



**Executive Board of the  
United Nations Entity  
for Gender Equality and the  
Empowerment of Women**

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**Speech delivered by UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet at the opening of the Annual Session of the UN Women Executive Board, UN Headquarters, New York, 27 June 2011.**

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Excellencies, Madame President and Members of the Executive Board, Distinguished Colleagues,

I would like to begin this Annual Session of the Executive Board by saying thank you. I recognize the huge effort that you as Board members have invested in these first months of UN Women's life, and the production of its first Strategic Plan. We have been working closely with the President, Ambassador Ogwu, and Vice President, Zahid Rastam, to address the guidance and interests that all members have expressed to us during many consultations. In working together to build this first UN Women Strategic Plan, you are making history.

I also want to pay tribute to the hundreds of individuals and organizations that have provided ideas and feedback. Scores of government partners, UN Country Teams, women's networks and academics attended consultations in multiple countries in every region. Assistant Secretary-General for Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships Lakshmi Puri has been leading the consultations with you and Assistant Secretary-General for Policy and Programme John Hendra, who recently completed his duties as UN Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam, told us that the consultation on UN Women's Strategic Plan in Viet Nam attracted 150 participants who stayed to provide feedback for nearly three hours. Oxfam Novib undertook a global survey of international NGOs; the GEAR Campaign organized outreach to women's networks worldwide while supporters in the U.K. set up the "Godmothers for UN Women. We have been so

privileged to receive the vast amount of ideas and encouragement which have generated an unparalleled amount of shared ownership.

In my travels to more than 15 countries and capitals in the past eight months, and through the inter-governmental conferences I have participated in — the convictions that brought me to UN Women have been reinforced repeatedly. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is not solely a plea for justice or for fulfilling human rights commitments. It is both of those things, but also so much more. Where we fail to capitalize on the potential and talents of one-half of the population, we also squander the potential to reduce poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and violence.

The evidence base for this is growing. FAO's most recent State of the World's Agriculture estimates that closing the gender productivity gap arising from unequal access of women to productive resources would reduce the number of undernourished people by 12 to 17 percent. That translates into 100 to 150 million fewer people living in hunger. Thirty-five UN MDG Reports from different countries around the world show that the child mortality rate for children of mothers with no education is more than twice that of those with a secondary education or higher. A McKinsey & Co. Report found that profitability increases when more women are on corporate boards and in top management.

Countries are beginning to count the cost of domestic violence to health and lost workplace productivity: in the US these reach US\$5.8 billion each year. In today's world, can we afford not to increase investment in eliminating gender discrimination when it has the potential to yield such high returns?

UN Women's good fortune is that it comes into being at a time when countries and businesses are asking this question, and rethinking their investment strategies. Our challenge now is to meet the rising demands and expectations.

Today I will first summarize highlights of my recent missions and how they strengthen the case for this Strategic Plan. I will then review where we want to be by the end of the Strategic Plan and the progress we have made to date on the transition and on the interim Vision and Action Plan that we presented to you in January. I will conclude with some comments on how this Plan helps us move together with a common vision.

I have been fortunate, over the past eight months, to travel to Liberia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Panama, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Viet Nam and China as well as to several donor countries. I have also visited and met with our colleagues at the European Union, African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa as well as other Regional Commissions such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

On a visit to Egypt together with the UN Secretary-General in March, and also this month in both Egypt and Tunisia, I was asked to share my experiences in democratization and advocated

for the inclusion of women in decision-making at these critical junctures of transition to new governments.

I want to thank my hosts in each of these visits. I am looking forward to visiting other regions, including South Asia, the Pacific, and East and Central Asia — as well as additional European capitals in the coming months.

These visits have given me a first-hand understanding of our country level work, enabling me to get to know our dedicated UN Women staff and UN Country Teams, Government leaders and members of civil society. I am impressed with how much we have accomplished together with the rest of the UN system and also how much more we can do to support Member States. These visits have also helped to validate that our Strategic Plan responds to the requirements and priorities of Member States.

UN Women's Strategic Plan and vision is framed by the General Assembly resolution that brought us into being and the global agreements that countries have made over the past decades, including, among others, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Millennium Declaration. While our Plan will be assessed and adjusted in 2013, our vision extends to 2017. It is aligned with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review cycle and with the planning cycles of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.

Many countries have transformed global and regional agreements on gender equality — or parts of these agreements — into national laws, policies and strategies; now their implementation needs to be stepped up. Others are still identifying what legal or policy changes are needed and want to benefit from global best practice as they establish a more conducive environment for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Our overarching vision is that every country in the world, at whatever level of development, has access to the technical expertise and support needed to advance gender equality in line with their national priorities. This is fundamental. It depends on richer countries willing to finance the technical support that UN Women and the UN system can provide, and on UN Women being able to rally the UN system and considerable expertise in gender equality worldwide to respond to country-level requests. In some areas UN Women also needs to increase its own capacity to respond to the demands of Member States for support.

Based on the feedback from our consultations, we have identified six priority areas, as well as concrete targets to guide our work. I want to be clear that we are not setting targets for countries nor monitoring their performance. We determine progress based on how many countries UN Women or UN Country Teams are able to support in a holistic manner to achieve what the countries have prioritized. That is, our targets are about the proportion of demand that we are able to meet in those areas where we are playing a leading role.

First, we will help advance women's leadership and participation, ensuring that countries have access to the best knowledge and technical expertise to accomplish this. Working with UN system partners, especially UNDP and DPA, we will assist countries to raise the percentage of women in national legislatures, to increase the numbers and capacities of women in local councils and in political parties, to support public administrations to position women at the front line of public service delivery, and to support the UN system to reach its goals for women's leadership in the Resident Coordinator system.

Different countries may set different targets in relation to women's representation and participation — UN Women's job is to help them achieve these. For instance, UN Women supported more than 25 countries and electoral commissions to introduce measures to increase women's roles as candidates and voters and to learn from south-south exchanges. We are projecting that we will provide coherent UN support to incorporate quotas and special temporary measures for women by 2017 in at least 15 additional countries.

Second, where countries are prioritizing women's economic empowerment, we want to mobilize coordinated UN support — from ILO, FAO, IFAD, UNDP and the multilateral development banks. This is a particularly exciting new area for UN Women and our goal is to facilitate more holistic UN system support to countries to strengthen gender responsive implementation of the decent work agenda, including social protection, and to adopt and implement measures to increase women's access to, and control over, productive assets.

We will carry forward work with the UN Global Compact to sign up more corporations to the Women's Empowerment Principles, with a target of 500 companies on board by 2015. We will build on efforts supported through the Fund for Gender Equality, such as the Johnson Sirleaf Market Women's Fund in Liberia, to develop a model of women-friendly markets that provide integrated support to market women and their children to enhance both their profitability and their rights. We will also prioritize economic empowerment options for rural women, including in new green industries and in the context of Rio+20 and advocate for greater investment in women's leadership in new economic development opportunities.

Third, our partners have requested stronger UN Women leadership and UN system action to end violence against women, in all of its forms. This is an area in which the four pre-existing entities, the UN system, and many governments and civil society organizations already have a significant body of work to build on. We will provide high quality support to enable at least 30 percent of those countries supported to advance primary prevention strategies and to increase access of survivors to integrated health, legal and protective services in at least 20 percent of the countries in which the UN provides coordinated support.

We will expand our work on Safe Cities for Women and Children — including through our recently launched partnerships with UNICEF and UN Habitat — and are projecting that local

authorities in 35 cities will have access to model approaches for increasing women and girls' safety in public spaces by 2017.

We envision stronger partnerships on ending violence against women with UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF and UNODC. Managing the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women as an inter-agency asset requires strong ownership by UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators. And to grow the UN Trust Fund — an efficient mechanism to get funds directly into the hands of innovative initiatives and government agencies — we need to ensure that the Trust Fund becomes the pre-eminent source, worldwide, that supports what works to prevent and end violence against women.

Fourth, UN Women will support women's leadership in peace, security and humanitarian response. We are working in close partnership with all relevant parts of the UN system, including the 13-member inter-agency mechanism, UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. With the Peacebuilding Support Office and eight UN entities, we have developed a strategy for peacebuilding that commits all of us to deliver concrete results.

UN Women will play a key role in promoting accountability for implementation, working with UN partners to achieve concrete targets, including that women and girls receive 40 percent of benefits from temporary employment programmes in post conflict situations, and that 15 percent of multi-donor trust funds are dedicated to promoting women's empowerment priorities. We will also work closely with DPA to achieve 20 percent representation of women as mediators and technical experts in UN-administered peace negotiations. At the request of both donor and programme countries, UN Women will support at least 25 additional countries to finalize National Action Plans on Security Council resolution 1325.

Fifth, national planning and budgeting processes that promote gender equality, is another area where we already have strong momentum. We are working closely with Ministries of Finance, Planning and Statistics in many countries to help them build their capacity in gender analysis, gender budgeting, and use of sex disaggregated data for more gender responsive public policy and budgets. We are working with women's networks and machineries worldwide, the OECD-DAC GenderNet and the UNDG Task Team on the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness upcoming in November 2011, to ensure that a strong voice for gender equality can inform the debates and build commitment to track indicators of investment in gender equality.

It is important to note that an increasing number of UN organizations — including UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN-OCHA — are building experience in incorporating gender markers in their financial management systems, which bodes well for increasing UN accountability. UN Women is working with UN partners to assess the feasibility of a system-wide approach to disaggregating budgets by gender.

Finally, the sixth goal brings forward the key results that we anticipate supporting in the inter-governmental arena. UN Women will ensure a visible link between normative agreements and operational experiences, including through the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and increase attention to gender equality in the broader inter-governmental machinery.

This quick overview of the substantive results that we hope to support countries to achieve depends both on the United Nations performing more effectively, and on building internal management systems and capacities that will enable UN Women to deliver what we have committed.

What aspirations for expanding UN system support for gender equality drive the UN Women Strategic Plan? Let me highlight three.

UN Women being represented in the highest level decision-making bodies, from the Chief Executives Board to the Secretary-General's Policy Committee and the UNDG enables us to support more coherent UN policy frameworks. We are already seeing results in this area, and are working with UN system partners to develop system-wide frameworks and action strategies on women, peace and security, and on ending violence against women.

Second we should see increased accountability for gender equality across the UN system. We are already making progress through the seven-point action plan for gender and peacebuilding and through coordinating efforts to have a common approach to gender budgeting in the UN system. We are seeing both Secretariat and operational agencies setting up systems to track budget allocations from the perspective of gender, which is an important initial step. At country level, we continue to support implementation of UNCT Performance Indicators on Gender Equality as tools for promoting accountability. Eighteen countries have already implemented the Performance Indicators and an additional 31 UNCTs are planning implementation this year. UN Women has provided technical support to UNCTs implementing the performance indicators via a Help Desk and will continue to support this work closely through the UNDG.

And, third, we must have mobile, accessible, and high quality capacity and technical support available to UN Country Teams. We are working with UN colleagues to explore how to build different forms of stand-by or surge capacity. Since UN Women will not increase its presence significantly in the immediate future, we need creative and cost-effective ways to ensure that UNCT's can access high- quality support on demand even when UN Women may not have presence in a particular country.

Turning now to the transition process: We are moving forward the priorities of the Vision and Action Plan I presented to you in January. The Vision and Action Plan provided important areas of work around which the four former entities could unite. We have developed some important strategic partnerships in line with the Plan, including with UNICEF and HABITAT on Safe Cities, with ILO on Domestic workers, with the Economist Intelligence Unit and Vital Voices on the Women's Economic Opportunity Index, and with the Global Colloquium of University

Presidents on a common research agenda. UN Women's draft coordination strategy is now ready and will be shared with the wider UN partners for comments before it is finalized.

We are going through an unprecedented change process in UN history. We have brought together staff from four different entities and are moulding UN Women into one culture, one team, one business model and one highly motivated workforce with a common purpose.

I now want to move to the important area of building the human capacity of UN Women to meeting the challenges and opportunities in the Strategic Plan. I am learning that things take longer in the UN system than I imagined.

Recruitment of senior management in New York is completed. We are fortunate that our two Assistant Secretaries-General — Lakshmi Puri and John Hendra — are now fully on board. I am so pleased that they are here — not the least being that I can share some of my workload with them.

The other part of my senior management team — the new D2s have also been recently announced with highly qualified individuals coming on board — with a good geographical balance.

I also hope to announce the D1 appointments soon and the first round of the internal competitive process. As you are aware, the alignment of 150 existing staff below the D1 level to the new organizational structure was completed in February.

I want to also share with you that we still have some way to go to address some of the legacy issues of the past particularly with regard to the use of the short term contract modality — the SSAs. A number of people have been engaged for short term needs which turned out to be a long term need for their services. Although I know that this may have happened at one point as a result of fast growth to respond to increasing demands, we need to address this situation. In this context, we have just recently undertaken a comprehensive review of the use of the SSA modality to determine what percentage of colleagues under this type of modality are actually performing long-term functions and will be moving to resolve the situation.

The Field Capacity Assessment gave us a good sense of where we currently are, the capacities that we have and those we need to better respond to demands from member states and UN Country Teams. That being said, priority in the next several months will now need to be placed on enhancing our overall field-level capacity both by determining the most appropriate regional architecture and by examining some of our key business processes, such as decentralization and enhanced accountability, so as to develop a business model most relevant to effectively deliver the key policy and programmatic support envisioned in this Plan.

So, how do we get from where we are now — the newest UN entity with an inspiring charter and high expectations but still enormous capacity yet to build — to becoming the Organization that can support the ambition contained in our Plan? There are three essential elements:

First, we need focus. That is also why we are articulating a minimum package of support services. Drawing on the comparative advantage of UN agencies and working through the Resident Coordinator system we will coordinate to respond to priorities identified by member states and articulated in the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). In countries where we will not have presence, we will work through and with other UN Agencies to support their work on the ground.

As I mentioned in my Vision and Action Plan, UN Women will work in three ways: leading where we have a comparative advantage; partnering while other agencies lead; or providing advocacy support to the work of others. In areas such as women peace and security or ending violence against women and girls, UN Women has a key role to play in bringing the system together to agree on and implement a system-wide strategy. In areas like HIV and AIDS, where a UN system-wide strategy already exists, UN Women will support existing agreements that define how different UN Agencies will work and will support the overall coordination mechanism to ensure coherence in the United Nations system response to the needs of national partners.

Second, our success in achieving the results in the Strategic Plan will depend on your critical support in providing predictable and multi-year funding to UN Women's core and non-core resources. As you know, a major impetus behind the establishment of UN Women was to address the under-resourcing of the United Nations' gender architecture. The Strategic Plan presents a real opportunity to better guide predictable multilateral investment in gender equality and women's empowerment.

Even with recent increases in contributions to UN Women, the scale of resources available to work to advance gender equality and women's empowerment remains miniscule relative to the needs and demand articulated — and the high priority that more and more countries place on gender equality.

Many countries have increased their contributions, some significantly, for which we are very grateful. I would especially like to thank our large contributors and also those programme countries that have significantly increased their financial contributions to our core funds. But for others, the time is now to walk the talk.

Member states, major constituencies, including women from countries worldwide have spent the past four years calling for the creation of a more powerful and better resourced entity for gender equality and women's empowerment in the UN system.

UN Women is finalizing a comprehensive partnership strategy which seeks to expand the current donor base, to deepen existing partnerships with increased level of financial contributions, and to diversify our supporters by building up strong partnerships with the private sector and foundations.

We recognize the need for burden sharing and for mobilizing funds from diverse sectors. My main preoccupation, at this time, is to make sure that UN Women can secure a critical mass of core funding, which is central to its ability to strengthen its capacity and reach. For 2011, our target as laid out in the Strategic Plan is US\$ 150 million, 50 percent of the total funding target.

UN Women will continue to harness the potential for multi-donor funding to the growing number of special funds that it manages, including the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which are now joined by a small number of country-based and regional funds. These have proven to be excellent ways of getting funds directly into the hands of partners efficiently and at relatively low cost, as well as to generate learning about what works. UN Women will bring the strength of communications, advocacy and strategic partnerships across the organization to report on the results we achieve to complement the resource mobilization strategy.

Third, while recognizing the universality and global reach of UN Women as envisaged in our founding resolution we do need strategic presence in programme countries. Our criteria for presence in countries during the period of the Strategic Plan takes into account: gender inequalities which persist in many crucial areas, both in developed and in developing countries; our universal mandate; the need to focus and strengthen our existing presence in some countries and build gradually our new field presence. We propose a particular focus on LDCs and middle income countries with high inequality as well as countries in conflict and post-conflict situations with particular insecurity for women. More details on the criteria to guide our strategy on coverage and strategic presence are contained in Annex IV of the Plan.

I am acutely aware that, ultimately, UN Women will be judged by the impact that we have on the ground, by the extent to which we can make a difference in the ability of all women — and particularly those who are most excluded — to exercise their rights and contribute, alongside men, to the development of their communities and countries. We are aiming to establish an integrated results-based management culture and support system to deliver on UN Women mandates. A top priority during the initial months following the approval of the Strategic Plan will be to complete the baseline information that will underpin our reporting and performance assessments.

We have travelled far in a very short period of time — just six months — thanks to the tremendous efforts of all of you here. We also know that we still have a long way to go and high expectations to meet. The Strategic Plan before you is our shared roadmap for the next few years.

Like any good map, it sets out a general direction to be followed. We will need to come back to it regularly to see if we need mid-course corrections and whether we are on the right track.

However, in order to make our journey a fulfilling and successful one, it is not just the map we need; greater resources, more dynamic partnerships, more men and boys taking leadership to advance women's rights, and significantly enhanced capacity within UN Women will be pivotal to helping us reach our destination — for improving the lives of women and girls who need us most and who have a huge amount to offer in return.

I have met some of these women and girls on my travels. One cannot fail to be energized by them. From the young women's rights advocates in Tahrir Square who stood courageously together with men and inspired us with their creative use of Facebook and Twitter to send out a global call for democracy and justice; to the Liberian market women who were determined to learn to write their names so that, for the next election, they can sign for their vote; to the Bangladeshi women police officers in Haiti and the women who staff the gender desks in police stations in Latin America and the women in Addis Ababa's safe home who were able to rebuild their lives. It is for the women and girls in neighbourhoods and villages worldwide, partners in development and peace, future leaders of their communities and countries that we are deliberating over the next three days. It is for them we are working.

Thank you and I look forward to our discussion together on the Strategic Plan.