



***Statement by His Excellency Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado  
President of the Republic of Honduras  
Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:  
A Commitment to Action***

New York, 27 September 2015

Two decades past the adoption of the Beijing Global Platform for Action, my country, Honduras, has made significant inroads in the promotion of gender equality and equity, showing substantial achievements regarding the Millennium Development Goals on this matter.

However, my government has seen with concern, a series of unforeseen events and contingencies unfolding throughout the world during this period of time, and particularly in Honduras, and putting at risk the progress achieved so far.

Indeed, we met the goals and successfully eliminated inequalities between the sexes in the secondary and tertiary levels of national education, and we practically eliminated them in primary education.

At the national level, we have seen significant advances in MDG 3. Data for 2014 indicates that we did achieve the goal with regard to eliminating inequalities between the sexes in secondary and higher education, by reaching levels of 1.16 and 1.38, respectively.

However, we fell short in meeting the goal of equality in primary education, although progress was significant (0.95), and very close to the United Nations gender parity index (0.97-1.03). Such achievements come as the result of the various efforts undertaken by the State and the Honduran people—with support from the international community—to lead the country toward higher levels of education insertion, regardless of sex.

Furthermore, improvements have been recorded on female participation in the job market, and we have managed to reduce gender disparity with regard to income.

We saw positive results in terms of job remuneration inclusion for women in the non-agricultural labor market (industry and services), at a ratio of 48.9%, compared to the 50% goal, as well as in reducing income disparity in this type of jobs. In this regard, we are aware of the fact that gender gaps persist with respect to equal pay for equal work, even if women may have higher educational credentials, both in urban and rural settings.

We approved effective from 2016, the principle of parity share between women (50%) and men (50%) in managerial positions within political parties and elected posts. Furthermore, in 2013 it was established that 10% of the political debt of each political party be allocated for training and political promotion of women. The one indicator that did not show greater progress refers to political representation of women

in Congress, which maintains very low levels: That is, a ratio of one female representative for every four male representatives.

Although not at the level of the MDG 3, initiatives to introduce measures and activities on gender equality policy in municipal decentralization, had positive results in some local governments in the country.

The municipality of Santa Rosa de Copán, in Western Honduras, has been a pioneer in this area, with outstanding results in the creation and implementation of new instances and measures such as the Women's Municipal Office and the incorporation of the gender approach in its budget, the execution of projects of a social, productive, and cultural nature, and even the protection of women's rights.

To this end, the municipality has received the support of the State and the international cooperation, especially from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

Furthermore, new social policies adopted by the Government through the "Vida Mejor" platform, including the cash transfer program that targets families living in poverty; housing conditions improvements; training; solidarity microcredit; and technical assistance for the creation of new microenterprises. All of which have focused on women's issues.

Let me also mention that, the proactive employment programs carried out by the State, which are responsible for the creation of an important percentage of new jobs in the country, are implemented under strict gender equity criteria.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, we consider crucial to focus our attention on certain contingencies and circumstances that, in our judgment, are deserving of special attention and new approaches, still under development. I specifically refer to two issues. First, the rapid and unprecedented increase in domestic violence rates in its different manifestations. Second, a disproportioned percentage of femicides in relation to all violent deaths.

The cases of domestic violence reported in many countries of our region are growing faster than other types of crimes. Initially, such growth was attributed to an increase number in case reporting, observed as a result of behavioral changes in the face of cultural barriers that had kept these facts strictly within the family context, and far from the public eye. It is undeniable, however, that beyond an increase in reporting, there is also a strong growth in the incidence of these crimes.

I do acknowledge that Honduras has work to do in polishing the right strategies to cope with this trend. A trend we believe is having the greater impact on the life of women and families, as it is one of the main constraints to achieve genuine gender equity in the country.

Likewise, the emphasis Honduras has placed on policies and actions to fight violence and crime, has made it possible to evidence a significant increase in women violent deaths, even when the country has achieved a significant decrease in the totality of homicide rates.

When comparing our national scenario in the context of regional and global statistics, we observe that, even though there is a lower incidence than in many other countries— goes hand in hand with a global trend.

I strongly believe that these two issues, domestic violence and femicides, should be prioritized in renewed efforts to promote and achieve gender equity. If this trend is not reverted, domestic violence and femicide threaten to tame the progress and achievements made in other areas.

I hereby state the interest of Honduras in promoting and supporting initiatives aimed at better understanding these phenomena, their impact on the policies to promote gender equality, and the development of effective strategies to tackle the challenges they imply.

Finally, allow me to emphasize some of the major challenges we are still facing.

Honduras could not meet Millennium Development Goal related to reducing maternal mortality. We recognize this shortfall, and this issue constitutes one of the key elements in the Health Care System comprehensive reform, within the recently approved Legal Framework of the Social Protection System, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, we are tuning compliance with the various instruments envisaged for the effective incorporation of gender equality and equity, both in the planning and the operational Government strategy.

In this regard, the country's MDG 3 related relevant challenge refers to the implementation of the National Women's Policy and the National Plan for Equal Opportunities 2002-2007, which was followed by the recently approved II Gender Equality and Equity Plan (PIEGH II) (2010-2022), and its different components.

I rest assured that such implementation can be carried out with strong involvement of the different public actors (Ministries of Education, Labor and Social Security, Health, Economic Development, among others), municipal governments, private sector, and international cooperation. One of the immediate actions contemplated to tackle this challenge, is the integration of the guidelines of the second gender plan in strategic planning and POA of all State institutions.

Finally, although women's participation in the job market has increased, it remains at low levels when compared to men's participation, which poses a serious challenge towards further strengthening job promotion and creation under a gender approach. We refer to jobs that are attractive to women who are not in the workforce, and that encourage them to become rapidly and economically active.

As pointed out, we have full confidence that the support and incentives included in the "Vida Mejor" platform, together with the gender equity approach in proactive policies with regard to employment, will facilitate our compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

I reiterate our interest in engaging in deeper analysis of new challenges and in developing practical and effective strategies. To that end, I offer Honduras' unconditional support to implement actions that will allow for criteria harmonization and unification, and the drafting of roadmaps to bring them to fruition.

Thank you very much.