

**H. E. Alie Kabba, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of
Sierra Leone to the United Nations
President of the UN-Women Executive Board, 2021
UN-Women First Regular Session
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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me, on behalf of my colleague Bureau Members, welcome you all to the first Regular Session of UN-Women Executive Board for 2021.

I am very grateful for the opportunity and honour to serve as President of UN-Women Executive Board for 2021. Please allow me to acknowledge my predecessor, colleague and friend, H.E. Ambassador Mr. Jukka Salovaara, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations as well as the Vice Presidents and entire dedicated team of UN-Women for their sustained commitment to duty throughout 2020 despite the brazen global challenges that unfolded before our own very eyes.

I would like to express deep appreciation in highlighting the work of the Board to ensure full business continuity; and I applaud UN-Women on its ability to deliver targets and fulfil its mandate despite the shift in working arrangements which have been in place since March 2020. We recognize the untiring efforts of UN-Women together with Member States and partners, civil society and all gender champions in promoting gender equality through the empowerment, promotion and advancement of women and girls everywhere in the world.

Let me underscore here that 2021 will be an important year for UN-Women and its Executive Board as crucial matters such as the next Strategic Plan 2022-2025 will be adopted by the Executive Board at its second regular session of 2021. Therefore, during the tenure of the new bureau and under

my presidency, we will continue to elevate the debate at the Executive Board meetings to ensure our discussions are strategic and strengthen the effectiveness of its oversight function with regard to improved governance. In the same context, I look forward to strengthening our common understanding of what it means for UN-Women to have a composite mandate. In particular, I will be happy to bring closer the normative and operational discussions in order to bridge the normative/operational gap.

We are all aware of how COVID-19 pandemic continues to expose structural inequalities across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection; and, we are all too aware, the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on the life and livelihoods of women and girls are alarming with far reaching consequences. Structural inequalities are further amplified in the context of fragility, conflict and emergencies.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls is essential to realizing the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The barriers that hinder women's advancement in all areas of their lives and livelihoods continue to persist. According to the findings of the UN-Women evaluation team, the multifactorial and entrenched gaps between men and women still exist. This is the time for us all to step up and unite around the vision for a more just, inclusive and equitable world. We need inspiring actions around our common purpose with shared responsibility to achieving opportunity for all.

Therefore, UN-Women's role in the context of bridging those entrenched gaps remains imperative. As the global champion for the advancement of women and girls' rights, UN-Women has a compelling role to play in the UN reforms. This is why 2021 is a critical year for the work of UN-Women because of the potential pressure that the entity would be under to ensure

that we build back better in a gender-responsive manner.

As we look forward to the adoption of the new Strategic Plan, I commend UN-Women for the extensive and inclusive manner it has conducted consultations particularly when it is coming at a time after the historic landmark events of 25 years of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 75 years of the UN, 20 years of the UN Security Council resolution 1325, 10 years since the creation of UN-Women and the first year of the Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs.

I look forward to your continuous support, collaboration and close partnership to achieve our common goal.

I thank you for your attention!