

## **Opening Statement of UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka to the Annual Session of the Executive Board 2019**

### **Intro and field visits**

Thank you, Madame President;  
Good morning distinguished Delegates, guests and colleagues;

I would like to thank the President and the Bureau for your active engagement on all matters that require the attention of the Board, including the Field Visit to the Caribbean – to the UN Women Multi Country Office in Barbados, along with Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada – and the Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards of all the Funds and Programmes to Colombia.

I know that many insights have been gained on the work of the UN Country Team and on how UN Women supports national priorities on gender equality.

We look forward to the account of these visits at the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board.

### **New senior staff**

Please join me in welcoming our new colleagues.

I am delighted to introduce to you to our new Deputy Executive Director and Assistant Secretary-General designate for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships – Anita Bhatia of India.

She has had a distinguished career at the World Bank Group, with extensive experience in the area of strategic partnerships, resource mobilization and management.

At the International Finance Corporation (IFC), she has developed and expanded innovative partnerships in key areas, including fragile and conflict-affected states, gender equality, financial inclusion and support to women-owned businesses. She has worked in Latin America, Africa, Europe, Central Africa and South East Asia.

Thank you for approving the repurposing of this post and elevating our work on partnerships and resource mobilization to this level.

I would also like to mention with appreciation the joining of Hanna Kristjansdottir of Iceland as Senior Advisor on Women's Leadership. Hanna comes with extensive government and parliamentary experience in Iceland and as Chair of the Women Political Leaders Forum. Almost 25 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform, we continue to be challenged by the slow pace change in women's leadership – just 75% of parliamentarians are men, only 11

countries have gender equal cabinets and just 6.6% of Fortune 500 companies have women CEOs. Hanna will support our efforts to increase and sustain the number of women in politics and enhance their capacity to engage in decision-making.

I would also like to note that this will be the last Executive Board session of Ms. Maria-Noel Vaeza, in her capacity of Director of the Programme Division. We are very fortunate to have Maria Noel staying on with UN Women in a new capacity as Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean. She will assume her new role at the end of June 2019.

### **Staff Council elections and workplace relations**

While we work for increased participation of women leadership everywhere, we are glad that UN Women staff leads by example.

Today we have newly elected representatives of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN Women Staff Council with us:

- Vesna Markovic Dasovic – Chairperson
- Amsale Admassu – General Secretary
- Sylvia Hordosch – Treasurer.

UN Women has unprecedented representation in the Staff Council. In addition to Sylvia, the following UN Women staff have been elected as members:

- Gulzada Bafina
- Urjasi Rudra
- Sonya Thimmaiah.

I consider the Staff Council an important body not just for UN Women but for the entire UN system. We appreciate their wise counsel and their collaboration on several critical issues, such as:

- Our continued push for gender parity across the UN system,
- The improvement of paid parental leave policies, flexible working arrangements and affordable childcare for all parents.
- The review of our policies and processes to better address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.
- And advice on a workplace environment that has been a challenge in parts of our organization.

I appreciate the frank insights that the Council has shared with us on these and other key issues.

Our staff are our single greatest asset.

An enabling work environment is essential for our staff to flourish. I am strongly committed to ensuring an inclusive and respectful workplace and making sure that there are support mechanisms in place for all personnel and the highest civility.

I am encouraged by the strengthened open culture at UN Women, which has bolstered the courage of staff to present complaints. At the same, I am concerned by the relative increase of cases that point to troubled workplace relations. This increase may simply be the result of the major effort to make our staff aware of their rights and a growing trust in investigative services provided by OIOS.

I have recently shared with all staff the report on disciplinary measures and other actions taken in response to misconduct and wrongdoing by UN Women staff members and others, between 2013 and 2018. However, more needs to be done to prevent workplace issues.

Some steps already taken include:

- 360 feedback for senior staff;
- Management induction training;
- New performance management guidelines with a focus on people management and honest feedback;
- More rigorous selection processes to ensure that senior staff have strong managerial competencies;
- The deployment of professional HR staff to regional offices.

Our change management process is also aimed at addressing some of the structural issues that may sometimes lead to management issues. For example:

- Improving oversight and accountability;
- Reviewing workflows and business processes;
- Clarifying decision-making processes; and

- Improved priority-setting to address workload.

While most allegations received by OIOS were closed after assessment or did not meet the threshold for misconduct, I am committed to ensuring management action in all cases. This may include:

- Addressing the issues through a performance management process;
- Redeployments to ensure better fits aligned with skills and needs in the organization;
- Change of reporting lines;
- Support through coaching, training and teambuilding;
- Mediated discussions by the ombudsman's office.
- And, in cases of recurring poor performance, separation from the organization.

I look forward to our discussion on these issues tomorrow in the context of the item on internal audit and investigations, as well as reviewing together the independent report by Deloitte on UN Women processes to address sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.

### **Annual report/Progress and challenges**

Distinguished Delegates,

The year 2018 marked the first year of implementing the new Strategic Plan. In many ways this has been both the best and the worst of times for gender equality.

Since the new Strategic Plan went into effect, we have seen:

- Heightened decisiveness on dealing with sexual harassment and SEA, such as:
  - The recent landmark decision of the ILO standard setting committee on violence and harassment in the world of work to recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.
  - And the additional measures being adopted by the UN system to take a victim-centric approach to sexual harassment.

- Extensive work on changing toxic masculinity, including research from the new State of the World's Fathers report on the positive impact of engaged fatherhood on children, including effects that empower them to break gender stereotypes.
- Vibrant and empowered young women like Greta Thunberg from Sweden leading the fight against climate change.
- Movements like the March for our Lives in the US speaking out against gun violence;
- Courageous young women in Sudan leading the change in that country;
- Women football players, including our Goodwill Ambassador Marta, shattering stereotypes and standing up for equality on and off the field.
- The recent announcement by the Canadian government at the Women Deliver conference of a record investment of \$1.4 billion on sexual and reproductive health and rights by 2023.
- In Switzerland last week, we saw women taking to the streets to strike against lasting gender inequalities.
- A few weeks ago, 144 Member States (led by Kenya) co-sponsored a resolution in the General Assembly to convene a high-level meeting to celebrate Beijing+25 in September 2020, for which we are very thankful.

Yet in the same period we have seen increased backlash against women's rights, including:

- New legislation that takes away the rights of women and control of their own bodies.
- In April, we saw the Security Council struggle to pass a resolution sexual violence in conflict, denying us an even more ambitious result.
- Women human rights defenders continue to be targeted around the world.

We are under no illusions about the work ahead of us. The importance of stronger resolve, building partnerships, increased resources and creating change that lasts are at the heart of our efforts.

I am therefore pleased to report a strong performance against the priorities and indicators endorsed by the Executive Board.

75 per cent of all indicators in our results framework met their milestones.

This was also the year with our highest level of programme delivery, which is testimony to UN Women's growing operational capacity and our ability to deliver growth despite an increasingly complex environment for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights.

Several achievements of 2018 are highlighted in the report. Amongst others, UN Women supported:

- The adoption of reform of 44 laws to strengthen women's rights in 25 countries;
- Capacity-building for more than 10,000 aspiring women leaders for their political campaigns;
- Training for over 18,000 justice personnel in 54 countries to better take into account women's rights;
- Better skills for almost 25,000 data producers and users to disaggregate data by sex;
- Increased access to productive resources for over 50,000 women producers, workers and entrepreneurs;
- The deployment of the essential services package to address violence against women in 48 countries;
- The commitment of 8 new cities to address sexual harassment in public spaces;
- Humanitarian assistance to 325,500 women and girls in 48 countries.

We have also identified areas of slower performance. The reasons include:

- The difficulty of mobilizing funding in some areas of work;
- Lack of prioritization by our country offices or national partners;
- Inadequate capacity especially where we have limited core resources.

We are taking corrective action to address each area one by one.

To increase transparency, we have launched our Strategic Plan Results Portal where information on performance against each indicator can be found. It will be complemented with our Transparency Portal, in line with IATI standards, to be launched later this year.

## Working in partnerships

Our results were not achieved alone. The year 2018 was characterized by strong partnerships and increased coherence with our UN system partners. Complex problems can only be solved through concerted action, where we reinforce the work of each other across the system. For example:

- We worked with OHCHR to support the implementation of CEDAW recommendations and to deploy 31 experts on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings;
- Together with UNDP, DPA (now DPPA) and other partners, we enhanced the capacity of electoral bodies on gender mainstreaming;
- We partnered with ILO, UNDP and others to enhance access to social protection. In the Dominican Republic, for example, this work impacted 100,000 women.
- Over 400 women's organizations received support to engage in conflict mediation and prevention and to participate in peace processes in partnership with DPA and DPKO;
- And, of course, we continued to work closely with UNFPA and UNDP to implement the pioneering EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to End Violence against Women.
- We have also built a formidable partnership with the private sector through the Unstereotype Alliance, which is fighting stereotypes in advertising and the media and has this year earned us a Cannes Lions award.
- The new UN-SWAP allows us to better map and understand the systemwide contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment. Sixty-six UN entities reported under the UN-SWAP 2.0, showing overall compliance with commitments at 58 percent.
- We are also committed to joint programming, which represents 13 per cent of our programme expenditures. While this may seem small, it is amongst the highest proportions in the UN system and we will increase it further.
- We are building on the experience of implementing the common chapter with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, where we are already enhancing complementarity and coherence.

These are just a few examples of how the UN system, by coming together, can achieve greater and better results for women and girls.

This is why UN Women has been actively engaging in the repositioning of the UN development system. Our focus is to place gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of the reforms so that the entire system delivers for women and girls.

A key aspect will be to ensure even more attention to gender equality and women's empowerment in new Cooperation Frameworks (previously UNDAFs). We actively contributed to the new guidance and we are pleased that gender equality and women's empowerment is recognized as a key principle.

We are now gearing up our capacity to be able to engage in the development of all Cooperation Frameworks, starting with the Common Country Analysis, to ensure that gender dimensions are captured, and UN Country Teams supported to deliver against national priorities for gender equality, regardless of whether UN Women is present in the country or not.

We will support Resident Coordinators to ensure the UN works better together and the development of a new generation of UN Country Teams that can respond better to the needs of all countries—whether they be least developed or middle-income. We have made necessary adjustments in our policies to recognize the enhanced role of RCs.

We also continue to engage in enhancing common business processes and harmonization. This is of particular importance to us as we already outsource several business functions to others.

### **Change management**

These and other changes in the UN system also require UN Women to adapt. This is why we have launched a comprehensive change management process at UN Women.

This process also takes into account lessons learned from the last seven years.

It aims to achieve a broad set of objectives that include:

- A stronger focus on results and capacity-building for our counterparts;
- More focus on the services where we have a comparative advantage and ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment is fully mainstreamed into other UN entities;
- A more effective structure that eliminates silos and duplications, enhances accountability and allows for better linkages with the three functions of our mandate;
- Enhanced planning and programming processes to align resources with priorities.



This requires:

- A review of our regional and country presence against available resources and potential impact to ensure our offices are placed in the right countries and staffed with the right people;
- Enhanced field capacity by decentralizing some resources from Headquarters;
- Greater clarity and complementarity of the portfolios of the Deputy Executive Directors, supported by an Integrated Executive Office;
- Strong internal and external collaboration and knowledge sharing by improving processes and information flow; and
- Greater planning, coordination and integration of UN Women's interaction with donors and partners.

Following my last report, progress has been made in the review of our country presence, which will take place in two phases.

The first phase is to 'right-size' our field footprint to ensure that Country and Regional Offices meet a minimum standard everywhere and can deliver effectively and efficiently. This includes addressing comments in the recent MOPAN report which highlighted capacity issues at country level.

This will be done based on clear criteria that look at levels of gender inequality and vulnerability, including income and inequality, along with funding projections to ensure sustainability. Demand at national level and UNCT will also be determining factors.

In the second phase, future growth will be determined by a bespoke set of indicators which are connected to UN Women's five areas of focus in the Strategic Plan.

In parallel, UN Women will strengthen policy capacity at the regional level by decentralizing some HQ capacity to regional and country offices. Decentralized Policy Advisors and increased knowledge management will strengthen local expertise in each of the thematic areas. This will allow UN Women to respond to Member States' requests for integrated policy support.

At Headquarters, the integration of Policy and Programme functions under one Director is underway. This will contribute to greater coherence between our global policy work and its application in our programming.

The draft Integrated Budget includes an allocation for change management which will be critical for its implementation and I call on you to support it.

## **Resource Mobilization**

Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to report that UN Women reached its highest level of voluntary contributions in 2018 since its inception, totalling 384 million dollars.

I would like to thank Sweden, the UK, Norway, Japan, Switzerland, Finland, Australia and the US, as well as the European Union for the substantial contributions made to UN Women in 2018 and for the continuous partnership.

While earmarked contributions have increased by 10 per cent, regular resources have only increased by 2 per cent. I call on more countries to assist us by prioritizing regular resources, which are the backbone of the organization.

We welcome and encourage soft earmarked resources on the country level, such as the direct funding of our Strategic Notes.

We have continued to diversify our funding, with a special focus on private sector partnerships. In the last five years, we tripled the share of revenue from the private sector to 6 per cent of total funding. We also increased the share of inter-agency funding arrangements, from 9 per cent to 13 per cent. We still have a long way to go.

We are in an improving position to reach the proposed targets of our Integrated Budget 2020-2021, which fully align with the result targets in the Strategic Plan. This will be a top priority of our new ASG. I have in the meantime tasked my Chief of Staff, Khetsiwe, to also assist with looking to help us diversify our work on innovative funding.

The year 2020 will be a critical year in this regard, marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Security Council 1325, the 5-year milestone of the SDGs, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN Women's creation.

There has never been a better time to translate the strong political commitment we have received from all of you into an equally ambitious financial commitment.

UN Women second decade, our UN Women 2.0, is a moment to use the lessons learnt in our first decade so that we are poised to become a stronger catalyst towards achieving substantive equality by 2030. Our change management takes this into account.

## **Beijing+25 and the year 2020**

Our preparations for the Beijing+25 anniversary events are underway.

We welcome efforts in many countries to undertake comprehensive national reviews. As of this week, 83 countries have submitted their national reports. I encourage all other States to complete their reports as soon as possible. I ask you to assist us in this regard by ensuring your countries are in good standing with their reports. We will be reaching out to countries to urge them to submit outstanding reviews.

Regional and country offices are also supporting comprehensive multi-stakeholder preparations at national and regional levels.

I welcome the decision of the General Assembly, led by Kenya, to convene a high-level meeting to celebrate Beijing+25 in September 2020 and look forward to the completion of the work on the modalities resolution currently underway, which is led by the co-facilitators the PRs of Qatar and New Zealand.

We are also busy working with the Governments of France and Mexico on planning for the Global Forum in July 2020 to engage civil society and other stakeholders.

We have also just launched our new campaign, “Generation Equality”, which links these and all the other advocacy elements together, emphasizing the strong intergenerational nature of the mobilization and youth leadership.

25 years ago, in Beijing, women from all over the world started on a race to equality, and now young people are showing their readiness to take the baton and run with it.

I saw this clearly two weeks ago, when I attended Women Deliver. I was energized by the high level of participation, with more than 8000 participants and so many young men and women feminists.

We need to do more to create spaces for young people to exercise their leadership so that we engage a new generation of activists who will take us into the next 25 years and usher in a new and irreversible reality for millions of women.

I hope you can join us in your countries and everywhere to make this a centerpiece of the 2020 celebrations and the work leading up to them.

### **Conclusion and looking ahead**

I would like to highlight the upcoming release of UN Women’s flagship report, Progress of the World’s Women, on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019, which this year is focused on *Families in a Changing World*. The report outlines a comprehensive family-friendly policy agenda to bring equality and justice home. We hope that it will be a call to recognize the diversity of families, and to work together to implement the proposed policy agenda to advance women’s rights and ensure that all families can flourish.

We are also looking ahead to the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in September and the opportunity that this represents to strengthen gender-responsive action in this area. To help galvanize momentum, UN Women will convene an event on 19 July that will present women's experiences and ways to scale up solutions.

I would like to thank Executive Board members for being such strong supporters of UN Women and of our common resolve to end gender inequality by 2030.

Thank you.