

OPENING STATEMENT BY UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UN  
WOMEN PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA  
EXECUTIVE BOARD, 14 FEBRUARY 2017

*As delivered*

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

Please allow me to thank and recognize our outgoing President, Ambassador Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Permanent Representative of Tunisia, who has steered the excellent 2016 Bureau and Board throughout their tenure last year. Your contribution is highly appreciated.

I also warmly thank the whole Bureau of 2016 for their commitment and hard work.

Although she is not able to be with us today, I am honoured to congratulate our new President of the Board, Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates. As you know, she is a strong champion for gender equality, and for the work of UN-Women.

I also congratulate and welcome the new Vice-Presidents who will be chairing in her absence: Ambassador Ivana Pajevic (Montenegro), and Mr. Shiraz Arif Mohamed (Guyana), as well as Ms. Gail Farngalo (Liberia), and Mr. Nicolas Randin (Switzerland), who are the other two new vice-presidents. Welcome to you; we look forward to working with you.

I welcome all the Member States that have become members of the Executive Board in 2017: Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, El Salvador, France, Israel, Montenegro, Nigeria, Rwanda, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Yemen, and Zambia. Welcome.

I would like to take this opportunity of introducing to you UN Women's excellent team of Regional Directors: for East and Southern Africa, Izeduwa Derex-Briggs; for West and Central Africa, Diana Ofwona; for the Americas and the Caribbean, Luiza Carvalho; for the Arab States, Mohammad Naciri; for Asia and the Pacific, Miwa Kato; and for Europe and Central Asia, Ingibjorg Gisladdottir.

They are the captains of our regional architecture and steer our all-important work in the field, of course assisted by our country offices. This is the first time in the Executive Board's history that we have the entire team present at the session. They are in New York to discuss the preparation of the Strategic Plan. They have benefited enormously from yesterday's workshop, and I hope you also had an opportunity to interact with them. Thank you all for participating in a very active way in the workshop we had yesterday.

I would also like to introduce our Director of the Strategic Partnerships Division, Ms. Joelle Tanguy who joined us in September last year. She leads the efforts to ensure the growth and diversity of our funding base. These resources are much needed for us to deliver on our mandate. Welcome, Joelle.

The Strategic Plan for 2018-2021 frames our aspirations. The collaborative, transparent and accelerated process of preparing the plan demonstrates how UN Women will execute its mandate within Agenda 2030.

We are working with our Member States and with our counterparts in the UN system, as well as with civil society and a growing body of non-traditional partners. We know that we must work together if the entire 2030 Agenda is to deliver for women and girls, and build on what we started in Beijing.

Close alignment and congruence with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and others also preparing their strategic plans has been a priority, and will influence execution. This is fully in line with the call in the QCPR for greater coherence and collaboration across agencies. For UN Women this is a no brainer! We need this coordination and collaboration.

I would like to draw your attention to three aspects that distinguish this Strategic Plan from its predecessor.

First, the new Plan is strongly aligned with the 2030 Agenda; it builds on the lessons that we have learnt in the last two decades, and demonstrates our contribution to the Agenda's implementation. And it takes forward UN Women's central role in supporting other normative agreements, most notably the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. It sees 2021 as a stepping stone to the end game of 2030.

Secondly, the plan also takes forward the lessons of the current plan, clearly identifying our added value. It will articulate the difference that UN Women makes in girls and women's lives, with a particular focus on those at risk of being left behind. It will include focus on change that lasts, initiatives that we can replicate and scale and tangible results. It will leverage innovation such as ICTs wherever possible.

Thirdly, the Plan will capitalize on our triple mandate of normative support, UN coordination and operational activities. We are still learning to take full advantage of the unique opportunities this offers for UN Women, so that we can play a key role in promoting UN coherence and Delivering as One, breaking silos between development, humanitarian-action and peace and security.

Finally, we are determined to strengthen the linkages between results and resources. This includes a more streamlined results framework linked to realistic resource level estimates. These objectives are fully aligned with the guidance of the QCPR, and we look forward to discussing this with you later today under the relevant agenda item.

As we prepare our new Strategic Plan, we will be guided by some measure of hope that we will be able to afford to implement it. Realistic resource level estimation includes a reasonable degree of predictability. This is an area in which you could assist us - wherever you can - by ensuring that your support is made available on time.

I will again argue that there is a need to rethink how much we receive in assessed contributions and to better position UN women's funding architecture within the UN system. We think our argument is credible and valid. We have made a request to the General Assembly's Fifth Committee to this effect, and ask for the support of your Permanent Missions to address this current severe handicap once and for all.

As you know, we currently receive only some 7 million dollars a year from the Regular Budget of the UN. This is 2 per cent of our total funding. This is in contrast to a very worthy agency with a similar combined mandate which receives some 40 per cent of its funding from the Regular Budget of the UN – 20 times that of UN Women.

We thank in particular the Member States who have increased their core contributions. Germany doubled its core contribution, the Netherlands almost doubled, and Japan increased by 25 per cent. UAE and Sweden increased significantly, and Denmark and the USA also raised their contributions. Finland, Switzerland and the UK maintained their high contribution levels. This is much appreciated.

This year Luxembourg and Norway have already made early core contributions, and I encourage all Member States to follow suit as much as possible.

The total provisional core income for 2016 rose by only approximately 4 million dollars as gains were offset by exchange rate losses. Provisional non-core income also increased modestly to pass the 170 million dollar mark. This number is likely to grow during the current year. Contributions from the private sector, though increasing, are still below 10 million dollars.

We put our resources to good use. For example, with the invaluable support from important partners like Sweden and Japan, we have doubled our portfolio of humanitarian work and quadrupled the number of countries in which we operate, since 2014.

Although we have not yet been allowed to be members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee we are actively involved through leading its Gender Reference Group. Again, we urge you to support us so that we can gain full membership of this Committee.

Over 2015 and 2016, we had ongoing humanitarian programming in 32 countries. Our work includes rebuilding the means of livelihood for women and their families, or distributing supplies in Nepal to nearly 43,000 of the most vulnerable women affected by the earthquake. We also provide gender expertise for joint assessments - for example, currently we have staff in Chile for the assessments after the fires, including the extent to which that has affected the lives of women and their families.

Again in line with the expectations of the QCPR and through our coordination mandate, we are building the coalitions of broad support needed to tackle the most intractable, deeply rooted issues.

For example, in 2015, UN Women launched the first-ever joint UN Framework for Preventing Violence against Women. This was jointly developed in partnership with ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and WHO. It establishes a common approach within the UN System, policymakers and other stakeholders.

Currently, we are leading the coordination effort in 5 out of 9 pilot countries in the Asia-Pacific: Cambodia, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Pakistan and Vietnam, with partners UNFPA, UNODC and WHO, with a view to the global rollout of the prevention programme with emphasis on the provision of essential services. Again, in this way we are beginning to perfect coordination and Delivering as One.

We are now seeing progress with gender becoming a valuable part of shared programme thinking and implementation with partners. The UNDG reports that gender now represents the area of highest concentration of joint programmes: 103 joint programmes are currently being implemented at the country level.

Even more importantly, the focus has turned to evidence of appropriate gender-focused action in the field.

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is one of the key instruments to strengthen the quality and coherence of country-level programming. 90 per cent of the 27 UNDAFs that were launched in 2016 feature at least one outcome level result to support gender equality and the empowerment of women. We are on the eve of the second UNSWAP, which will take forward the work of SWAP 1, and contextualize accountability for gender mainstreaming and results within the SDG-related work of the UN system, including by the UN Country Teams.

There is a window for repositioning UN Women and better coordination under the new Secretary General's leadership. Our new Secretary-General has expressed strong support for gender equality and women's empowerment, building on the tradition of the previous Secretary-General. He has also supported the mainstreaming of gender as a key aspect of his priority focus on prevention.

To leave no one behind, women and girls must be placed at the centre of efforts. For this reason, we highly value our seat on the SG's Executive Committee. This is an important opportunity to integrate the gender perspective in the highest-level of decision-making across the three pillars of the UN.

The Secretary-General has made an exemplary commitment to achieving gender parity at senior levels of staffing in the UN by 2021. This mirrors well the initiative we have started in HeForShe, in which we have asked the private sector to work hard to achieve gender parity by 2020. The Secretary-General has formed a UN Gender Parity Task Force that is responsible for accelerating progress towards equal representation of women at all levels of the UN. UN-Women is a co-chair of this.

Momentum is building on all sides and our coordination role has even greater relevance. This does not suggest all is smooth sailing. We can see the gains but also the threats to these gains. Women are also taking it upon themselves to protect the gains. Across the world, women's voices are growing in strength and unity. They too are calling for what we have promised in our Agenda 2030.

In many countries women are reconfirming the correctness of the choices made in Agenda 2030 and especially in Goal 5. In Poland, Bolivia, Cape Town, London, Uruguay, Washington and multiple cities all around the world, women are standing up to protect gains.

Their calls are for: universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; full and effective participation and equal opportunities for women's leadership in work and in politics; the end of all forms of discrimination; and the end of violence against women, and to hold perpetrators accountable. We must embrace these calls and support the women.

This is what the 2030 Agenda has given us. This is what the Sustainable Development Goals have given us – a shared aim for our global community. And not only Agenda 2030. Over the last two years, a resounding global gender equality compact has been accumulated, through the Beijing +20 Review, Agenda 2030 itself, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the New Urban Agenda and the New York Declaration on Migrants and Refugees. All of these are intensely engendered.

This global gender compact reminds us of the drive for change and the strength that comes from acting together, within the strongly principled framework of the UN, with aspirations that are shared by the world. On our part, we look to you to uphold these values and to help us extend them to the women and girls of the world.

I thank you for your support and for your continued engagement. I ask that you continue to uphold the cause of gender equality and women's empowerment as you go about your other business as representatives of your country, and as you prepare next month for the Commission on the Status of Women.

Our priority theme – Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work - is critical for our future, for economic justice and for making the world we live in leave no one behind. I look forward to seeing you all at the CSW.

Thank you.

