more complex process even if we had tried to do so!

Developing the framework is of course the prerogative of Member States, and the role of the UN system is to support this process and provide the best possible technical advice. As the moderator has already noted, a number of concurrent streams are already underway. As called for by the Rio +20 outcome document, the Open Working Group is now established and will very shortly begin to work on a proposal for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN Task Team, which set out the UN's position on the post-2015 framework before Rio in its report "Realizing the Future We Want for All", will provide technical support to the Open Working Group, which already has before it the UN Task Team report together with the outcomes of a survey of Member States on priority issues to be addressed in the SDGs.

The independent High-Level Panel established by the UN Secretary-General has met three times, in New York, London and Monrovia, and will meet again in Bali at the end of this month, with its report due to the Secretary-General at the end of May 2013. As indicated in the Monrovia communique, the Panel is likely to focus on extreme poverty, job generation, and sustainable production and consumption, as well as on accelerating achievement of the MDGs.

Critical issues for implementation of the post-2015 agenda, including partnerships and financing, will also be discussed at the Bali meeting.

In addition, the UNDG is facilitating eleven thematic global consultations, as well as over 70 national consultations and outreach via www.worldwewant2015.org. An initial report from the first cut of these consultations will be released in about two and a half weeks and individual reports from many of the thematic consultations are already available online on the website I mentioned. UN Regional Economic Commissions are also organizing regional consultations, and will produce their own report from these discussions.

It's undoubtedly going to be challenging to bring all of these different threads together into one narrative and a single set of goals and targets. Of course this will ultimately be the task of Member States. But with the Open Working Group likely to report next year, it's clear that all of us are in this for the long haul. With 2.5 years still to go, we will need to pace ourselves. It's for this reason that I believe we should be cautious about moving too quickly to try to identify goals and targets. The narrative has to come first, and it must be compelling, aim high, and take us forward from the principles set out in the Millennium Declaration towards a more transformative agenda.

It's also going to be challenging to ensure not just procedural, but most critically, substantive convergence between the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda. As Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has said, and I quote: *"It is essential that the processes on Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda are coherent with each other. This will enable Member States to define a single global development framework with sustainable development at its core."* And there is a tension between those who prefer a MDG plus approach that merely extends with the existing goals, and the increasing number of people around the world who want to see a truly transformative framework that is universal and applies to all.

At the same time, I strongly believe this very open and inclusive global consultation process is critical to ensure the accountability and credibility of the post-2015 agenda. The legitimacy of the future development framework will rest, in large part, on the extent to which the process as well as the framework itself is rights-based. In other words, that there is broad, inclusive consultation and engagement by all stakeholders and societies and that the voices of those who are most marginalized and excluded are heard. I also hope that the broad consultations taking place will make governments conscious that they are under scrutiny, aware that once

intergovernmental negotiations get underway, they are taking place under the gaze, and very high expectations, of the whole world.

However, before we can really look forward to what the post-2015 framework might contain, we need to look back and **reflect on the achievements and shortcomings of the MDGs**.

There's no doubt that the MDGs have been very influential in shaping the development landscape. While initial take-up was slow, over time they garnered broad political – and considerable financial – support.

They were concrete and time-bound, which helped to galvanize action on many fronts, including for promotion of gender equality and women's rights. They've been adapted to suit local contexts and needs, and used as a measure of progress, in many countries. And they are simple and straightforward to communicate.

But as we know, the MDGs have also been strongly criticized on a number of important grounds. National averages obscure inequalities within countries, global targets were interpreted as national targets, and there is an imbalance between the responsibilities of the South outlined in Goals 1-7, and the commitments of the North, set out in Goal 8. Most critically from a gender perspective, Goal 3 is quite superficial and does not include many aspects of gender inequality and the discrimination women experience – in employment and in broader economic engagement, as caregivers, in decision-making at all levels, and in the peace-building process. Most critically, violence against women, one of the most significant human rights violations, was not included at all.

That said, the MDGs are the goals we currently have in place. And as we have heard many times over the past week, with just 1,000 days to go, it is critical that we work really hard to accelerate actions to achieve the MDGs, in particular goals such as reducing maternal mortality where we are seriously lagging. We need to continue to focus our best efforts on this, and not always immediately turn our attention to the post-2015 agenda. The MDG Acceleration Framework, adopted in over 40 countries with the strong support of Governments, is a very positive indication of the continued commitment to the current MDG goals, including Goal 3 on gender equality.

That being said, the world looks very different now than in 2000 when the MDGs were developed. The successive crises we have experienced in the 21st century – the economic crisis

and financial austerity, food and fuel crises, high levels of unemployment especially among young people, the impact of climate change, increasing conflict and fragility in many societies, rising inequalities within and between countries, and failures of governance and accountability – are changing the way we think about sustainable development, and the well-being and resilience of individuals, communities and societies. The call for a new, transformative development paradigm has moved from the fringes to the mainstream of our discussions about what kind of future we want to see for women and men, boys and girls in countries everywhere.

So, what would a **development framework** that builds on the successes of the MDGs, recognizes and responds to emerging challenges and **that has at its heart gender equality and women’s empowerment** look like?

In line with the principles set out in the UN Task Team report “Realizing the Future We Want for All”, there appears to be an emerging consensus that the future development agenda must be rights-based, and build on existing normative agreements and commitments; that it must be universal, address challenges that know no borders, and apply to all countries regardless of their development status; that it must be transformative, and directly tackle inequalities and structural discrimination at all levels and in all forms, and that it must be holistic and comprehensive, and integrate all dimensions of sustainable and human development, for people and planetary boundaries. Also, and most critically, it must be accountable and transparent, and enable ordinary people and civil society to hold governments to account.

There are also positive signs when it comes to the positioning of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the post-2015 framework. The Rio+20 outcome document recognizes that gender equality and women’s empowerment are vital for sustainable development. In preparation for the 2014 Development Cooperation Forum, participants in last December’s Vienna Policy Dialogue on Gender Equality called for a standalone gender equality goal and for gender to be integrated into all aspects of the agenda. The meeting recognized that addressing gender equality effectively remains a complex undertaking, and that it remains a challenge to secure adequate financing for gender equality.

At the Monrovia meeting last month, the High-Level Panel noted the centrality of gender equality to its discussions. And the recent Chairperson’s Statement from the Inequalities Consultation held in Copenhagen in February stated that the post-2015 agenda should include not only a universal goal for gender equality and empowerment and advancement of women and

girls, but also for substantive mainstreaming of gender inequality and other dominant inequalities in all areas, through disaggregated targets and indicators.

This is very encouraging. But we have more to do to develop and agree on what a gender goal might actually look like. UN Women held an Expert Group Meeting late last year, and it was clear that while there was not yet agreement about the shape or substance of a standalone gender equality goal among the experts who participated, there was consensus that gender equality and the normative commitments we already have in place including CEDAW must constitute the “minimum standards” for all goals in the post-2015 agenda.

Since then, UN Women has done some more thinking about the content of a gender equality goal. We are advocating for a substantive standalone gender equality goal that is firmly grounded in women’s rights, and based on existing human rights norms and standards, including those contained in CEDAW. A standalone gender goal must be comprehensive, avoid repeating the narrow focus of MDG3, and include the specific gender issues that other goals and targets will not address.

First, the new framework and gender goal must aim to **end harm**, and **eliminate violence against women and girls**. The many recent and terrible examples of violence against women and girls, coupled with systemic failures of law enforcement and justice systems, are evident in all societies and at all levels of development. As has been said all week, violence against women and girls is a human rights violation that impedes women from contributing to and shaping the societies they live in.

As Madame Bachelet said on Monday at the opening of CSW 57 “the time to act is now”. And as she also said, ending violence against women is indeed the “missing MDG” that must be included in any new development framework. One possible way to do this, which is already under discussion, might be through a personal security or even better a freedom from violence goal which explicitly addresses violence against women and girls, in addition to a standalone gender equality goal.

Secondly, the framework and goal must **expand women’s choices and opportunities**, including by ensuring women’s access to education and decent work; equal access to and control over resources and assets; access to social protection; protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; and a fairer sharing of burden of unpaid work that women do.

Thirdly, it must ensure that women **participate fully in decision-making**, in all contexts and at all levels – in households, communities and countries.

Finally, it would **craft better indicators**, to get at the heart of what needs to change for a transformative agenda. And it would assess progress across all other goals and indicators, by **disaggregating targets and indicators** by sex, age, income, location and other factors. As this is still a work in progress, I will be very interested to hear **your views** about our vision for a gender equality goal.

As you may know, UN Women, together with UNICEF, has been co-leading the global thematic consultation on inequalities. In addition to the Chairperson's Statement which explicitly calls for a gender equality goal, the final report from the consultation recommends the inclusion of an inequalities goal. It has been suggested that this may be used to argue that gender inequality should be folded into a broader inequalities goal.

But let's be clear about this. We need a gender equality goal, as well as other key goals that address universal issues, such as inequality, peace and security, freedom from violence and so on. Because only then will we have a development agenda that is fully grounded in human rights, that can foster a world free of discrimination and violence, where women and men, girls and boys, can live in dignity, free of fear and want, with the freedom and capabilities to make their own choices about how they live their lives.

So while there are certainly positive signs, we still have a long way to go. We will need to be vigilant if we are to ensure the post-2015 agenda embodies a vision for the kind of future we want to see, and that it is implementable, measurable and accountable.

I strongly believe that if all of us, governments, civil society, the private sector, and ordinary people, continue to work together, we can create such a framework. I can assure you that UN Women is fully committed to working with all of you to do just that.

Thank you.