



Speech of Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women

UN Women Executive Board
First Regular Session 2015

Date: 9 February 2015

Venue: UNHQ, Conference Room 1

Mr. President,

Members of the Executive Board,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues and friends,

Good morning.

First of all, please allow me to thank and recognize the fine leadership of our outgoing President, Ambassador Gonzalo Koncke Pizzorno of Uruguay, who has steered his excellent bureau and board during their tenure.

I am also honoured to congratulate our new President of the Board, Ambassador Ib Petersen of Denmark, and to welcome Algeria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Colombia as new members of the Bureau for this year.

2015 is a very important year for the United Nations, and even more important for UN-Women.

Distinguished delegates,

Soon you will participate in the upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action over the last 20 years; complete the work on the post-2015 development agenda, and negotiate financing for development, and review the study of the 15- year review of Security Council resolution 1325.

This year can be a springboard for concerted global action on gender equality and women's empowerment; it is a moment for bold decisions under your capable leadership.

We launch this year with solid endorsements of our mandate and role, and acknowledgement of our achievements.

AUDIT REPORT

Mr President,

We have a second clean audit. Let me thank the UN Board of Auditors, as well as all the offices that worked so hard in this process.

Let me also thank the UN-Women team that manages our finances.

We take good note of the warning of UN-Women's financial vulnerability in the case of a decline in voluntary funding levels.

EVALUATION

On today's agenda we also have a main item on evaluation.

I would like to recognize and thank the Chair of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee, Caroline Heider for her leadership and the Committee's excellent work.

We are proud that your central finding is positive, that we live up to the United Nations Evaluation Group's standards of independence, credibility and utility, and that we compare favorably with other UN organizations.

UN SYSTEM COORDINATION

In its second year of implementation, the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN SWAP) continues to be a systemic success.

UN SWAP is continuing to stimulate action within the UN system with 62 UN entities and departments reporting progress in 14 of the 15 performance indicators.

UN-Women's investment in capacity development across the UN System has contributed to the continued effectiveness of UN SWAP.

However, we are not complacent; we will keep driving for improvement.

MOPAN

Mr President,

Last month, the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) provided its assessment report of UN-Women – the first ever – providing a comprehensive, robust, and evidence-based review of the first three years of our work.

Our overall rating of ‘adequate’ or ‘strong’ on most indicators was very pleasing.

MOPAN endorsed our mandate and mission; recognized our strategic focus, our focus on results, our policy and normative role, and our strong evaluation function; and highlighted the need to address our funding situation.

EBOLA

Mr President,

UN-Women is key to all of the critical areas of the UN System.

I believe that one of the most striking examples of the way in which we can and should ‘deliver as one’ is the UN response to Ebola.

I am particularly thankful for UN-Women’s work in this deadly outbreak. You will hear more at the lunchtime informal briefing, including from our staff in Liberia and Sierra Leone, in which latter office we lost one staff member to Ebola.

Their dedication and courage demonstrated how much we can contribute even where our resources are modest.

We have fought to bring a data-driven perspective on the epidemic’s disproportionate impact on girls and women in their roles as caregivers and frontline health workers, as well as the essential role of women as leaders and drivers of recovery.

For now, let me read you an extract from a message from Mary Okumu, Country Representative in the Sierra Leone office.

She tells their story frankly of the experience of becoming a stigmatized office and experiencing traumatic loss that they turned to a positive:

“People were cautious in relating to us from a distance. They could not trust us – after all, one of us had died from Ebola.

At least the stigmatization was a propelling force – that it should not have to happen to others. We understood deeply just what it felt like to be discriminated against-- isolated and unwanted.

We agreed to get back on our feet and help others who were hurting like us.

We used every single means at our disposal: advocacy, lobbying, strategising, gender analysis, cultivating allies, educating the public, and mobilizing through social and all media. We used the same media that that discriminated against us to pass on the message.”

Mary finished her message with a quote from Bob Marley: “You never know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice “.

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

Mr President,

In 2015, after fifteen years of being in force, Security Council resolution 1325 is being reviewed. UN-Women is proud to serve as the Secretariat of the Global Study on implementation of resolution 1325.

This is a critical year of taking stock. Persistent gaps remain in all aspects of women’s involvement in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

I want to thank the member states who have taken considerable interest in this review and are helping with its implementation, from provision of resources to hosting of review sessions.

Mr President,

We continue to extend support to Syrian women in the area of livelihood and psycho-social support targeting displaced women. We work with women from all sides of the divide.

We have also recently established a presence in Yemen, a truly challenging country to be a girl or a woman.

UN-Women’s programming in South Sudan has expanded significantly since last year, and we thank the governments of Denmark and Japan for their support.

In my recent meeting two weeks ago with the very impressive South Sudan Women for Peace, we were asked to assist with the consolidation of an inclusive front of

women for peace. UN-Women enjoys good relations with all sides and our work has been highly appreciated, thanks to our team at country level.

EDUCATION

Mr President,

You asked us in Executive Board decision 2011/3 to emphasize the importance of education in our work.

We are forging ahead, in partnership with relevant United Nations bodies, especially with UNESCO, starting with an innovative joint programme in education and gender equality, with UNFPA joining as a partner. We will announce details at the CSW, and I will report further on this at the Board's next session.

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Mr President,

The campaign is on track to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and to critically evaluate its implementation.

I thank the record-breaking 164 countries who made those reports and participated in the regional reviews. I recognize too the rich contributions from civil society, who remain so integral a part of this.

The recommendations for the future that stem from these reports will be a centrepiece of the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March.

CSW59

Mr President,

When Member States gather on the first day of the Commission, we hope that this will be a moment for a strong reaffirmation of commitment to full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform and all normative frameworks for gender equality.

Let me express our appreciation for the bold proposal to galvanize momentum for accelerated implementation through a political declaration.

Early adoption would send a powerful signal of cooperation and consensus.

Mr President,

It is critical that Member States commit to a target date of 2020 for stepped up, measurable progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action, and to 2030 as the definitive expiry date for gender inequality.

Civil society has declared its commitment to this time bound fight to end gender equality.

We call for Planet 50:50 by 2030.

During CSW59, we invite the representatives of all countries to commemorate Beijing +20 with the stalwarts who were in Beijing in 1995, the generations that followed and those who will be there in 2030 and beyond.

We will be joined in that celebration by the thousands of civil society representatives who have signed up to attend CSW59.

We thank the city of New York for being a partner to the Beijing+20 commemorative iconic events.

In November last year, New York led our drive to cities all over the world to light up their landmark buildings in orange - dramatically united in solidarity to end violence against women.

It is that spirit that we hope to continue through our memorandum of understanding with New York City and a growing body of cities around the world.

To illustrate and build on the interconnectedness between the post-2015 development agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action, we are co-hosting a Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in September 2015, with the People's Republic of China.

POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The post-2015 development agenda is an un-missable chance to bring together all countries to make a universal, transformative deal and effectively fight inequalities, poverty, vulnerability and environmental degradation, so that all countries make progress in the three pillars: development, peace and security, and human rights.

A strong, dedicated gender equality goal, complemented by gender-sensitive targets and indicators in other goals must be part of the post 2015 agenda.

Four components of the post-2015 development framework are being negotiated in the UN General Assembly:

- the declaration,
- the goals and targets,
- the monitoring and review,
- and means of implementation and global partnership.

All must contribute to the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the realization of women's and girls' human rights.

This requires increased and renewed investments, a strong commitment to improve data collection and analysis, accountability frameworks for leaders, and established responsibilities for all stakeholders, including the private sector.

There is a greater responsibility for men in their dominant leadership roles to make far-reaching contributions.

As this process unfolds, I call you on to build on the existing normative framework on gender equality and non-discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action.

No goal or target should fall behind existing international human rights standards. All targets must be designed to make a difference. We urge you to keep this in close focus.

Without your extra vigilance and determination to usher in a bold agenda, we could miss this important moment.

These are the decisions that will change the history of the world and the reality of women.

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Mr President,

An ambitious post-2015 development agenda must be matched by an equally ambitious level of financing for gender equality.

Without a significant increase in investments for gender equality the new agenda will remain words on paper.

FULLY FUNDING UN-WOMEN

Mr President,

What's true for the world is true for us.

Your ambitious vision for UN-Women is yet to be matched by an equally ambitious level of financing for gender equality.

The funding level of 500 million US dollars that was originally envisaged for UN Women in the Secretary-General's Report continues to elude us.

We have taken an extraordinary step in asking for the Secretary-General's intervention in relation to our resource mobilization challenges. We appreciate his willingness to work with us to step up our collective and combined efforts to improve our funding situation.

Underfunding handicaps us and is a severe risk, as our partners and auditors have pointed out, which makes it highest priority for myself and my top executives.

In 2014 the financial support for UN-Women came from an increasingly diversifying pool of donors.

Let me put on record once again our deep appreciation of the support that member states and international institutions such as the European Commission provide.

In 2014, we saw:

- the highest number of Government core contributions of over 140 member states;
- “double digit” core contributions from 6 member states, notably Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, but we need 15 such double digit champions, and I note efforts by countries like Japan and the United Arab Emirates to step up their support;
- a new \$20 million benchmark from Finland and the United Kingdom, however, more such leaders are needed; and
- the highest revenue since our establishment. The provisional figures for 2014 show regular resources (core) of \$163 million and other resources (non-core) of \$150.3 million.

In the next UN programme budget cycle, we need to ensure that UN-Women's allocation of assessed resources is substantially increased – from its current modest 0.27 per cent share at 7.7 million dollars.

Later today, we hope that the structured dialogues on financing will help us to find ways to achieve full funding for 2015 and so to be better positioned to deliver on the expected post-2015 commitments.

PRIVATE SECTOR AND HEFORSHE CAMPAIGN

Mr President,

One of the ways in which we are building a broader front of actors who take practical steps to support our mission is through the HeForShe campaign. We are reaching out to mobilize men and boys in all walks of life, with the aim of self-questioning and behaviour change.

In its first four months, HeForShe has achieved some astonishing, record-breaking successes and unconventional, thought-provoking outreach to men and boys.

It has put the United Nations centre –stage as a leader in the global quest to engage men and boys in the gender equality movement.

In Davos last month, at the World Economic Forum, we launched a drive to further galvanize action by a growing body of CEOs, heads of states and universities who are willing to make solid and unparalleled commitments to gender equality. We are seeking at least 10 in each category to start with, in what we call the IMPACT10x10x10 challenge.

We are immensely grateful to have the extraordinary leadership of the Prime Ministers of Finland, the Netherlands, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Sweden as initial political champions.

Adding in the muscle and practical sway of the private sector, the CEOs of Unilever, PriceWaterhouseCooper and Tupperware have committed to full implementation of the Women's Empowerment Principles, and will extend their pilot projects further.

The recent Barbershop Conference in New York was yet another milestone at which the permanent representatives to the United Nations played an important role.

I thank the Permanent Representatives of Surinam and Iceland for leading this initiative.

The conference was deliberately designed to challenge conventional thinking and to give participants time to reflect on and question the role of men and boys, the current power relations, and the role of patriarchy.

We urge Permanent Representatives to replicate these barbershop events in their own countries throughout this important year, and to report back and share the experiences from them.

We hope they will forge ahead to have the difficult conversations that disrupt the status quo, and break the social norms and gender stereotypes that limit opportunities for women and girls and restrict men and boys to certain roles.

Distinguished delegates,

As you know, UN-Women is going through a transition in its senior management. I will introduce the newly recruited senior staff at our annual Session in June once they have started at UN-Women.

Mr President,

In conclusion, as we turn our thoughts to 2015 and to the years ahead, I would like to acknowledge this Board for its crucial leadership, and to thank you.

Allow me also to warmly thank the CSW board, who are already hard at work under the chairpersonship of Thailand.

Your support and strong leadership for this entity is integrally linked to the ultimate success of the whole post-2015 development agenda, as gender equality is pre-requisite for the success of the sustainable development goals.

As Mary in Sierra Leone said – “Being strong is our only choice”.