



KEYNOTE REMARKS BY

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LEADERS' SUMMIT ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

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Excellency, Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon
Excellency, President Chi,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this 20th anniversary of the Beijing Program of Action - a landmark event that galvanized a concerted international effort to advance women's rights - we are grateful for the initiative to convene this year's Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,

Today's Summit provides a unique opportunity to reflect on how far we have come since Beijing, and to identify unresolved challenges that women continue to face in various domains across the globe. But identifying those challenges is not enough. We need to seek solutions for those challenges, in addition to pathways to equality and parity.

Madame Chairperson,

I don't have to remind everyone in this hall where my country stood 15 years ago in relation to the oppressive nature of the Taliban and other radical groups who ruled for several years over most of our territory before 2002. Afghan society in general, but women and children in particular, bore the brunt of the extremists' non-traditional and un-Islamic practices for several years.

Today, we have a totally changed environment. Afghan women and children have come out of oblivion and, under a constitutional order that enshrines their basic human rights, have made steady strides in the political, social and economic spheres of their country.

Despite difficult security conditions in some regions caused by terrorist elements or illegal armed groups, we have reached a point where women have regained their historic role as a powerful force for change and progress in society. But we see it only as a beginning, as the march forward has some ways to go.

Today, Afghan women make up one-fourth of the government workforce, with increasing access to high level decision-making positions. We have four female ministers in the cabinet, two female governors, new female ambassadors, several deputy ministers and, very soon, we intend to introduce a female member to the Supreme Court.

Women comprise 27 percent of all legislators in our national assembly, and have an unprecedented rate of representation in provincial councils. As such, they are actively engaged in decisions of national and local importance - including those, which concern our national security, political inclusivity and economic development.

In the area of education, we have invested heavily to increase the number of girls enrolled in schools, and to improve the quality of education they receive. Girls make up forty-percent of the more-or-less seven million children enrolled in schools.



And in the security sector, women are serving courageously to defend our country against various security threats as air-force pilots, soldiers, officers and in the police.

On the political front, I and President Ghani know from personal experience as presidential candidates last year that millions of our sisters turned out in massive campaign rallies, and comprised more than 35% of all voters in two rounds of elections. It is encouraging to know that Afghan women will continue to be an integral part of our journey towards the consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan.

Having listed these accomplishments does not mean that we no longer have serious problems in this sector. Women in my country continue to suffer as a result of violence, including honor killings, lack of adequate access to the justice sector and abject poverty.

Madame Chairperson,

This year's UNGA also coincides with the 15th Anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325 on "women, peace and security." On this occasion we reiterate our long-standing commitment to strengthen the role of women in preventing and resolving disputes; and in peace-building and development activities.

Afghan women are now part of peace-building initiatives, including track II exchanges with the Taliban and as members of the High Peace Council.

In June, we presented our national action plan on 1325; and we are confident that it will go a long way in expediting progress to implement the landmark resolution.

Protecting the constitutional rights of all our citizens is a high priority for the Afghan National Unity Government. As a result, we are conducting comprehensive reforms in our security, legal and judicial institutions to effectively investigate all incidents of mistreatment and to assure justice. In short, we aim to fight impunity.

We are sparing no effort to the implement the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law, and our National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA). The same is true for our commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), on which our first national report was presented in 2013.

We thank the international community for its generous commitment to helping Afghan women and children. However, under current conditions, problems stemming from insecurity, poverty and injustice will need continued support from the international community. We are also hopeful that development aid and gender programming assistance will be aligned with our national priority programs.



We welcome the fact that the post-2015 development agenda contains a stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, strengthening women's role in society, and in ensuring that their rights are protected. Afghanistan will do its part to reach the goals set for 2030.

Madame Chairperson,

Once again, I thank the Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon and President Xi Jinping of the Peoples Republic of China for convening this important meeting, and reiterate Afghanistan's firm commitment to further our progress in ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Thank You.