



PERMANENT MISSION OF MONTENEGRO TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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OPENING STATEMENT

by H.E. Ms. Ivana Pajević

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On the First Regular Session of the Executive Board

of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

“New York 13th February 2018”

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Your Excellences, special guests, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for entrusting me with the position of the President of the UN Women Executive Board in 2018. It is a great honour for my country, Montenegro, and for myself. It is also a great motivation to make difference for rights of women and girls in every corner of our world.

I warmly welcome and congratulate the newly elected Vice-Presidents who will work with me in supporting this Executive Board in 2018 - Ms. Christine Kalamwina from Zambia, Mr. Jo Il Lee from the Republic of Korea, Ms. Desirée Cedeño from Panama and Mr. Jyrki Terva from Finland.

Your Excellences,

We all know that societies are stronger when women and girls' rights are respected, when women are valued and empowered, and when they have leading roles in our communities. Full protection against violence and discrimination, equality of girls' access to education, women and girls' access to labour markets, equal work and pay and equal participation in social and political institutions are indispensable for successful eradication of extreme poverty, for sustainable development and peace.

We should spare no efforts to open real opportunities for women and girls. The key is our strong, full commitment to it. We have to involve women and girls everywhere - in schools, in businesses, in military ranks and at peace talks. Institutions, companies, governments and organizations achieve better results if they offer equal opportunities. Only when countries pursue gender equality

agenda and use the potential of all women and girls, they can generate sufficient funds to reinforce success across the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Promoting gender equality both at home and internationally is a priority of Montenegrin Government. Our national policy on gender equality focuses on three priorities: increasing political participation of women, combating violence against women, and economic empowerment of women.

Since the adoption of the first Law on gender equality in 2007, my country has passed a long way in developing a systemic approach, building institutional capacities and implementing action plans for gender parity and promotion of women's rights. The efforts of state administration have been, all the way, supported and complemented by the efforts of civil society and international organisations. This has created a significant shift in our society in only a decade - from no policy to a functioning legal and institutional framework based on common European standards. It has been acknowledged, among others, in the latest reports on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the third national report at the UN Human Rights Council as a part of the Universal Periodic Review of human rights.

But moreover, it has affirmed our strong conviction that prosperous and peaceful societies can only be sustained if women's rights are protected and if women have equal opportunities to grow, learn, participate, and be protected from violence. And we are happy to share our experience with countries and societies in which similar efforts need to be made in order to improve the situation of women and girls.

Distinguished colleagues,

We must continue gathering around gender equality and women and girls' empowerment. We need full dedication, commitment and strong engagement of the Board, the Bureau, all Member States and the Secretariat. As we live in the world where violent conflict and political disruption continue to have disproportionate effects on women and girls, UN Women is taking decisive action and seeking new ways of building peaceful and resilient societies.

Last year this Executive Board endorsed the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 that sets out an ambitious agenda. It is encouraging to see that UN-Women has started as ambitiously in its work as the Plan is in its goals. This Executive Board is in a unique position to follow up on its progress on delivering on norms, as well as in coordination of the UN system on gender equality and in operational activities on country level.

Throughout the year, at each of our sessions UN-Women will present an example of its work at country level. We will hear a presentation on Haiti today and later this year on Tanzania and Iraq. These briefings give us a vibrant picture of what UN-Women delivers at country level in support of national priorities of the host countries. That is a good opportunity for Member States to ask questions about the operational response of UN-Women.

This spring we will have the joint field visit of the Executive Boards and the UN-Women specific field visit. Last year I had the opportunity to participate in the field visits to Nepal and India. These visits were truly valuable experiences that gave all of us a feeling of satisfaction, that UN Women work is achieving real results for the women and girls in their communities. We witnessed the determination and strength of the women that we met, as well as their readiness to bring positive change to their lives and the lives of future generations.

By the end of the year we will consider several evaluations. In addition to the annual evaluation report, we will discuss evaluation on UN-Women's contribution to political participation and leadership. Those will be additional opportunities for us to enquire about the work of UN-Women on the ground.

Distinguished colleagues,

My intention for 2018 is to make the UN-Women Executive Board even more engaging, collaborative and useful. I will also ensure to work in close cooperation with the Presidents and Bureaus of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA within the Secretary General's reforms of the UN development system.

We all have a role to play in achieving gender equality. Women and men, girls and boys, we must all step up and work together as advocates and positive voices for UN-Women, gender equality and women's empowerment. That is the only way to succeed in today's world and implement 2030 Agenda.

This is our common goal and I would like to assure you of a full engagement of my Government and me personally in that regard.

Thank you!