

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

13 February 2018

As delivered

Thank you very much, Madame President. I would also like to thank the other Excellencies for this session.

I want to start by thanking Madame President for leading us through the session so efficiently as well as thanking the Vice Presidents for the coordinated and efficient way in which they worked and supported the President before the meeting. I think that was clear from their interventions today.

We thank the delegations for all their statements, as well as their questions and the issues raised—some of which we went through today - as well as the questions that they expect us to work on and come back to them on.

There were a number of issues that came up from your discussions and contributions. I would like to highlight some take-aways that emerged as clearly important to you.

Most of the delegations highlighted the importance of gender parity, as well as the importance of positioning UN Women and the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Secretary-General's repositioning process. In that way, you are encouraging us to ensure that UN Women plays a significant role and takes full advantage of this new space and possibility.

Colombia and Turkey, for instance, noted that as a member of the Group of Friends for gender parity- a group of 144 members- they strongly support the Secretary-General's commitment to achieve gender parity in the UN. This is an area that UN Women has worked on and we were encouraged by the number of Member States who expect us to continue to support this work of the Secretary-General.

We were heartened to learn from the Ambassador of Turkey that Turkey is also driving its own gender equality within its mission, and that women diplomats are at 73%, and 27% of the male diplomats are HeforShe. So clearly this gender parity trajectory is cascading.

Colombia highlighted that gender equality will be a cross-cutting issue for the United Nations and therefore UN Women needs to fully utilize its coordination mandate. This was echoed by other Member States.

Finland underlined that UN-Women's coordination role should be fully taken into account in the reform process both in the development and the humanitarian context.

We also appreciated reference to the gender pay gap, which was mentioned by more than one country sharing their experiences as well as expressing concern about the its continuation and urging for more work to be done in this area; something that we are also very concerned about.

Panama highlighted the importance of gender parity work and efforts towards equal pay, for instance through the Equal Pay Coalition (EPIC), which we have facilitated as UN Women, ILO and OECD. Panama has created a pay equity seal with businesses to raise consumer awareness of the gender pay gap. And New Zealand also expressed both interest and concern on this same subject.

Belarus also highlighted results achieved in gender pay equality following the adoption of its 5th National Action Plan to attain Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment by 2020. And of course we know that Iceland has also taken up this issue and is doing a lot of groundbreaking work in increasing pay equality. We were pleased to learn that women's pay has significantly increased in the workplace.

As always, the issue of violence against women was also raised by Member States who, like us, are concerned about this issue. New Zealand pointed out that an undersecretary to the Minister of Justice with the responsibility to end sexual and domestic violence against women has been appointed. And the United Kingdom has pledged a "zero tolerance" policy on sexual exploitation and abuse within the UN system, and has entrusted UN-Women to put in place robust systems to investigate complaints. More Member States referred to the issue of violence against women.

We appreciated Norway's reminder that UN-Women needs a sustainable inflow of flexible funding to allow the efficient delivery of the Strategic Plan. Today's presentations on the work being done in Haiti, and our ambition to use innovation to ensure that we have significant and scaled impact everywhere we work clearly would be helped by an inflow of flexible funding that would allow us to experiment, and also would impact those innovations that were successful.

We appreciate the congratulations from the US government, the increase for our funding, and the recognition of the effective partnerships we have created.

A number of Member States made reference to our humanitarian work, as well as to the work on women, peace and security. Given that this is a relatively new area for us, which we have increased quite significantly within a very short space of time, we are very thankful for the support and encouragement that we have received from the Member States. As we work in these humanitarian settings, they continue to present very challenging situations both from man-made crises as well as crises that nature is responsible for.

We hope that the work that we presented on innovation has demonstrated that even though we are a relatively small entity we are committed to shouldering our responsibility and using whatever means we have at our disposal to reach out to a significant number of women and girls all over the world. I urge you to support us and welcome those Member States who have ideas on how we can reach our innovation journey to come forward.

We appreciated your response on the work that we have done on HIV/AIDS. I also thank UNAIDS as well as my team for the work that we have done together and I hope that our presentation showed you that, with relatively limited resources, we have been able to reach a significant number of women and girls in many countries that are grappling with the disease.

In conclusion, I also have noted some of the questions that you have. We will either send responses in the interim or we will table them at the next Executive Board. We look forward to our ongoing collaboration. Again, my thanks to Madame President and the team that supports her.