

*Closing remarks by United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, at the First regular session of the UN-Women Executive Board*

14 February 2017

Thank you very much, to the Vice Presidents, for guiding us efficiently today, and thanks as well to all of the Vice Presidents for guiding us.

I thank **H.E. Ambassador Pajevic** and **Mr. Shiraz Mohamed** for chairing the session, **Ms. Gail Farngalo** for chairing the side event, and **Mr. Nicolas Randin** for facilitating the decision.

I would also like to convey my thanks to the President of the Executive Board Ambassador, Lana Nusseibeh, in her absence, and thank her for her message. We look forward to her participation at the next Executive Board.

I want to thank the delegates for all their statements today, and also for the work that you have done over the last two days. The participation in the informal workshop of the Strategic Plan was informative and intense, and I think we learned a lot. You have helped to guide us and to give us a roadmap. Thank you, and please rest assured that we have listened to your inputs, where you have raised areas of concern and where you have given us suggestions. We also liked it when you praised us, so we take the full package. I heard this session described as “substantial, interactive and interesting”, I think by the representative of Switzerland; we also appreciate that the representative of Chile applauded the interaction.

I do want also to thank the Regional Directors; I hope this was a fruitful experience - to meet the Executive Board members and to have an opportunity to engage and to share information about their work.

The representative of Maldives mentioned on behalf of small island developing states that “the Board must not be disconnected from work on the ground”. We see in that statement the need to be better connected to constituencies such as those States who have specific and particular needs.

We also hope that the presentation you have heard today from our country office in Moldova has inspired you to see what happened “on the ground”. I want to congratulate Moldova - one of the newest offices - certainly showing that being a new kid on the block does not mean that you cannot be great and innovative. Congratulations for all of that. I also want to thank the Ambassador for his reassuring remarks and the support that we have received from the Government and the people of Moldova as we have been doing our work there.

I concur with the Member States on the comments they have made about the Regional Architecture. I thank Switzerland for the comments on the regional architecture evaluation made on behalf of 15 countries and Switzerland. We have noted your concerns and we will pay particular attention to all of the critical areas you have identified. I am pleased that we have an opportunity to share with you what we are doing on the humanitarian front, and I want to thank the Government of Japan for the support that they have given us on that front. Clearly it is not pleasing for us when our work in the humanitarian emergency area is growing because it means something is not right in the world, but I am relieved that in our own small way UN-Women has been able to play a role and to partner effectively with other agencies and partners, civil society and government.

We noted with appreciation that you welcome the focus of the Secretary-General on gender equality. Indeed, we want to assure you that we will take full advantage of this renewed commitment toward gender equality in the UN and we will make sure that this benefits our work and our ability to execute our mandate.

The representative of Samoa acknowledged the work of UN-Women in Vanuatu and Fiji after the cyclones in 2015 and 2016, and we appreciated that, and the fact that we were actively involved in rebuilding the lives of the women there. We appreciated what the representative of Pakistan pointed out, including sharing with us the progress that they have made and the fact that they now have a Foreign Secretary who is a woman. We appreciate that because we do have some setbacks in some places, but we appreciate it when another country makes progress. The representative of Bangladesh also highlighted that their Prime Minister is a woman and the leader of the opposition is also a woman.

We were applauded by the representative of the USA for the work that we do in Myanmar and Pakistan on ending violence against women, and again we appreciate that. We have noted and we concur with all the Member States who raised time and again the importance of a rights-based approach in the work that we do, because indeed this is also what defines our work.

The representatives of Norway and Sweden underlined that gender equality benefits all genders and makes countries more prosperous and capable. This is the message that we take to heart and it drives our outreach, not just to women but to men and boys who we are now beginning to see as partners in addressing gender equality.

We noted the representative of Brazil's emphasis on the work that needs to be done to end femicide, and indeed our Regional Office and our team in Latin America is seized with this issue, as well as other partners in the UN system.

I also appreciate the comments that you have made about our financial situation. I thank the Board for the statements as well as the countries that have increased their support for us. We like to hear this increase, increase, increase tone all the time, and we do indeed welcome that message.

The representative of UAE expressed concern that, despite the ever-growing demand for the work of UN-Women, our funding continues to depend on voluntary contributions, and called for that to be revisited. We hope that this idea will find traction.

The representative of Panama encouraged UN-Women to reach out to non-traditional donors, and we welcome your ideas in that regard.

We also noted with appreciation the comments by the UK delegate on the importance of working to produce results, and to link resources to results; something that is also very important to us.

The representative of Maldives had encouraging words for UN-Women by saying "A great plan with a promising future will always find financial resources".

I want to thank Lakshmi Puri and the team she has led that has worked on the Strategic Plan, for the countless hours that they have spent on this plan. Julien Pellaux and his team, our colleagues in the field, Shane Sheils, all our managers, as well as our regional managers - everybody has

invested time in making sure we understand how the Strategic Plan will give us a roadmap that is in line with expectations.

We are now nearing International Women's Day. Please make sure that it is in your calendar. We will have, as usual, a really interesting event on the day. The theme is aligned to the theme of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); it is about women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work and links to our campaign for Planet 50-50 by 2030. We will also make sure there is a bridge between that theme and the theme of CSW.

CSW61 already has about 8,000 delegates who will attend, between private sector and governments. You can imagine that this is indeed going to be a bumper activity. We are anticipating also a high number of Ministers, judging by the active participation of Ministers in the different regions in the pre-CSW consultations.

We will hold the CSW Youth Forum again. We are hoping that this will also be another opportunity for us to invest in young people and to begin to train future diplomats, activists and people who care for humanity.

During the CSW we will present a report to the Secretary-General from the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, which was established by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. That report will come with some interesting recommendations. We hope to have the time to discuss these with Member States even after the CSW as they will support a lot of the work you are already doing in your countries on women's economic empowerment.

There are a number of activities by the private sector, by Member States, and by civil society as usual, which will make the CSW weeks and days challenging as well as exciting. You will be spoiled for choice for events to attend.

In addition to that we will also be looking at interacting with Ministers and at how we could accelerate the implementation of existing agreements and commitments. As we adopt new agreements, sometimes we forget the agreements that we have already made. We sometimes pilot new commitments without teasing out how well we are doing with the previous commitments. We have planned a session during the coming CSW to do a reality check on this.

On a lighter note, but exciting, there will also be a HeForShe "Arts Week" in the city. This is a way in which we are trying to make the period of the CSW a time in which many people who are not attending CSW also think about the issues that are being discussed. We will share with you the arts venues that will be hosting activities, music, drama, etc. that will carry the message of CSW. Similar events will happen in London, Paris, Bangkok, Santiago, Chile, Sao Paulo, and in Panama City.

We are taking the world, inch by inch, with your support.

Thank you.