

Opening statement by UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women,
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the 2017 Annual Session of the Executive Board

27 JUNE 2017

[As delivered]

Madame President,
Members of the Executive Board,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends,

Good morning.

Firstly, let me thank Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh for her strong interest and engagement as the President of the Executive Board and for her unwavering support for UN Women and the cause of gender equality. I also want to thank the whole Bureau for its dedication to the cause of gender equality. May I also thank the Vice-Presidents for facilitating the Board's decisions during this session. We look forward to constructive and fruitful negotiations under your guidance.

Since the last session, Bureau members have been on a Joint Field Visit to Nepal, and a UNWomen field visit to India. It has been a busy session. These field visits bring to vivid life the work we do in programme countries. You will experience part of this with the briefing on the operational response in Somalia tomorrow. I really wish every member of the Board could experience a field visit at some point.

I am pleased to introduce to you Katja Pehrma from Finland. She joins us as Senior Adviser and Focal Point for Women in the UN System. This is a key appointment as she will also support the Secretary-General's push for gender parity in the UN, and our work as we align the UN-SWAP and the country-level gender scorecard that will monitor the implementation of the SDGs. Katja brings nearly 20 years of experience in multilateral diplomacy, negotiations and leadership.

We also say goodbye to Marco Segone, our Director of Evaluation, as he joins UNFPA. Under his leadership, the UN Evaluation Norms and Standards have been revised and a new stand-alone Norm included on integrating gender into the evaluation function of the UN system. He has promised that he will continue to be an advocate for engendered evaluation norms and standards wherever he goes. We wish him all the best in his next position.

Today I will briefly address both the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and say more on the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Our performance to date has critically informed the development of the new Strategic Plan, under the overarching direction of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. Our results in 2016

build on several years of hard work by our staff and your support. They demonstrate our growth, learning, and improvement, including how we have learnt to work within our mandate.

In 2016 alone, in 61 countries—with a combined population of nearly 1.6 billion women and girls—72 laws were adopted or amended with our help. In some cases, we have been able to accompany the implementation of these laws through our country presence. This work strengthens the protection of the rights of women. In 24 of those countries, the improved legislation was on ending violence against women and girls. We have a keen interest in the implementation and follow through of these laws, so that women can truly experience the benefits of the laws that have been passed. Our field presence is a vital enabler of this. So is our triple mandate.

By combining our normative, operational and advocacy role we contributed to increased political participation. Our advocacy led to eight countries adopting temporary special measures to support women's political participation. For example, in Tunisia political parties are now required to have equal numbers of women and men on lists of candidates for municipal elections—a first in the Arab world. And in 51 countries, our training built women's leadership and campaigning skills. In some cases, women were able to campaign successfully and win.

UN Women is active in 74 countries to support an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. Last year, our support resulted in stronger economic policy frameworks in this area in nine countries. Our work on economic empowerment benefited from our extensive engagement in the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. It has been enhanced by the agreed conclusions of the 61st Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61).

We continue to fight for better investments in gender equality and women's empowerment. We made some initial progress in 28 countries, which increased their budget allocations for gender equality. These countries have a combined female population of over 1.2 billion. If these policies are implemented effectively, we could significantly impact a large number of women and girls.

We have built our capacity to leverage ICT and innovation, directed at practical solutions for those who most likely to be left behind. For example, in Rwanda, in partnership with the government and the World Food Programme, we have connected 3,000 women farmers and cooperatives through their mobile phones to information, finance and markets. This is again an illustration of leveraging partnerships effectively to scale up change in women's daily lives and to provide them with opportunities. It also demonstrates effective use of our coordination and operational mandate to drive a high impact through a flagship initiative.

We continue to build productive engagement with the private sector that offers opportunities for dramatic transformation in some cases. Our HeForShe Corporate IMPACT Champions have demonstrated progress in their commitment areas. For example, PricewaterhouseCoopers has

reached parity at senior leadership, moving from 18 per cent to 47 per cent representation of women in just one year. And this has raised the bar for their peers. Vodafone, another Champion, is delivering free access to online and offline education with learning materials to refugee children in settlements in Kenya, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and that also is being done in a manner that targets girls who might otherwise be dropping out of school.

Just last week at the Cannes Lions festival, we co-launched with Unilever a new alliance with some of the most influential brands in the world with global reach. The alliance has committed to un-stereotype their advertising and project the society that we aspire to, free of gender stereotypes.

And 400 more companies adopted the Women's Economic Empowerment principles.

In the area of women, peace and security, specific provisions for women and girls have been included in 70 per cent of UN-supported peace agreements, thanks to UN Women's engagement, and that of partners on the ground. Even though we realize much more still needs to be done in this area, there is renewed and increased interest in women's leadership and mediation. For example, in the "Women's Leadership Initiative for Stability in Africa", Germany, with UN Women and the African Union Commission, is supporting a two-year effort for a network of African Women leaders to strengthen the capacity of women in the African continent to make a difference. Some 100 African women leaders attended the launch event of this network last month. This will increase their availability to support conflict prevention and peace building.

Our humanitarian action work has increased. We supported and partnered with 263 women's organizations in response and resilience-building, directly supporting more than 125,000 women and girls.

In 2016, we contributed to focused attention on women and girls in a spectrum of intergovernmental processes starting with CSW 61. We also contributed to the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, where we were the Chair of the Global Migration Group and emphasized the special needs of the most vulnerable. We contributed to the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, and we also contributed to the New Urban Agenda adopted at HABITAT III.

We have significant and strong partnerships with civil society and women's organizations at all levels. Our movement-building support for civil society has taken on increased urgency as we encourage women to raise their voices, calling for their rights, and protecting their rights to control their body and make their own decisions. Together, we are protecting women in their diversity and responding to growing xenophobia, tightened restrictions on all aspects of women's autonomy such as their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Together, we uphold the rights of elderly and young women, of rural and indigenous women, and women with disabilities.

This requires significant advocacy, in which civil society has consistently supported us, and in some cases provided needed leadership. We have actively participated in major events at this year's CSW, and in the AWID and the Women Deliver conferences, in which women's rights have been at the top of the agenda.

Distinguished delegates,

The audited Financial Statements of UN Women for the year ended, 31 December 2016, show good liquidity and a strong net asset position, and are expected to receive yet another unqualified audit opinion.

Last year, despite exchange rate losses and a constrained funding environment, it was an improved year for resource mobilization—not enough, just improved— with increased revenue compared to 2015 levels, reaching \$327 million. Regular resources reached \$141.6 million and other resources grew to \$178.1 million. This steady growth path helped inform our projections for the Integrated Budget. Yet, we are still not where we need to be in order to make the largest impact on those being left behind, and we must move as fast as we can in order to achieve our aspirations of what we want to deliver by 2030.

The two-year Integrated Budget that will be presented during this session is aligned with the four-year strategic plan. It emphasizes cost effectiveness, efficient resource management and a strengthened link between results and resources. The Budget projects voluntary contributions of \$880 million for 2018-2019 and requests an institutional budget appropriation of \$203.8 million. It complements the very limited funding we receive from assessed contributions under the Regular Budget of the United Nations.

Nevertheless, our resources remain below the level of political commitment for the gender equality agenda. And we know that, with greater resources there is much, much more that we can do and deliver.

This is true both for UN Women and for investments in gender equality and women's empowerment in most parts of the world, when we consider that work that can be done by civil society and by women's ministries and similar organizations.

We also have limitations. We have not made as much progress as we hoped for, in some areas of our strategic plan. Eight outputs remain off track. For example, we did not meet the target number of countries for nationally generated and disaggregated statistics on economic opportunities for women. Nor did we support a sufficient number of countries with evidence-based practices to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

These limitations are a missed opportunity and we intend to do our utmost to address them going forward. They remain a concern, reminding us how much we need the capacity to fully

and effectively carry out our mandate, and to further develop our institutional structure and systems.

The new Strategic Plan responds to these challenges and is stronger on the partnerships that are required in order for us to extend our reach. We are committed to collaborating across the UN, and building enhanced gender expertise within the UN System, so that gender mainstreaming can be both effective and impactful. Both are integral to this new Strategic Plan.

I would like to thank you for your active engagement, guidance and support throughout the process of the Strategic Plan's development. We promised robust engagement and extensive and transparent consultations with the Executive Board. We received extensive feedback, including at last week's informal briefing, which was extremely useful. We have taken note of your comments.

In addition, we held consultations with member states, civil society, within the UN system, and with the private sector. We also made sure to engage with those whose voices are often least heard, for example the International Disabilities Alliance. The integration of their suggestions ensures that our planning authentically reflects the needs and wishes of those we serve and the rights of all women and girls.

This new plan is eager to provoke significant and durable progress, with as many partners as possible, and without delay. At this year's Commission on the Status of Women, I called for 'constructive impatience'. That is a keynote for making sure we use the full power of our mandate to leave no one behind and that we are mindful of the long wait many have endured already.

Throughout our consultations, we heard the importance of leveraging our triple mandate and of treating all parts of the mandate as indivisible, and equal. We are committed to this balance as we work with partners in and out of the UN system. For us, working with others is simply a necessity—it is our 'collaborative advantage'.

We see our triple mandate as our key added-value and together we are able to target these partnerships, in many cases with your support. Our common chapter sets out a strong commitment to working together, and fully leveraging the diversity of the UN system in support of Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. UN Women is actively collaborating in 32 out of 53 Delivering as One countries. We have gained much from that experience, particularly in Mexico, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Viet Nam. We will pursue this and benefit from this experience as we follow up the implementation of the QCPR objectives.

The new Plan is different in focus and implementation. Leaving no one behind and reaching the further behind first are core principles of the Strategic Plan and a measure for success. The human rights-based approach permeates the whole Plan. Partnerships and innovation are key features, so is the use of data. The Plan addresses multiple and intersecting forms of

discrimination. It pays particular attention to young women, older women, women with disabilities, indigenous women, rural women, and other vulnerable groups that experience discrimination.

It addresses structural barriers to gender equality across all the Strategic Plan outcomes so that change is not subject to reversal and is truly transformative;

The lessons learnt and the requirements of the QCPR have been used in the leveraging of our mandate, especially in the architecture of the FPIs. This focuses us on limited but high impact programme work. In addition to better integrating our triple mandate, we have moved from 17 outcomes to 5, and from more than 30 outputs to 12. The Flagship Programme Initiatives have applied our composite mandate to scale up results and create impact through partnerships with governments, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector, as envisaged in the QCPR.

Our measures of success are clearer with more quantifiable indicators that capture the difference UN Women is making in women's lives. We have articulated clearer drivers of change.

We will also continue to work with and expand to new constituencies working at national and regional levels. We will work with media and advertising organizations to change deep seated attitudes and cultural norms that are slowing down our impact and progress. We will work with men and boys, who will continue to be engaged through HeForShe and making sure that we will also work with other organizations on this issues as well as with Member States. We are also working with faith-based organizations and will continue and expand this in the next four years.

Youth will be a key priority with capacity building for young women, and the promotion of youth participation across all outcome areas, fostering their voices, and creative contributions, for example through Young Innovator Awards. You heard yourself the voices of young people who addressed us last week.

Innovation and technology will accelerate trends and leapfrog progress through our innovation facility, which we launched last year.

Increased high-level advocacy is a key strategy, working with top decision-makers like Heads of State and CEOs as well as at grassroots levels, with both public and the private sectors. We have experienced the progress and the benefit of working with CEOs and Heads of State who are HeForShe Champions.

Through the Plan we will promote the voices of rights holders, particularly women's voices.

The Plan supports better integration of leadership and participation with national planning and budgeting, as they are mutually reinforcing areas.

Women's economic empowerment has a strengthened focus on macroeconomic policies, income security and social protection, rural development and entrepreneurship, and is aligned with the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

Ending Violence Against Women has a greater focus on prevention in line with CSW57's agreed conclusions, integrated into our programmes with a greater focus also on data, and better implementation of existing laws.

On Women, Peace and Security, there is great alignment with Security Council Resolution 2242 and integration of the 1325 Global Study recommendations.

And across all outcomes there is a greater focus on use of good data as it is important to indicate progress.

Our field presence remains essential. In line with the Regional Architecture evaluation, we are working towards better alignment of HQ with country needs. We are moving towards a differentiated field presence, introducing transparent criteria for UN Women's presence, respecting national ownership and leadership and promoting South-South cooperation.

Distinguished delegates,

We are moving from a Strategic Plan that bridged the start of the 2030 Agenda and our early years, to one that takes us through our first decade and past the crucial 2020 milestone for substantive progress towards substantive and irreversible equality by 2030.

By 2021, we want to see more women who lead, participate and benefit equally from governance systems with increased representation in decision making in both public and private sectors, and in the United Nations; more income security, decent work and economic autonomy, with women enjoying equal pay and with better provision for those in the informal sector; and more women in business, especially women entrepreneurs.

We want to see more women and girls living a life free from any form of violence; more women and girls with decision-making control over their bodies, their health and their futures, and with access to reproductive health services; more women and girls contributing to sustainable peace and resilience and benefiting equally from crisis prevention and humanitarian action; more women benefitting from important legislation with far-reaching impact, assisted by our operations, and fewer countries with discriminatory laws; and more capacity and expertise for gender mainstreaming both in the UN headquarters, and at country level.

We want to see a broader rights-supportive culture growing throughout society, that stands up against negative norms and stereotypes, with a strong women's movement connected together on ending violence against women; and we want to see coordinated efforts in the implementation of SDGs at country level, focused on impact and monitored through scorecards.

In the United Nations itself, leading by example, we should like to see gender parity in employment, as envisioned by the Secretary-General. With Swap II we are focused on collective impact and coordinated accountability.

Distinguished delegates,

A strong partnership with Member States is essential throughout our work. I can never overemphasize this. The role of the Executive Board is pre-eminent in that relationship. Also essential is our extraordinary relationship with civil society.

I thank you for your support and advice, as we shape the road ahead for this organization.

Together with our partners in every part of the world, we will continue to deliver for women and girls, seeking equality for all.