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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **The responsibility of men and boys in achieving gender equality**

#### **Chair’s summary**

1. On 16 March 2015, the Commission on the Status of Women held a conversation on: “The responsibilities of men and boys in achieving gender equality”. The conversation was chaired by H.E. Mr. Ruben Zamora (El Salvador), Vice-Chair of the Commission, and was moderated by Ms. Noelene Nabilovou, Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA), Fiji. The panellists were: Mr. Soren Feldbaek Winther, Special Advisor at the Danish Ministry of Gender Equality, H.E. Mr Henry MacDonald, Permanent Representative of Suriname to the United Nations, Mr. Gary Barker, international Director and founder of Promundo, United States of America; Mr. Bafana Khumalo, Senior Programme Specialist and co-founder of Sonke Gender Justice, South Africa; Mr. Natko Geres, Director of Status M Centre, Croatia. The respondents were: H.E. Mr. Antonio Gumende, Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the United Nations, Mr. Hiroshi Minami, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Ms. Kate Gilmore, Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, Mr. Gary Cohen, USA, Executive Vice President of Becton, Dickinson and Company and Founder of the Together For Girls Partnership, and Ms. Ayla Goksel, CEO for Mother Child Education Foundation, Turkey. Representatives of 22 Member States, the European Union and one non-governmental organization participated in the interactive discussion.
2. Participants welcomed the increasing attention to and understanding of the

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importance of engaging men and boys in gender equality, and the growing attention to this issue in intergovernmental fora. The growing evidence of what has worked in policies and programmes constitutes a solid basis to foster and expand initiatives developed and implemented so far, and highlights the urgency to bring this work to scale to enhance its impact. Participants provided examples of initiatives to foster the positive engagement of men and boys ranging from community level initiatives to national action plans. These included dedicated programmes on eliminating violence against women, fatherhood and positive masculinities, parental leave policies, steps to encourage men to be caregivers and kindergarten teachers, men as equal partners in regard to sexual and reproductive health and contraceptive use, as well as in HIV prevention and support.

3. Participants confirmed that social norms can change, since roles are socially defined and changeable. Social constructs and related stereotypes can and must be transformed in the home, in the community, in local and national institutions, through legal and policy frameworks and across private and public spaces. The transformation of unequal power relations between women and men at individual, community, social and institutional level was key to sustainable development.
4. It was noted that men as individuals are also positively affected by gender equality, as it contributes to abandoning risky masculinities and stereotypes of dominance, toughness and violence. This does, however, also require action and support in favour of the “man to be”, as social pressure and expectations needed to be mitigated through peer support. In order to enable a qualitative shift, the concepts of protector, benevolent father/partner needed to shift in favour of responsibility, rights, equality and partnerships.
5. Participants emphasized the important role of early socialization of boys and girls in shaping identity and transforming gender relations to prevent and eliminate discrimination and violence and build relationships of respect. Educational programmes in the home, in schools and in places where children are socialized are key to developing non-discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. Quality comprehensive sexuality education needed to become an inherent component of formal and informal curricula in order to build positive and respectful behaviour of boys and girls, prevent violence, enhance adolescents’ sexual and reproductive health and ensure adherence to, retention in and completion of education programmes.
6. The media, sport and education institutions had a prominent role to play in shaping positive cultural shifts. The increasingly complex role of media and social media in creating cultures of equality specifically of youth and facilitating women and youth’s access to services and opportunities required stronger investment and attention. Participants also highlighted that the private sector can play an important role in changing codes of conduct in work places and in promoting women’s leadership through the transformation of corporate values and culture. The engagement of religious leaders as active promoters of transformative change was critical in relation to harmful practices and traditional social norms that prevent the full realization of the rights of young women and girls.

7. Civil society, including strong and cohesive civil society movements can enable transformation and cultural shift. The role of civil society in holding government accountable, transforming mind-sets and building alliances and consensus on priorities for the achievement of gender equality was stressed.
8. The importance of data for a better understanding of men's and women's gendered roles was recognized. Consequently, participants called for efforts to build the evidence on trends of men's work in the home and on time use by men and women. Better evidence was also needed in regards to prevention and elimination of violence against women, attitudes and behaviours towards sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the redistribution of unpaid care work. Such evidence can play an important role in overcoming barriers to change.
9. Participants called for a more consistent and sustainable engagement with men and boys. Initiatives to engage men and boys needed to be expanded and scaled up, and integrated with the existing work on gender equality. At the same time, participants emphasized that investing in men and boys should not be to the detriment of resources allocated to women's organizations, women's empowerment programmes or gender equality mechanisms. Rather, additional resources needed to be provided to implement specific policies and strategies to focus on the responsibility of men and boys in the achievement of gender equality. Funding was required for comprehensive approaches to the engagement of men and boys and to complement and strengthen existing systems and instruments in place to achieve gender equality.
10. According to participants, governments must demonstrate political will and accountability for implementation and enforcement of coherent legal and policy frameworks that guarantee women's human rights, promote gender equality and address gender inequalities. Violence against women and girls, harmful practices, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's access to and control over assets and productive resources, girls' and women's rights to a quality education at all levels, women's access to decent work and the elimination of the gender wage gap, women's universal access to social protection and services, women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work, and women's leadership and partnership at all levels were mentioned as the primary areas that had to be addressed without delay.
11. Participants called for gender equality to be integrated as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda, as well as across all the other goals and targets. Including indicators on men's responsibility for gender equality in the sustainable development goals would send an important signal, strengthen accountability and contribute to the transformation of unequal gender relations.
12. Investment in gender equality and women's empowerment was also called for. Participants called for a stronger inclusion of gender equality programmes in existing financing for development frameworks. It was recognized that the current investments in gender equality needed to be expanded.