

**Closing remarks by Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women at the Executive Board Annual Session, 21 June 2023**

***[As delivered]***

***Firm foundations for the work ahead***

Let me first thank H.E. Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya, the President of our Board at this Annual Session, who continues to lead this body with rigour and wisdom. Thank you, your Excellency.

I also thank the Vice-Presidents for their efficient coordination within their regional groups. This is a strong contribution to the overall effectiveness of the session as well underpinning the negotiation of the decisions. I thank in particular those who have led the process of facilitation, resulting in today's adoption of five substantive decisions, which we will now take forward. I recognize Mr. Diego Antonino Cimino, Ms. Yaroslava Sochka, Ms. Jessica Orduz and Mr. Karin Kunjara Na Ayudhya.

Allow me to also recognize Jean-Luc Bories, well-known to us all as our Secretary of the Executive Board, whose team we appreciate greatly for their smooth and professional organization. And of course, my thanks as ever to the whole UN Women team – whether in the field or here in headquarters.

After today we will do much more than take forward your decisions. We take forward the sense of shared purpose and renewed energy that comes from reflecting on what has been achieved, and where we must still go.

Allow me to reiterate my appreciation of your constructive response to the Annual Report for 2022. It was a key check point for our implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 with its seven integrated systemic outcomes. What we have found is that we have a stable, results-driven focus amid the current turbulent challenges to gender equality and women's rights on which many of you spoke.

Let me also reiterate the deep value to us all of your explicit commitment to our indivisible triple mandate and your encouragement to make the fullest use of our comparative advantages, both within the United Nations system and throughout the broad network of our partners and allies. This is crucial for our impact, for SDG5's centrality, for the ecosystem of gender equality as a whole and for our ability to drive accelerated progress towards 2030. We will continue to invest in this area, including through increased and sharpened focus on our coordination mandate in particular.

I have noted your interest in our clear articulation, with factual information, of the ways in which our mandate works in practice, including its role as a nexus between action, humanitarian development and peace. UN Women will continue to provide data, knowledge and analysis, to facilitate political participation and engagement of women-led organizations, as well as access to opportunities, resources and financing.

As we look ahead to the SDG Summit this year, to the Summit of the Future in 2024, the Financing for Development Forum – and indeed to Beijing +30, we do so with a clear view of what we must do to get

the Goals back on track for success. A key element of that is enhanced data collection and use, and I appreciate the distinguished delegates' underlining of this point as well as on increased disaggregated data collection.

We are proud of the strong delivery and performance demonstrated through these past days and I thank you for the positive statements made in support of our efforts on accountability and transparency. These are firm foundations for the work ahead, rooted ever more deeply in our country presence and I hope are becoming hallmarks of the UN Women culture.

I appreciated this distinguished body's urging that we continue to tackle multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination by partnering with civil society and championing country programming.

We have been inspired over these last days by many examples of individual country achievements as well as a building sense of what we must - and can - achieve collectively.

Beyond what we report to you on impact, it is always so valuable to hear from you directly about the multiple ways in which you see UN Women programming at the national level bringing results, from increased political representation to contributions in the areas of peace, safety and security, to women's economic empowerment.

Following our rich discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of our work on economic empowerment, let me reiterate to the distinguished delegates our firm commitment to invest resources and personnel in this important thematic area. As you heard me say yesterday, this has significant multiplier effect for women's human rights and sustainable development. We are finalizing the strategy that will reflect a multi-sectoral approach to advance both development and human rights objectives. It will respond through four pathways to patterns of gendered marginalization and transform women's economic and social status, scaling up UN Women's leadership in the field of women's economic empowerment globally and influencing global discourse, through coordination within the UN system and with other key stakeholders.

I am fully committed to drive UN Women's communication of our impact and to invest further to strengthen capacities on the ground to monitor and report on results at a strategic level.

The discussion at this session of the integrated budget for 2024-2025 has been of particular importance. Not only do we need to be equipped with adequate resources to achieve our ambitions, these need to be solid, sustained and well calibrated. That calibration of direction and emphasis is supported by our frank view, back over the results of 2022 and forward towards the Mid-term Review of our Strategic Plan.

Our resources are of course both human and financial. I am committed to the steady evolution of our workplace and of opportunities for the growth and development of our workforce as a uniquely inclusive cohort.

I greatly appreciated, in this session, as in our informals and in our previous sessions, the exchanges on the vital importance of a positive and enabling work environment, free from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and from sexual harassment (SH). As I stated during the meeting on this, I have insisted on enhanced accountability structures for preventing SEA and SH within UN Women. You have my solemn undertaking to pursue this relentlessly.

SEA and SH in the United Nations are grave violations of our mandate and values. Let me re-state: we cannot and do not accept the continued experience by women and girls of such acute vulnerabilities to this type of sexual violence.

In conclusion, I thank you for all the rich discussions during this session. Allow me to close by inviting you once more to the Trusteeship Council tomorrow at 4:30 p.m., where you will have the opportunity to meet the core of our leadership presence in the field - our Country Representatives and Regional Directors. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Thank you so much.

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