



Sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly

Item 23 (b), Women in development

Introductory statement by

Ms. Lakshmi Puri

**Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director for
Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships
UN-Women**

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Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address the Second Committee of the General Assembly on the item “women in development”, and to present the report of the Secretary-General that has been prepared by UN-Women for this item (document A/66/219). I congratulate you, Chair, and the other Bureau members on your election, and assure you of the full support of UN-Women in the discharge of your responsibilities.

The establishment of UN-Women in 2010 demonstrates the strong commitment of the General Assembly to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women across all three key pillars of our work – development, peace and security and human rights; and also human development. Similarly, at last year’s high-level plenary meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, Member States recognized that gender equality, the empowerment of women, women’s full enjoyment of all human rights and the eradication of poverty are essential for social and economic development and the achievement of all MDGs.

We have an extensive record of commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment. We also have a strong evidence base to demonstrate that gender-sensitive approaches, together with women’s full participation in political and economic processes at all levels translates into more sustainable solutions to the challenges the global community is faced with, such as those of economic growth, food security, climate change, conflict resolution, or poverty eradication.

A number of recent flagship publications confirm this point. Our own UN-Women Progress of the World’s Women report *‘In Pursuit of Justice’* demonstrates that effective systems of justice are a foundation for women’s economic empowerment, in areas such as formal and informal employment, land rights and property ownership. The report also sets out the progress on MDG3 and finds that despite some progress much remains to be done and secondly it shows how success in MDG3 is critical for the achievement of all other development goals including poverty and hunger eradication. FAO’s *‘State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011’* shows that the number of hungry people in the world could be reduced by 12 to 17 percent if women had the same access to productive resources as men, thereby increasing yields on their farms. Closing the gender gap in agriculture could generate significant gains for this sector and society as a whole. The World Bank’s 2012 *‘World Development Report’*, on gender equality and development, points to the gains that have been made in terms of women’s rights, education, health and access to jobs. But it also highlights a number of priority areas for closing remaining gaps – such as increasing women’s access to economic opportunities.

During the general debate in the Third Committee last week, many speakers drew attention to the impact of global trends, crises and challenges on gender equality and women’s empowerment. We also heard that promotion of gender equality is not only the

right thing to do, it is also smart economics. Attention to gender equality perspectives is therefore crucial if effective solutions are to be devised for the benefit of everyone.

The Second Committee considers every other year the sub-item on “women in development”, as part of its discussion on the eradication of poverty. I suggest that this consideration should be primarily a catalytic opportunity to tease out some of the aspects that need to be made visible in the Second Committee’s debates on all its agenda items. National and global economic and financial processes can slow or accelerate the achievement of gender equality. Economic policies are not gender-neutral. Macroeconomics, trade, debt, agriculture, sustainable development – women and men are affected differently by the decisions we make, depending on whether those decisions take into account women’s and men’s actual access to employment, natural resources, credit and technologies, or the division of labour between women and men, within households and within the wider community. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are critical to all three aspects of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental, and hence need to be addressed clearly in the Rio plus 20 preparations and outcome.

Consideration of gender equality must therefore not stop at today’s discussion – to the contrary. I encourage all delegations to actively reflect gender issues across the spectrum of matters you are seized of, and how women can benefit from the policy recommendations in the subsequent draft proposals that you will take up.

The report that I have the honour to introduce (A/66/219) follows on work we presented to this Committee at past sessions. Two years ago, we paid particular attention to the impact of the financial and economic crises as well as to women’s access to full employment and decent work, and to social protection. We also presented the *2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, which dealt with access to and control over economic and financial resources – a topic that was especially timely in the context of the economic and financial crisis, the food and fuel crises and the challenges of climate change. The *World Survey* illustrated the importance of examining women’s access to economic and financial resources in a broad sense, including resources generated at national level through budgets, trade, and development assistance; financial services such as savings, credit, remittance transfers and insurance; employment; land, property and other productive resources; and social protection. It pointed out the need for appropriate gender-sensitive responses to the multiple crises to minimize the negative impacts on women and take advantage of the opportunity to develop positive trends. These issues remain highly topical today.

The current report carries the analysis forward and examines gender-responsive budgeting as a good practice in strengthening gender perspectives in national development strategies. Evidence suggests that gender-responsive budgeting has helped to:

- address the gaps between Government commitments on achieving gender equality goals and the allocation of resources;

- build the planning and budgeting capacities of Government agencies, especially in the context of budget reform;
- promote accountability on the use of public resources to women; and
- increase the transparency of policy processes through the participation of civil society.

There are currently over 60 country initiatives for gender-responsive budgeting in all regions. A number of UN entities, including UN-Women, are supporting these efforts. And several Member States in the Third Committee, including Bangladesh, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, and Pakistan referred to steps taken to pilot or expand gender-responding budgeting. A 2009 study conducted under the auspices of the UN Economic Commission for Europe summarized work done in that region.

Gender equality is a key to achieving development goals. Integration of gender perspectives in national development strategies and resource allocations is recognized as a necessary strategy to reach this goal. Gender equality and women's empowerment is indispensable for more inclusive and equitable development and growth which is the need of the hour for efficiency as well as effectiveness of development strategies. Gender-responsive budgeting can help Governments decide whether and how policies need to be adjusted and where resources need to be reallocated for the achievement of gender equality.

We have analyzed action taken by Member States, and support provided by the United Nations system and donor countries to integrate gender perspectives into such national development strategies. This analysis expands on the work from two years ago, and on the analysis we presented in 2007 on gender equality perspectives in poverty reduction strategy papers. This time, we have found that States have indeed taken a wide range of measures to ensure that gender equality issues are addressed in national strategies and programmes.

They have:

- identified gender issues as a priority or a cross-cutting issue that is systematically mainstreamed in all stages of policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- integrated a gender perspective into sectoral development plans;
- ensured the alignment between national action plans on gender equality and national development strategies;
- undertaken gender analysis of national policies and programmes to identify critical areas for action and appropriate strategies; and
- built the capacity of line ministries and the national machineries for gender equality as well as their staff on gender mainstreaming through training, providing guidelines and developing tools.

The United Nations makes concerted efforts to support Member States to integrate a gender perspective in their development strategies, including through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), a common strategic

framework for the operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level. We have reviewed progress to strengthen gender perspectives within UNDAFs since their first roll-out in the late 1990s. The most recent study found that gender equality was highlighted as a cross-cutting theme and gender equality outcomes were specifically delineated in slightly over half of the 51 frameworks reviewed. All the assessments were found to cite relevant gender-differentiated data, especially data on women's health and girls' education.

And lastly, we have reviewed measures taken by donors and bilateral development partners in integrating a gender perspective into all development cooperation work including official development assistance. This is especially important due to the significant changes in the aid architecture landscape since the adoption in 2005 of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, and as we move towards the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in November 2011 in Busan, Republic of Korea. We suggest that the forthcoming High-level Forum offers an opportunity for Member States to go beyond the political affirmation of the centrality of gender equality to nationally owned development assistance, and move towards integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid management system and building capacities of national Governments, in order to implement gender-responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring. Gender equality and women's empowerment should be a strong criteria for aid effectiveness. In this regard, the IDA-16 allocation for gender equality is to be welcomed and, if properly used, could well prove transformative in recipient countries.

Gender equality and gender-responsive planning and budgeting are also a cross-cutting priority in the LDCs, in their PRSPs and in the international aid and support architecture in the Istanbul Plan of Action for the LDCs for the Decade of 2011-2020.

Based on the analysis of the work of these stakeholders, we conclude that, despite efforts made, progress has been uneven and gender perspectives are only partially being integrated into key instruments for national development.

Consequently, the report puts forward recommendations to strengthen gender mainstreaming efforts in national development strategies, sectoral plans, as well as in development cooperation work carried out by United Nations entities. Second, we recommend steps to enhance participation and accountability, which are crucial for bringing about change. In that regard, we emphasize the role of national mechanisms for gender equality as well as of civil society, especially women's organizations, in national development planning processes and across all sectors. Third, more needs to be done to improve resource allocation and tracking of such resources. Such resources need to be provided and tracked in line ministries, by donors, and the United Nations system for the full implementation of their commitments on gender equality. And last, more work is needed to improve measures and tools for gender mainstreaming, including effective application of gender-responsive budgeting, systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data, and development of gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and reporting on progress and impacts.

Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

These remain difficult and uncertain economic and financial times. One year after its establishment, UN-Women is seriously under-resourced, hampering our ability to deliver on the expectations of stakeholders. We are working to expand our resource base, including by reaching out to non-traditional funding sources. I extend our sincere appreciation to those Member States that have provided voluntary contributions. We look forward to your support so that we can indeed deliver prompt, concrete results.

Thank you.