"Promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in cities"

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I would like to begin by congratulating the Seoul Foundation of Women and the Family, under the auspices of the Seoul Metropolitan Government, for taking the initiative to organize this important conference and for the many other initiatives it is taking to ensure a focus on women in cities. I am honoured to make this keynote address.

Gender equality and empowerment of women is a development goal in its own right and is essential for the achievement of all other development goals. The positive links between gender equality and empowerment of women and effective and sustainable development in all areas are clear, including in relation to urban development, human settlements, poverty eradication and improvement of the quality of life for all citizens. Women represent half the resources and half the potentials of families, communities and nations. Women are important agents of change in all contexts, including in cities.

Background

The goal of gender equality and empowerment of women has been endorsed by the Member States of the United Nations in many different contexts over the past 60 years, including in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by 189 Member States in consensus at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

The actions required to ensure gender equality and the fundamental rights of both women and men have been elaborated over the past three decades through the world conferences on women organized by the United Nations. The Beijing Platform for Action clearly established the responsibility of governments for promoting equality between women and men and highlighted the importance of protecting and promoting women's human rights and facilitating their empowerment.

Today, 185 Member States of the United Nations have also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW), the human rights treaty which was adopted by the United Nations in 1979. The Convention addresses the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women, in both public and private spheres of life. Both direct and indirect discrimination is prohibited in the convention, including through laws, policies or programmes and conduct which may appear to be gender-neutral but which nonetheless have disproportionate negative effects on women. The Convention requires not only the development of adequate policy and legal frameworks to protect and promote women's rights but also attention to the effective implementation of these frameworks.

Following the Millennium Summit in 2000, the United Nations adopted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) on the basis of the internationally accepted development goals established over the past decade, including in the Platform for Action. The third MDG is focused on gender equality and empowerment of women, with indicators on education, employment and participation in decision-making. While it is important that one MDG explicitly addresses gender equality, attention to the needs, priorities and contributions of women as well as men must be identified and addressed in the implementation of all the MDGs.

One Millennium Development Goal gives attention to urban development - MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability. It has a specific target on cities: Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Implementation of this MDG must also include attention to gender perspectives.

The framework of the MDGs has effectively mobilized governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and has enhanced the focus on implementation and reporting on the globally agreed development goals. Although attention to gender equality perspectives has not been adequate in implementation of the MDGs to date, it is important to recognize the opportunities the MDGs provide for increasing the visibility of gender equality issues in national development planning processes, enhancing monitoring and reporting on achievement of gender equality commitments, facilitating development of alliances with new partners, and improving access to resources.
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A dual strategy for promoting gender equality

Achievement of the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women requires systematic attention to the situation of women as well as men in all policy areas. The Beijing Platform for Action called for a dual strategy – i.e. efforts to incorporate attention to women in all policies, programmes and activities (gender mainstreaming), alongside targeted activities for women.

The gender mainstreaming strategy requires that the contributions, priorities and needs of women as well as men are considered in the beginning of planning processes. This is necessary in order to influence the direction of development so that *both* women and men can be involved and fully benefit. Gender mainstreaming ensures that the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is the responsibility of all

actors across all sectors. An important first step in gender mainstreaming is to carry out gender analysis. No decisions should be taken or resources allocated without analysis of the existing roles and contributions of women and men, and of the potential impact of planned actions on both women and men. Capacity to effectively utilize such gender analysis must be developed as required competence at all levels of staff in all areas of work.

Specific targeted actions for women also remain very critical as a complement to gender mainstreaming, given the serious remaining gaps and challenges to gender equality and empowerment of women in many areas which need to be specifically addressed.

Global assessment of progress in achieving gender equality

Recent global assessments of progress in gender equality and empowerment of women have indicated many achievements over the past decade, but also serious obstacles and challenges in every area. There is a huge gap between policy commitments at global and national levels and practice on the ground. More than 60 years since the founding of the United Nations, and more than thirty years since the first world conference on women, we know very well what needs to be done to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women. The challenge is ensuring effective implementation of the commitments to action that have already been made in many different contexts.

Among the positive achievements is the fact that, in almost all countries around the world, policies and strategies for gender equality have now been developed and important human rights instruments, such as CEDAW, have been ratified. A broad range of mechanisms have been established at national level to promote and monitor gender equality (such as women's ministries, gender equality commissions, ombudspersons offices and parliamentary networks). Important processes, such as gender evaluations or gender audits have been initiated in many countries.

Even though significant gains have been made in these areas, there is still much room for improvement. Policies and strategies on gender equality and empowerment of women are only useful, and human rights instruments can only be effective, if there is systematic and effective implementation and follow-up. The establishment of specific mechanisms to work on gender equality and empowerment of women can only have a positive impact if these mechanisms are provided with clear mandates, adequate resources and appropriate political support. This requires political will, resources, follow-up and accountability, which in many contexts is still lacking.

One important positive development is the significant increase in women's organizations and networks over the past decade. Women have developed a relatively powerful political voice in this manner in many contexts. However, it is important not to accept that women should only be heard through their separate organizations. Women should also be equitably represented, and have access to decision-making, in all

organizations. There is evidence from all parts of the world that women remain under-represented in decision-making in both formal and informal contexts, and that, as a result, gender equality concerns are often neglected.

Other critical gaps and challenges which have been identified at the global level include the persistent, and in some cases increasing, incidence of violence against women; the unequal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men; and persistent stereotypes on the roles of women and men. Discussions at this conference will certainly highlight why these issues have strong implications in the area of urban development, human settlements and cities.

Gender-based violence is a serious development constraint that inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men. A recent in-depth study of the United Nations Secretary-General on all forms of violence against women highlighted the enormity of the problem in all regions of the world. Violence against women cuts across all geographic, class, wealth, age, racial, ethnic and political divides. It requires a comprehensive response which includes actions to prevent violence, to prosecute and punish perpetrators and to provide remedies and relief to victims.

Unequal sharing of family responsibilities has implications for women's access to education, employment, public office, training opportunities and participation in voluntary activities. Women are constrained by inadequate sharing of family responsibilities and cannot devote as much time to these activities as their male counterparts. The institutional environments are also not always conducive to women`s participation, because activity schedules and lack of child care facilities can cause conflicts with family obligations.

Attitudes towards gender equality and empowerment of women among the general public and within bureaucracies have not changed at the same pace as policy, legal and institutional frameworks. Stereotypical attitudes and practices are working to the disadvantage of women and girls in all areas of society – in families, educational institutions, government bureaucracies at all levels, religious institutions, cultural institutions, sporting organizations, workplaces, political bodies and in the media. Such stereotypical attitudes and behaviours can be difficult and/or sensitive to identify and address.

Negative attitudes and practices are often accepted as the norm by both women and men. Change will require significant efforts and take time. Many stereotypes have been internalized through upbringing, education and the media and, as a result, women and girls can have negative or low expectations and self-images. Women and girls themselves therefore need to be specifically targeted with information and awareness raising campaigns, and their empowerment promoted. Media too has a critical role to play.

Addressing stereotypes will also require an explicit focus on men and boys. Promotion of gender equality cannot be done in a vacuum by women alone – men and

boys must be involved in the process of change. The attitudes and behaviour of men and boys can have significant impact on the lives and well-being of women and girls. In many areas of the world, these impacts are far from positive, including in relation to violence, exclusion from decision-making, harassment in the workplace, and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Increasing efforts are being made to engage men and boys in the work for gender equality and empowerment of women. These efforts will have little effect unless they explicitly identify and address areas of continuing male privilege which hinder gender equality and empowerment of women.

A further constraint identified in the review of implementation was the lack of comparable, reliable statistics with which to measure progress in most areas. The need for identifying indicators of progress has also been highlighted.

Women in cities

All the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action have relevance for the issue of women in cities, including poverty, education, health, economy, decision-making, human rights, violence, conflict, environment, media, the girl child and institutional arrangements. There are no specific references to women in cities in the Beijing Platform for Action and its follow-up but a number of references to important elements of the urban environment, such as water, sanitation, transport and health care.

During the 1970s and 1980s women and urban development was given considerable attention among researchers and policy-makers. In 1994, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) held a conference on "Women and cities: housing, facilities and urban environment". The European Charter on Women in Cities was developed in 1995. At the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), in Istanbul in 1996, the City Summit placed great importance on women's concerns and led to a series of commitments by national governments within the framework of the Habitat Programme. In Paragraph 46 of the Habitat Programme, governments committed themselves to: "*developing programmes and practices to encourage the full and equal participation of women in the planning of and the decision-making process involving human settlements, and the reinforcement of those decisions.*"

The first World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities brought together more than 500 city mayors. The Assembly's Declaration invited city association members to implement the Habitat Programme on a local level, committing themselves especially to: "*promoting and ensuring the full participation of women in the decision-making process at a municipal level by taking necessary measures for them to share power and authority*". In this region, ESCAP has done considerable work on women in cities, including in collaboration with women mayors.

Urban advantages and challenges for women

The urban environment offers many advantages for women; but there are also many challenges. Cities can be sites of both empowerment and exploitation for women.

Compared with rural areas, many cities offer better facilities and services, such as water, transport, education and health care. They provide more opportunities for social, economic, cultural and political participation. Women can also usually access more diverse employment opportunities in cities. There are many possibilities to engage in community politics at different levels. Enhanced access to information, including through the media and new information and communication technologies (ICT), is another advantage for women. In cities women can also more easily access sports, recreation and cultural facilities.

However, it is important to realize that women are not a homogeneous group and there are significant differences and inequalities between groups of women living in cities. The needs, priorities and contributions of different groups of women, such as women of different age, race, class, marital status, and women belonging to different social, ethnic and religious groups, must be recognized and taken into consideration. Groups of particularly vulnerable women, including poor women, HIV/AIDS affected women, disabled women and migrant women, must also be given particular attention.

Urban poverty can negate the potential advantages of cities for women. Women in poor communities do not have the same access to infrastructure, services and employment opportunities as affluent women in the same cities. Poor urban women are more likely to become victims of sexual violence or human trafficking. Urban poverty is linked to HIV transmission and reduces the likelihood of treatment. Street children, orphans, prostitutes and poor women in urban areas are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection.

A number of researchers have also drawn attention to what they call the "the return of the so-called "serving classes" in all global cities around the world, made up largely of migrants, including migrant women", most of whom remain largely invisible to policy makers and planners. The growth in the demand for highly paid professionals in cities, and the consumption patterns of such high income professionals, has generated a demand for low-paid service workers, including for example low paid clerical and blue-collar service workers, such as janitors, servicemen and restaurant workers. This can lead to increased social polarization in cities.

Some researchers have also drawn attention to a growing divide between women within cities. The expansion in demand for high level professionals has brought with it an increase in the employment of women in professional jobs which require long work hours and intense engagement. This places heavy demands on their time and requires new types of support for coping with household tasks and families. A new demand for a range of household workers, particularly maids and nannies, has grown. A growing share of household tasks are relocated to the market: they are bought directly as goods and services or indirectly through hired labor. Many of these activities become "informalized" and are low-paid with little security and social benefits and often dominated by migrant women.

Infrastructure and services

Human settlements – housing and communities - in urban areas involve many important elements, such as health care services, child care, education facilities, and transportation systems. All facilities, services and infrastructure in cities need to be considered from the perspective of women as well as men.

Let me start with access of women and girls to *education*. Girls have higher enrollment rates and cultural acceptance of their right to education is more widespread in cities. However, many girls in poor urban areas also drop out early. The reasons for the low retention and achievement levels of many girls in urban schools are similar to those in rural areas: lack of resources, early marriage and pregnancy, household responsibilities, and unwillingness of parents to invest in the hidden costs of education (fees, transport, etc) for girls. Data on within-city differentials reveal dramatic differences in access to education and levels of achievement of girls between slums and wealthier neighbourhoods in many cities.

Health services are also generally more readily available for women in urban areas. For poor women, however, lack of time and money, and lack of decision-making power within families, can negate these advantages. There are significant inequalities between women in access to health services in cities, even in very wealthy countries.

Support by skilled attendants and access to emergency care are factors in explaining why maternal mortality is generally lower in urban areas. Women in cities are three times more likely to deliver with skilled health personnel than women in rural areas. However, poor women in slums are less likely to deliver with a skilled birth attendant than women in other urban areas. The reasons why poor urban women do not seek maternal care include poverty, other more pressing household expenses, other demands on their time, and the absence of supporting infrastructure such as transport and childcare. Poor women are significantly less likely to use contraceptives and to have higher fertility rates than their more affluent counterparts.

Inclusive health policies and programmes, accompanied by clear targeting of services and resources to disadvantaged groups, are needed to improve the health status of all women in cities.

Child-care and other services is another critical issue for women in cities. Access to services is certainly much better in cities and towns than in rural areas. As in other areas, access is significantly less secure in poorer parts of urban areas. The stereotyped perception that child-care, and care of others such as older persons, the sick and the disabled, is the responsibility of women persist in all parts of the world. Many well-intentioned efforts therefore focus solely on women and disregard the fact that men are parents and should have the same responsibilities as women for caring activities in families.

The lack of progress in promoting more equal sharing of domestic responsibilities between women and men, as called for in the Platform for Action in 1995, means that the

lack of quality child care and other care services in urban areas primarily affects women, hindering their education, training and employment opportunities, which in term impact negatively on their potential to provide income and ensure sustainable livelihoods. New forms of child-care, and care of older persons, the sick and disabled, need to be developed which are based on the notion of the shared responsibility of women and men for caring in families.

Water is recognized as a basic need or public good, and as a human right for all. Improved access to reliable supplies of good quality water and sanitation facilities is a well established advantage of living in cities. Many poor city dwellers around the world do not, however, have this guaranteed access to water and sanitation. Almost half of all urban residents in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are victims of diseases associated with poor water and *sanitation f*acilities, such as diarrhea diseases and worm infections. Poor sewerage and drainage also contribute to the transmission of malaria, dengue fever, and yellow fever.

Poor women living in slums are usually disproportionately affected by inadequate water and sanitation facilities. Not only do they bear the burden of collecting water from standpipes or vendors, often queuing for long hours from early morning, but they suffer considerably from deficient sanitation facilities. In poor urban communities women often have to do their washing at communal washing slabs.

Although the location and type of water facilities is of importance to women, they are still often not fully involved in decision-making on water in urban areas. If they have no voice, they may be negatively impacted by decisions, such as location of facilities, opening times and pricing policies. Water pricing policies may have significant implications for women. Even if women place high priority on clean water they may not be able to pay for improved supplies. Women may be significantly affected by privatization of water services. Increased prices may force them to use unsafe sources of water, or to reduce the use of water, with negative health impacts for their families.

The implications of inadequate services for women are considerable. When a household's services are cut off because of non-payment, it is the women of the household who have to cope with the consequences. When services are shared in common, for example communal taps or toilets, it is usually women who take responsibility for maintenance and cleaning.

In most parts of the world – because of persistent inequalities in sharing domestic responsibilities - women use water for most of the domestic work at home, such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children, the elderly and the disabled. In this context, they are important agents of environmental sustainability, educating their children and families on the importance of conservation.

Transportation is also a critical issue for women in cities. In cities of the developed world, travel patterns have changed drastically as more and more women join the workforce. Per capita income has risen, while the time available for household work

has declined. In these circumstances, workers are buying more outside services to meet their daily subsistence needs, such as child-care,meals, laundry and other services. This has meant an increase in the number of non-work trips per person, as well as in "trip-chaining" where a single trip outside the home (or the office) might have multiple destinations or stops, which some researchers claim leads to increases in vehicle-kilometers traveled and exponential increases in emissions from the transport sector.

In many cities, women are responsible for a disproportionate share of the household's transport burden, while at the same time having more limited access to available means of transport. In middle-income households where only one car is available, men tend to use the family car for work trips while women rely on public transport. In poor families, it is usually the male head of household who will use public transport, leaving the women, who actually might earn more money for the family, to walk. With limited access to individual means of transport, the vast majority of poor women in cities in developing countries are dependent on either walking or on public means of transport, which can be both motorized (e.g. buses, subways) or non-motorized (e.g. rickshaw taxis and bicycles).

Cultural factors may constrain women's abilities to use public transport or bicycles. In many countries there is also a problem of safety and security of public transport for women, especially after dark. Poor route planning for public transport tends to exacerbate the problems women face and force them to depend on more expensive alternatives.

Poor women make more frequent and shorter trips than men. They make more trips at off-peak hours and more trips that are off the main routes, and engage in more complicated multiple trips, all of which tend to make their movements relatively expensive for public transport to provide, and hence more highly priced or more poorly supplied. Even poor women have to "trip-chain," combining their travel related to domestic and care-taking responsibilities with their trips related to income generation.

Transport systems targeted only at peak-hour male commuter trip patterns do not serve women's needs. In most cities and towns around the world, infrastructure planning continues to primarily cater to the needs of the car- or motorcycle-driving, largely male majority. Women typically have to make multiple stops, pay multiple fares, and travel during off peak hours, when service is less reliable and waiting areas are less safe.

Gender analysis needs to be incorporated into all aspects of transport development. By focusing on planning interventions that directly target the particular transport problems of women, much could be done to alleviate their burdens. Failure to produce transport policies that meet the needs of women has exacerbated social exclusion and, some claim even increased environmental pollution. Research is required on the mobility needs of women in cities, their domestic responsibilities and their preferred work and leisure patterns.

Affordable housing for all is also a universal right. Nonetheless, world-wide the problem of homelessness is growing. Cities all around the world have seen an increase of pavement dwellers and slums persist and even increase in many developing countries. Shelter deprivation has significant negative health and wellbeing implications. It can lead to increases in mortality and morbidity rates for children under five. Although poor children born in cities are closer to hospitals and clinics, and their parents are generally better informed, they still die at rates comparable to rural children. Overcrowded and unhealthy living conditions, without adequate water and sanitation, provide a rich breeding ground for respiratory infections, intestinal diseases meningitis and TB, and increase mortality among malnourished urban children. This process is exacerbated by poor nutrition, which lowers the immune system's ability to defend against disease.

Many poor women in cities are negatively affected by forced evictions and demolitions, resettlement schemes, slum clearance and development projects carried out by Governments or their agents. As a result of existing discrimination within families, women may also find themselves in insecure housing situations which causes considerable trauma. Women may have to flee their homes because of domestic violence or they may be evicted by their in-laws on the death of their spouses.

Planning of housing and urban communities should be based on the needs, priorities and contributions of women as well as men. Women have a very good understanding of the kinds of structures and spaces that are needed to meet basic needs of families. Housing, including structures and use of space, and urban planning always reflect gender norms and attitudes, even if these are not explicitly articulated. For example, the 'garden city' movement in Europe was based on a concept of women fulfilling their perceived 'natural' roles in the private sphere. Houses in Muslim neighborhoods in some countries are designed to allow women to observe *purdah*, secluded behind high walls at home and in semi-cloistered community parks.

When looking at cities from a gender perspective, one of the factors underlying planning for use of urban space is the perceived roles and responsibilities of women and men in relation to care-giving roles. Many of the past and present trends in urban planning and development reflect the perception that women should be the primary caregivers. Due to the imbalance in sharing of domestic work, women actually do take responsibility for most of the direct care-giving work within families and communities in many parts of the world. It is important, however, that this is not accepted as the norm. Efforts should be made to reflect the changed roles of women who are increasingly engaged in income generation in cities, and to promote and facilitate the increased role of men in domestic work.

Women as well as men should be central to urban planning and development, both as key users of urban space in their role in contributing to home management, and as key actors in residential environments in their role as community leaders and initiators of neighborhood networks. Viewing families, communities, towns, cities, and regions from a gender perspective, and understanding that men too have caring roles and responsibilities, requires a radical shift in thinking and actions.

In the long-run, it is presumed that cities offer greater potential for women to acquire property, in part because of the broader range of education and economic opportunities. In some countries, however, legal reform is needed to address the inequalities women face in owning property in cities. Where laws are in place, cities continue to need programmes and recourse mechanisms to tackle informal barriers, such as customary practices, lack of awareness, high costs and discriminatory lending and titling practices. Property rights and access to credit are closely interlinked and women also have greater difficulties than men in accessing credit.

Employment

Urbanization has certainly increased women's labour force participation, Employment opportunities are more diverse in urban areas. The benefits of paid employment for women are many – including increased household income, increased status in the family and community and possible positive impacts on gender relations.

Much of the global growth of employment opportunities for women has been in the informal sector, especially in Africa and Asia. Informal sector employment is critical in enabling poor women to develop survival strategies and to lift their families out of poverty. Much of the informal work is, however, unstable, with poor conditions, low pay, and at times even unsafe environments, exposing women to exploitation and abuse. Many women are exploited in cities as informal domestic workers, as trafficked workers for low-wage jobs or as trafficked prostitutes, and as women migrant workers.

Women's independent migration for work has increased over the past decade. The employment – both formal and informal - of foreign-born women in cities covers an increasingly broad range of economic sectors, some illegal and illicit, e.g. prostitution, and some in highly regulated industries, e.g. nursing.

Migrant women's regular waged work can have a positive impact on gender relations Women gain greater personal autonomy and independence. Their access to public services and other public resources gives them the opportunity to integrate into the mainstream society. Women are often the ones in the migrant households who have most direct contact with public offices, through health care and child care services.

Women may migrate to cities in other parts of the world or they may migrate from rural areas to cities within their own countries. Migration within their own countries may not necessarily be permanent, but may be "seasonal", i.e. women migrate to towns and cities in the low season for agriculture to supplement their household incomes and return to their homes when the agricultural season begins. They take on a variety of temporary occupations, including domestic work, work in bars or restaurants, and work as street vendors, garbage collectors, factory workers or labourers on construction projects. In many cases, such women live in cheap hostels, with few facilities and poor sanitary conditions, with negative impacts on their own health and wellbeing.

Participation in decision-making

Women are still far from being represented equitably in political and administrative decision-making in cities. Their voices are not systematically brought into the consultation and dialogue around city planning. As a result, city institutions, facilities, and services are not always conceived with the needs, priorities and contributions of women as well as men in mind, which can result in, among other things, inefficient public services with inappropriate opening hours.

Local government is often perceived as a relatively autonomous sphere of government, with close links to civil society, and as such, crucial to democratic decentralization. However, unless the interests of women have been fully represented, the local level systems are not fully democratic.

As the tier of government closest to civil society, local government is often seen as the most accessible level of government to women and one which provides opportunities for locally-organized women. Local governments traditionally provide services utilized by individual households, such as electricity, waste disposal, public transport, water, schools, health clinics and other social services. The decisions of local governments therefore have a direct impact on women. Women have important contributions to make to the development and appropriate management of these services.

It is often assumed that women will have no difficulties in engaging in local urban politics because eligibility criteria for the local level are less stringent, and local government is the closest to the women's sphere of life, and because engagement at local level is easier to combine with rearing of children. The fact that women in many areas have developed informal organizations and networks in their neighborhoods is seen as a step towards getting them involved in more formal political decision making at the local level. There are expectations that decentralization will make service delivery more responsive to the needs of women through the proximity of locally-elected representatives to their constituents.

While the ideal of democratic decentralization does hold promise for women, the impact expected is rarely achieved. The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) provides data on women's representation in local governance, including in cities. Based on 2006 figures, 20 percent of councilors at the local level are women, while women make up only 9 per cent of the world's mayors. The participation of women in local government has been increasing steadily but there are serious challenges to be overcome, and the pace of change is far too slow.

Prejudices against women's involvement are often more strongly held at local than at higher levels. Local government in many areas has been shown to be particularly responsive to informal institutions, systems and relations of power, rather than more formal rules and procedures. This serves to advantage men rather than women. Women's historical exclusion from local government means that they do not have access to the

same kinds of networks as men and are less experienced. The informal institutions of local governments can also often be openly very hostile to women's involvement.

Women face discrimination both when standing for office and when elected or appointed to local government positions. Politics and decision-making are often seen as a male preserve and women are perceived as incapable of management and governance roles. Conservative attitudes, particularly towards women at senior management level, negate women's potential and contribute to the lack of confidence that many voters may have in women.

The male environment within political institutions can also deter women. The fact that there are few women in decision-making bodies means that these women are expected to work within styles and approaches that have been developed by men for men. They are not expected/allowed to stand out and take different approaches. It is for this reason that the "critical mass" target of 33 percent women in all institutions is so critical. One or two women in organizations, no matter how knowledgeable, skilled and committed, cannot make the difference needed.

Increasing women's participation in decision-making in cities requires actions on a number of fronts. Firstly, promoting *equal representation in decision making* is an important means of ensuring that the needs of women and men will be taken into consideration in municipal planning and management. Achieving the election of equal numbers of men and women at a municipal level is, however, challenging. It requires political will by municipal authorities and clear targets, backed if necessary by legislation. Some countries, such as Brazil and Tanzania, have introduced legislation to reserve a percentage of seats in municipal bodies for women.

Women must also be encouraged to *participate in the management* of municipal services. City councils must develop measures to encourage women to take up key positions within the administration. These measures must ensure that the workplace is secure and non discriminatory, with clear policies on equitable promotion procedures, sexual harassment and safe working environments.

A third strategy is to facilitate women's involvement by *making the public consultation procedures more accessible to women,* and finding ways to engage and channel the energy and action of women in local informal associations and networks.

Steps taken in different countries to improve this situation have included laws reserving seats for women in local legislatures, such as in India and Bangladesh. Training is another important instrument in encouraging women to participate in local government and ensuring this participation is effective. Local governments have set up orientation and training programmes for women on municipal legislation, budgeting and taxation, service delivery systems, poverty alleviation schemes, community and environmental management, shelter committees, communication skills and women and development.

Women within local government have also initiated programmes themselves to encourage women to participate and have established their own associations for support and training. The Australian Local Government Women's Association is one example in which branches have initiated mentoring programmes for women, targeted councils where women were either not represented or under represented, conducted pre-election seminars and worked with NGOs to develop initiatives to support women candidates. The China Association of Mayors has a Branch of Women Mayors who meet for support and training in aspects of their job.

The collection of data on women's participation in local government adds to the visibility of women in decision-making in cities. Election statistics are published in New Zealand after every local government election and these include comprehensive and comparative data on women. In India all levels of government collect gender-disaggregated data for use in policy and programme formulation and quantitative and qualitative data on the number of women and men employed and elected in the various levels of government. In countries where statistics do not exist, information is more difficult to access and use for debate and policy development.

Safety and security

World Habitat Day 2007 has the slogan "A safe city is a just city". This has particular relevance for women. Gender-based violence, with the tremendous physical, psychological and financial damage inflicted on women, families, communities and society, is unfortunately a feature of urban life. Violence in its various forms, from intimidation to sexual assault, restricts the ability of women to move in and around cities, reducing their freedom to seek work, social services and leisure activities.

In cities all over the world many girls and women feel unsafe alone in the street. At some point in their lives many have had to, or will have to, face sexual harassment, abuse and violence, only because of they are women. Violence against women and girls cuts across lines of income, class, race, ethnic group, and residence. Physical, sexual and psychological violence can be a daily feature of women's interactions in their neighborhoods, on public transport, in workplaces, schools, sports clubs, colleges, hospitals, and in social institutions. Unsafe spaces abound in cities and surrounding areas – deserted streets, dark lanes, isolated bus stops, or public latrines. Urban environments offer greater anonymity to perpetrators of violence against women and girls.

Although not all women have been raped or attacked, all have felt at some point a sense of unease, ranging from feeling uncomfortable to complete paralysis. According to a study conducted in Canada in the 1990s, violence or the threat of violence, committed for the most part by men, affected more than 60 per cent of women. This violence creates feelings of fear, helplessness and insecurity.

This means that in large cities, many women may have to restrict their movements or activities because they feel unsafe. The fear or threat of violence is an effective way of controlling women's activities. Many women living in large cities do not feel safe in their

own city and this limits their fundamental right to frequent public places. Fear and feeling unsafe are major obstacles to the empowerment of women.

Male violence against women in any context is always based on discrimination and inequality between women and men. Women may be at greater risk of gender-based violence in urban areas, because of the breakdown in cultural norms that govern relations between women and men. Rapidly shifting norms regarding male and female roles can increase domestic violence. Research in the Philippines found that poverty and urban residence are associated with a higher likelihood of intimate-partner violence.

There are a number of other contributing factors. The age of marriage is rising, and sexual activity outside marriage is increasing in urban areas. Young women find themselves at risk of forced sex, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Poverty, the move to a new environment (in the case of migrants), unemployment, inadequate wages, social exclusion and racism in cities can produce frustration among men and vulnerability among women. Changes in social controls, in particular the breakdown of social bonds at neighborhood level, with the resulting limited likelihood that neighbors would intervene, can also contribute.

Violence is generally underreported and reliable statistics are hard to come by. Women tend to be constrained in reporting incidences of violence because of shame, stigma, lack of confidence in protection under the law and fear of retribution. Women in urban settings are, however, far more likely than their rural counterparts to report having experienced violence. This can be partly attributed to increased possibilities in urban areas for exposing violence and seeking redress.

The consequences of urban violence are devastating for women, their families and communities. Violence against women and girls compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It can leave deep physical and psychological scars. It undermines girls' development by making it difficult for them to remain in school, destroying their confidence in adults and in peers, and putting them at risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Physical and sexual abuse is also a factor in unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) and complications of pregnancy.

Municipal initiatives must concentrate on changing the city's physical environment in order to make it safer for women. Clearly fundamental is the need to make public spaces (such as parks, car parks and university campuses) safer and more accessible. Public transport networks must minimize the chances of women being threatened and attacked. Adequate lighting in housing areas and inner cities is also essential.

Living with the threat of violence makes women sensitive to various aspects of urban life which may contribute to their insecurity, or that can reassure them. This makes

them infinitely qualified to detect problems and offer solutions. One of the ways in which women can reclaim their city in order to gain the full benefits of its resources is to actively work on changing the environment, together with municipal authorities and other community institutions and groups. For this reason, safety audits and safety walks to assess the security risks in different urban environments, carried out by municipalities, in collaboration with women's groups, for example in South Africa and Canada, are extremely important.

Women's community organization in urban areas

Around the world, projects have been undertaken to "rehabilitate" public space to strengthen local communities and encourage local participation in urban development. Development of civic spaces in cities is critical to ensure diversity and political citizenship, and to avoid the risk of social polarization. Many of these important efforts are, however, carried out without a gender perspective and without the full involvement of women.

The "local" context plays an important role in generating civic participation and social inclusion. When public spaces in neighborhoods are designed to support contact and communication they provide natural places for people to meet, get to know each other, and create common understanding as well as common activities and to reinforce the sustainability of mutual support networks.

A lack of gender sensitivity on the part of local authorities in municipal planning and management, and a lack of capacity to work effectively with networks and organizations representing the interests of poor, vulnerable, and marginalized urban dwellers, including women's groups and networks, may result in neglect of attention to women's needs, priorities and failure to recognize their contributions. This is a net loss for communities and cities as the potentials of women go unutilized.

There have been very positive outcomes when women are consulted. For example, in Norway, transport planners were better informed by local mothers as to where children played and what specific transport and safety needs should be addressed. In Sudan, women were able to tell those constructing refugee camps where to locate the female washing areas to secure privacy for women, ensure that customary practices were not ignored, and reduce the risk of harassment and violence.

Women are frequently actively engaged as leaders and participants at the smaller scale community level. Women have demonstrated considerable enterprise in addressing the challenges of urban poverty, providing some of the most creative grassroots initiatives, such as savings clubs, soup kitchens, and organized efforts to engage and co-operate with local authorities around access to services.

The "local" context provides a bridging function between private and public, and between informal and formal, that lends itself well to supporting care-giving tasks and

this has been used effectively by women in many countries. Local neighborhood networks provide pportunities for wider sharing of caring for children and older adults within the community. The innovative spatial and social arrangements in "urban village" initiatives offer quality alternatives to family caregivers. This provides a new vision of multi-generational living, with neighbourhood engagement and accessible community services that avoid the limitations of overly centralized systems.

These local support networks in urban neighborhoods involve a shift towards more collective responsibility and a reintegration of family care into public life. This also opens up the potential for changes in the gender-based division of labor and care-giving within families and communities. Studies of parental self-help initiatives have concluded that men have become more easily involved in family care-giving responsibilities when these tasks were "socialized" in a more public and collective setting.

Women slum dwellers in many countries have organized themselves to ensure their perspectives are taken into account in slum renewal programmes and are increasingly aware of the importance of being more actively involved in community projects and developments.

Many women have engaged in struggles against high rents and service charges, and have pressed for participation in civic organizations to ensure that these have a distributive agenda which meets the needs of poor families and communities. The contribution of women to human settlements development, slum upgrading, and basic services delivery, whether in cash or in kind, has been considerable. They are often the first to find the user fees required or provide community labour, and they are invariably involved in maintenance responsibilities associated with community management.

The issue of safety plays an important role in women's organizing. Women's groups worldwide are developing strategies against domestic violence and assault in public spaces. This involves new principles of urban planning, which encourage the community at large to take responsibility for preventing violence. Increasingly, women's groups have moved from dealing directly with the problem themselves, to getting municipalities, law enforcement agencies, and other mainstream players to recognize and address the problem.

An area where women have worked to hold governments accountable is through their 'watchdog' role in relation to revenue and expenditure. Gender-responsive budgets are mechanisms by which governments can integrate gender analysis into public expenditure policies and budgets in different sectors. This does not imply separate budgets for women, but rather the political will to disaggregate expenditure according to its differential impact on women and men, with the aim to increase resource allocations in support of gender equality.

There are many areas of concern to women in cities in relation to budgets, for example in the areas of infrastructure and services. Local revenue collection also has implications for women, such as licenses and site fees for street traders that particularly

affect low-income women in the informal sector. Some progress has been made in South Africa, for example, towards raising awareness about the impact of local government revenue and expenditure on women. This has involved informing women about local government expenditures and revenues, and advocacy for resource allocations that promote gender equality.

Conclusions

Although cities belong to both men and women, developments within cities are often carried out without consulting and involving women, thereby hindering them from exercising their fundamental right to full citizenship. This can have very negative implications for women, not least in the area of safety and security. Some researchers are calling for efforts to be made to allow women to "reclaim" the city.

Women's reality is not the same as men's - socially, politically or economically. For cities to meet the needs and priorities of all its citizens, both women and men, and take into account their contributions and potentials, urban planning must explicitly incorporate gender perspectives in all areas. Policies, plans, resource allocations and programmes in cities need to more effectively target the particular needs and priorities, and build on the contributions, of women as well as men, to guarantee more effective and sustainable management of human and financial resources.

This requires that gender analysis is carried out to make policy makers and planners aware of the situation of men and women of all ages, ethnic and religious groups, income brackets, marital status, etc. It also requires that the situation of particularly vulnerable women is identified and addressed, including poor women, HIV/AIDS affected women, disabled women and migrant women.

A number of elements for establishing an enabling environment for gender equality and the empowerment of women have been identified which are highly relevant for cities. I have already discussed many of these in this presentation. They include:
- improving women's *capabilities*, for example through access to education and health services;
- increasing their access to and control over *opportunities and resources*, such as employment, economic assets, housing and transport;
- enhancing their *agency and leadership* roles, including through increased participation in decision-making;
- protecting and promoting their *human rights;* and
- ensuring their *security*, including freedom from violence and the threat of violence.

All of these elements are critical in working to promote gender equality and empower women in cities.

In some countries, cities and local and provincial governments are trying to use the global intergovernmental agreements such as the Platform for Action and obligations under CEDAW to support work on gender equality and empowerment of women on the ground. Some local government bodies in Sweden have, for example, worked to find ways to use the concluding comments on Sweden prepared by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Two weeks ago the government of Korea presented its report to the Committee. When the concluding comments are made available, efforts could be made to use them strategically in working to promote gender equality in cities in Korea.

We should take up the slogan "A safe city is a just city" and ensure that this fully incorporates attention to women and girls, and their needs, priorities and contributions. The conviction expressed by the Heads of State in the United Nations in 2005 that "Progress for women is progress for all", is also true in the cities of the world. Gender-sensitive development is needed to ensure that cities provide safe and empowering living conditions for all citizens, women and men and girls and boys, and can contribute to equitable, effective and sustainable urban development for the benefit of all.

I wish you a very successful conference and a widely disseminated and utilized outcome.

Thank you.