



UN SYSTEM-WIDE GENDER EQUALITY ACCELERATION PLAN

Pivoting the United Nations
to effectively deliver for
women and girls



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ABSTRACT

Our Common Agenda makes an ambitious commitment to place women and girls at the centre of renewed multilateralism - recognizing that the global goals will never be achieved without the full equality of half of the world's population. This system-wide call to action and acceleration plan sets out The UN's commitment to accelerate the much-needed internal transformation at the UN that when fully implemented will enable all UN entities, no matter their mandate, to support all 193 Member States and other stakeholders deliver equitably for women and girls. It calls for the UN to lead the world humbly and boldly toward gender equality- both as a human rights issue and as a central prerequisite to development, peace and security.



ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS A GENDER EQUAL WORLD

Pivoting the United Nations to effectively deliver for women and girls

WHY



It is our duty to pivot now!

Gender equality is at the very heart of the three pillars of the United Nations: human rights, development, and peace and security. Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter as well as the Universal Declaration for Human Rights. Over recent years we have observed a backlash against women's and girls' rights and the very concept of gender and gender equality. Now, almost 30 years after the 4th World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, where gender equality was recognized as one of the key concepts in international human rights and as critical to achieving development, peace, and security goals, many of the hard-won victories for women and girls are at risk.

At the same time, humanity and our planet are facing a cascading, interrelated set of crises. Economic inequality, food insecurity and violent conflict are growing globally. The number and intensity of extreme weather events is rising, biological diversity is depleting, and air pollution is growing across the world. Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals remains elusive and is in some cases reversing. The COVID pandemic and some response measures have only worsened the situation.

Responding to these realities and achieving the SDGs—especially, but not only, SDG 5—demands a radically different approach by the UN. **It calls for the UN to lead the world humbly and boldly toward gender equality—both as a human rights issue and as a central prerequisite to development, peace, and security.**

A recent independent review commissioned by the UN Secretary General¹ found that the UN System has taken important steps in the last 10–15 years to advance gender equality. A milestone was the establishment of UN Women in 2011, as the UN entity leading normative, UN coordination and operational work to advance gender equality. A broad-based increase in consciousness as well as a concerted effort to mainstream gender equality have also taken place. Gender parity at the senior most leadership level has been achieved for the first time in the organization's history. Millions of women and girls around the world have been able to reap the benefits of the work UN entities do at the country level to support women's and girls' rights. However, we also agree with the sound analysis and the main finding of the review that the UN System is not on track to achieving its goals on gender equality. A substantial transformation of power dynamics, leadership approaches, strategies, priorities, structures, and accountability are therefore urgently needed. Without internal transformative action we cannot fully serve half of humankind.

Every minute of every day, in every country in the world, gender equality champions in communities, public service, civil society, governments, parliaments, workplaces, media, law enforcement, academia and elsewhere work tirelessly to include women's and girls' voices in decisions that affect their lives, deliver services that meet their needs, while seeking to end

injustice and discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity. They do so not only because it is the right this to do, but because these actions benefit everyone. Women, girls, their representatives, champions, and duty bearers expect the United Nations to stand with and for them. In accordance with the UN Charter, international normative commitments and member state expectations, it is our duty to do so.

¹ 2023: Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality, prepared by Dalberg Advisors, in partnership with John Hendra and Kavita N. Ramdas who served as senior advisors.

WHAT



What will we achieve and where we will be in 2030:

- Not all entities have the same starting point, but all will take bold steps and do more. In this way the UN as a whole will become an organization where achieving gender equality is:
- a strategic priority everywhere and driven by the highest level of leadership in each UN entity.
- grounded in UN norms and standards for gender equality and human rights and global commitments agreed upon by all Member States, what we call the Blue Principles
- indivisible from the goals and mandates of all entities that now fully embrace how advancing gender equality will advance their core mandate and how they can make real change for women and girls in all their diversity.
- goes beyond technical fixes to effectively address the deep, structural, and political issues of gender equality.
- based on a shared understanding of the root causes of gender inequalities, discrimination, and injustice.
- with a strong focus on delivering measurable results for women and girls in all their diversity in every Member State and being accountable to them for progress and results.
- planned, operationalized, and adequately financed.
- informed by valued technical expertise and more personnel with gender expertise, responsibilities, and budgets.
- amplified through strong networks, coordination, and division of labor.
- in partnership with women's civil society and feminist leaders and networks.
- driven by consistent gender-responsive leadership and accountability; and
- supported through aligned incentives and policies.

HOW

Accelerated and simultaneous system-wide change

A whole of system pivot is no trivial matter and it must therefore be given unwavering priority by all leaders of the UN. An intentional and simultaneous lift and shift is required for impact to be felt globally. We look to all our leaders, our personnel, all Member States and our partners to rally behind this plan.

**A Clarion Call
for gender
equality**

**Gender-
responsive
leadership**

**Accountability
for gender
equality results**

Resources

**Action for
gender equality
everywhere**

Together, the entire UN System will implement 5 bold sets of accelerators which will help us to pivot, step up for and stand with women and girls in all their diversity everywhere. We call it the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan - a system-wide clarion call and acceleration plan.

It sets out our commitment to move beyond achieving parity and accelerate ongoing efforts to achieve the much-needed internal UN transformation that when fully implemented will enable all UN entities no matter their mandate to support all 193 Member States and other stakeholders deliver equitably for and advance the rights of women and girls.

The accelerators recognize and build on existing system-wide efforts to mainstream and advance gender equality¹ and importantly seeks to close identified gaps around leadership and accountability in those efforts. All parts of the United Nations, in every Member State and at all organizational levels, stand ready to accelerate implementation of exciting policies and take new actions to deliver the kind of changes needed. Achieving the ambition of greater inclusion and capacity to deliver for women and girls in all their diversity across all efforts requires addressing entrenched patterns of power and patriarchy within all parts of the UN and in all UN member states. This will be matched with greater collective action in line with the UN system reform agenda, informed by strengthened gender expertise and by women and girls themselves, zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse, backed by strong leadership and accountability, continuous review and learning, and incentivized by financing targets and pooled funds. In accordance with its founding resolution, UN Women will play a key role, coordinating the UN system in these efforts, that will also continue to be championed by the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General.

WHEN

Starting now and accelerating toward 2025 and 2030

We will start right away and gradually expand our effort and reach over the coming years. 2025 and 2030 represent significant milestones for the global commitments to achieve gender equality. We will use the momentum for change that these milestones offer to propel our internal efforts forward. Our Acceleration plan therefore has three implementation stages:

2024/25	2026/27	2028/30
■ Start taking immediate effect	■ medium-term effect ■ can be felt at scale only after more design work, with more resources etc	■ longer-term effect ■ can start taking full effect after a significant 3-5 year transformation process across all entities

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability>, <https://dppa.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security>,

THE GENDER EQUALITY ACCELERATION PLAN– UN SYSTEM- WIDE GENDER EQUALITY ACCELERATORS

1

TOGETHER WE ISSUE A CLARION CALL ON GENDER EQUALITY TO CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE THAT THE UN STANDS WITH WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY EVERYWHERE.

- 1.1.** Together, all UN leaders call on all UN personnel to stand unwavering and united to uphold a strong policy stance on gender equality everywhere, upholding the Blue Principles.
- 1.2.** We strategically address pushbacks on gender equality and women's and girl's rights everywhere through multi-stakeholder engagement.
- 1.3.** Our coordinated and joint activities result in the reversal of systemic gender inequality across all sectors and UN pillars in all Member States.
- 1.4.** Support to and protection of women's human rights defenders is part of our strategy to advance gender equality in accordance with international norms and standards.

2

GENDER-RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP THAT PERSONALLY AND ACTIVELY ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE AND IN ALL EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES EVERYWHERE

- 2.1.** We learn from and address the lived experiences of women and girls in all their diversity – i.e., the injustice, barriers, violence, the harmful norms, and stereotypes.
- 2.2.** All UN entity heads lead the adoption and announcement of entity plans to operationalize the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.
- 2.3.** We conduct internal power analysis of the systems, structures and hierarchies and formal and informal decision-making, and change those that constitute barriers to gender equality and equity.
- 2.4.** We embed gender equality as a valued core competency for all personnel and adapt internal practices, procedures, and HR policies to reflect gender equality objectives.
- 2.5.** We work with other UN leaders to elevate and systematize specialized UN expertise on gender equality.
- 2.6.** We have no tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and put the rights and dignity of victims and survivors at the forefront of all prevention and response.

3

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY RESULTS WILL UNLOCK THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE GENDER EQUALITY ACCELERATION PLAN

- 3.1.** The Secretary General establishes a new system-wide Gender Steering Group to accompany the implementation of this plan.
- 3.2.** Each UN entity establishes their own Gender Equality Steering and Implementation Committee – or similar mechanism - to drive progress, learn, and enhance accountability for results.
- 3.3.** Under the leadership of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General Country Biennial Gender Equality Reviews of UN activities take place with the UN leadership in all UN Member States.
- 3.4.** We invite our independent internal auditors and evaluators to regularly review our progress on the Gender Equality Acceleration plan and report to our governing bodies thereon.

4

RESOURCING THE CHANGE, WE WANT TO SEE IS AN IMPERATIVE. MOST RESOURCES WILL LIKELY COME FROM INTERNAL REPRIORITIZATION AS WELL AS A SHIFT IN FUNDER PRIORITIES.

- 4.1. We strongly discourage gender-blind funding and gradually increase to minimum 15% our expenditures on all programmes to outputs where gender equality is the principal objective.
- 4.2. Together, we mobilize support for a strong and well-resourced UN Women and enhanced gender expertise in all UN entities.
- 4.3. We commit to raise \$300 million for women's organizations in conflict and crisis settings over the next three years through existing financing mechanisms, such as the WPHF.

5

TAKING ACTION, WE BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGE WITH ALL UN STAKEHOLDERS TO BUILD INCREASING MOMENTUM FOR THIS UN SYSTEMWIDE PIVOT ON GENDER EQUALITY AND TO ADVANCE NORMATIVE GAINS.

- 5.1. Working with Member States, we uphold and support normative gains on gender equality in all intergovernmental spaces and promote an ambitious revitalisation of CSW.
- 5.2. We open multiple opportunities for local women, girls and their representatives to access financing, and fully and meaningfully participate in UN led and supported activities.
- 5.3. We build strategic partnerships with private sector and philanthropy in support of our transformation.



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