

CSW 60: Women's Empowerment/Sustainable Development

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(Opening courtesies)

I think we are all agreed that the 2030 Agenda will be a game-changer for sustainable development. I see it, at its core, as a human rights agenda. There are stand-alone elements in the new Agenda that speak directly to human rights issues – gender equality is one example, Goal 16 is another. The Agenda includes:

- A strong emphasis on equality and non-discrimination;
- Non-discrimination and social cohesion targets, which represent important steps towards a development agenda that leaves no one behind;
- An emphasis on a people-centred and equitable response to climate change and environmental degradation; this recognises the impacts of these challenges not just on our planet but on the rights of people around the world;
- The need for our economies to produce greater benefits for all, which goes to the heart of some of the world's major human rights issues;
- The inclusion of a dedicated goal on peaceful and inclusive societies; this is a major departure from the MDGs and an anchor for the promotion and protection of human rights for all.

All of these elements clearly have strong linkages to the empowerment of women and the work of CSW. As the Deputy Executive Director of UN Women pointed out earlier, the 2030 Agenda's preamble clearly recognises the contribution of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls to the achievement of all goals and targets: *"The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities"*. This point could not have been made more clearly. So, as we look to implementation of the Agenda, it will be essential to have a gender perspective systematically mainstreamed in the implementation arrangements.

More specifically, the new Agenda seeks to empower women and girls through ensuring that they have full participation and opportunities for leadership, that they get control over productive assets and that they achieve gender parity in access to quality education. The Agenda also commits to ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

It commits us, in short, to creating a world where all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls will be eliminated.

Picking up the Chairman's invitation to address some of the specific questions posed for this panel:

The first question deals with aligning existing national strategies and policies to the 2030 Agenda, and ensuring that full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is an integral part of these efforts.

Of course, while implementation of the 2030 Agenda is only beginning, the fight for gender equality has been underway for many years. One of the highlights of the September Summit was the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which marked twenty years since the Beijing Conference and which took place just after the adoption of the new Agenda – its timeliness could not have been better. A huge number of Heads of State and Government, my own President included, used this meeting as an opportunity to highlight progress and recommit to action on the empowerment of women in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

The linkages and interdependence of the Beijing and 2030 Agendas must be recognised in a real way. This will mean breaking down siloes across Governments as implementation plans are designed and rolled out. Gender equality is not to be confined to, say, health ministries or education ministries. The structures currently being designed at national level must reflect this. We need e.g. institutions which will ensure that a cross-cutting view is taken of how a Government is implementing gender equality across all the policy areas for which it has responsibility. We need officials with specific cross-cutting responsibility for gender equality to be included in all national implementation committees or mechanisms supervising implementation of the new Goals. Gender equality must be implanted in the minds of all our citizens. My own country recognizes that there are areas in which we have further to go in terms of achieving equality for women. And, while Ireland has made gender equality a priority area of its foreign policy, we will need to make our strategies at home and abroad more robust and more compelling because of the new universal commitment we have entered into under the 2030 Agenda.

Turning to the second question about inclusive, effective and accountable institutional mechanisms:

It is important to mention here the role of the HLPF, which stands at the pinnacle of the follow-up and review mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda and which will draw in the outcomes of national reviews of implementation. I expect that the Secretary General's report on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level, due around now, will emphasise the crucial importance of the HLPF to the success of the Agenda.

The HLPF must be a tool for accountability to our citizens, so that what we here agreed to in their name will be delivered in their name.

(Concluding emphasis on the value of the forthcoming CSW meeting as a means of demonstrating high-level political commitment to the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment within the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda.)