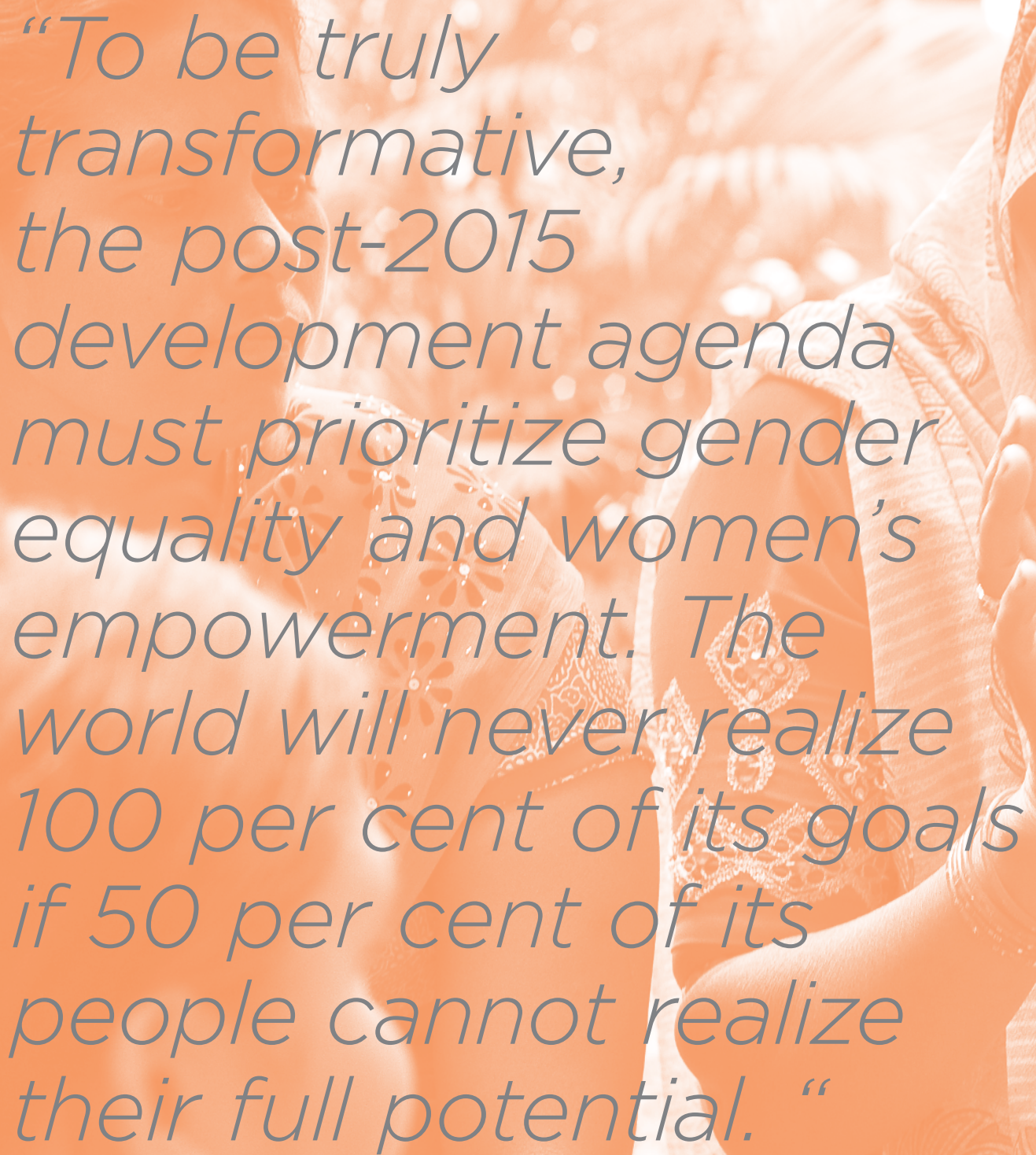




**BEIJING + 20: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

# The Representation of Women and the United Nations system





*“To be truly transformative, the post-2015 development agenda must prioritize gender equality and women’s empowerment. The world will never realize 100 per cent of its goals if 50 per cent of its people cannot realize their full potential. “*

**UN Secretary-General  
Ban Ki-moon**





# BEIJING + 20: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE: THE EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM 1995 - 2030



# FOREWORD

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 is a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women. It remains the most comprehensive global policy framework and blueprint for action, providing the most valuable source of guidance and inspiration to realize gender equality and human rights for women and girls, everywhere.



Since 1995, Governments, civil society, the United Nations and other stakeholders have worked to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and achieve equality in all areas of life, in public and in private spaces. Discriminatory legislation is being removed, and violence against women and girls and harmful practices addressed. There have been significant gains in girls' school enrollment, and women's participation in the labour force and the economy is growing in some regions. Women's representation in national parliaments now exceeds 20 per cent globally compared to 11.3 per cent in 1995. Significant normative advances have been made in the global agenda on women, peace and security. Much has been achieved; but, equally true is the reality that progress has been unacceptably slow and uneven, particularly for the most marginalized women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Unfortunately in no country in the world has true equality for women and girls been achieved.

As we enter the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there is a new sense of real urgency, a recognition that we are at a turning point for women's rights, a recognition that realizing gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls must be a pressing and central task. Gender equality is not only a goal in itself, but a means for achieving all other goals on the global agenda. Today, more than ever, urgent and sustained action is needed to transform the structures, institutions and norms – economic, political and social – that are holding back progress on gender equality. These systemic changes must be deep and irreversible.

This is certainly true within the UN system itself, and it is necessary for the UN to lead by example. After decades of uneven progress toward an equal representation of women at all levels within the UN system, where women were over represented at the lower P1-P3 levels and under represented at the higher levels, UN Women was created in July 2010 as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UN Women



brought together resources and mandates for greater impact, merging and building on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system.

To develop a more systematic, accountable and coherent approach towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women with all UN entities, UN Women led the development in 2012 of a UN system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, or UN-SWAP. The UN-SWAP assigns common performance standards for the gender-related work of all UN entities and uses a framework with 15 performance indicators based on intergovernmental mandates. All UN system organizations will need to adopt clear and actionable policies on gender equality and women's empowerment. Fifty-five UN entities and departments contributed to developing the UN-SWAP; eight piloted it to test for technical soundness and today 62 entities, departments and offices report on it. This report showcases the past, present and future of the aspects of the Action Plan focused on the representation of women – admittedly a foundational requirement for progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women within the UN system, as in any institution.

As this report highlights, we have made progress over the past years throughout the UN System and our projections for the future show advancement towards parity within all UN entities. Yet much work needs to be done to ensure progress is systematic and institutionalized. UN Women will continue to be a strong champion for women and the equal representation of women at all levels and in all occupational categories, and together with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women we will continue to strive forward. It is important that the UN System itself be a model for women's empowerment and gender equality. *I hope this report will be a tool to this end.*

Gender equality is a shared vision of social justice and human rights. Everyone has a responsibility to act. **We must seize all opportunities at institutional, national, regional and global levels and give new impetus to the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and women's and girls' enjoyment of their human rights.** Key elements of change encompass transforming norms and stereotypes; transforming economies to achieve gender equality, such as through decent jobs and significantly boosting investments in gender equality; and last but not least, ensuring women's full and equal participation in all levels of decision-making; and strengthening accountability to measure, propel and ensure that we attain and sustain our goal.

Let's make the UN system 50-50 by 2030: Step it Up for Gender Equality!

Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka  
Under-Secretary-General  
Executive Director, UN Women

# THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

The Beijing Platform for Action, developed during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting on September 15, 1995, remains the most overarching blueprint for advancing women's rights. As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern that are as relevant today as 20 years ago: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment; and the girl child. For each critical area of concern, strategic objectives were identified, as well as a detailed catalogue of related actions to be taken by Governments and other stakeholders, at the national, regional and international level. Significantly, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action mandates the full participation of women “in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision making process and access to power, [as] fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace”<sup>1</sup>.

This includes women's participation in decision making process within the UN system.

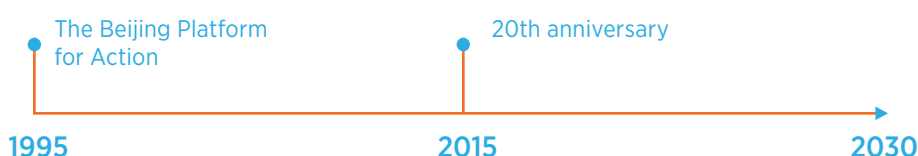
The Declaration urges the United Nations system, regional and international institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations and civil society, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of the Platform for Action, stating that the responsibility for ensuring its implementation and the integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system must rest at the highest levels.

Paragraph 193 of the Platform for Action mandates actions to be taken by the United Nations, including<sup>2</sup>:

- a. Implement existing and adopt new employment policies and measures in order to achieve overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above, **by the year 2000**, with due regard to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible, in conformity with Article

<sup>1</sup> Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Chapter II, Global Framework.

<sup>2</sup> Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Actions to be taken by the United Nations.



101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations;

- b. Develop mechanisms to nominate women candidates for appointment to senior posts in the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system;
- c. Continue to collect and disseminate quantitative and qualitative data on women and men in decision-making and analyze their differential impact on decision-making and monitor progress towards achieving the Secretary-General's target of

having women hold 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000.

As we near the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this landmark document, it is time to reaffirm the principles of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the equal representation of women in all institutions, with the United Nations being no exception. Twenty years after the Beijing Conference, the United Nations system continues to face significant challenges in achieving the equal representation of women, particularly at senior decision-making levels.



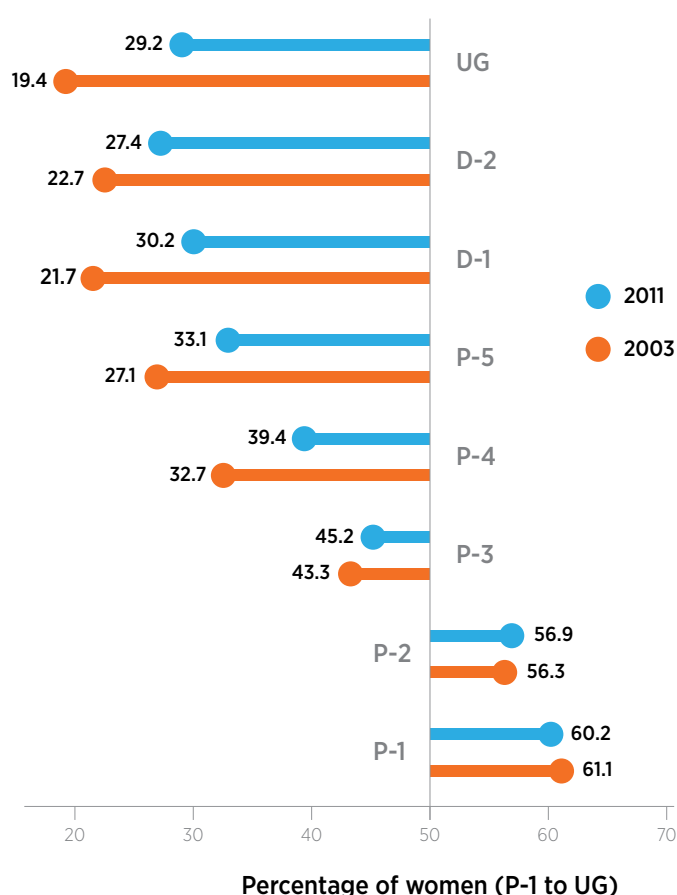
# PAST: 2003 - 2011

In **2003**<sup>3</sup>, eight years after the conference in Beijing, women accounted for only **36.3 per cent** of the UN Professional and higher categories workforce. Women occupied 19.4 per cent of posts at the UG<sup>4</sup> level, 22.7 per cent at the D-2 level, 21.7 per cent at the D-1 level, 27.1 per cent at the P-5 level, 32.7 per cent at the P-4 level, 43.3 per cent at the P-3 level, 56.3 per cent at the P-2 level and 61.1 per cent at the P-1 level.

**Five years later, in 2008**, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories had reached **38.4** per cent, a total of 1.5 per cent between December 2004 and December 2007, which equals an annual average increase of 0.5 per cent.

By **December 2011**, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the UN system had reached **40.9** per cent, finally passing the 40 per cent threshold. It had taken seven years to fill a 4.3 percentage points gap. However, the inverse relationship between level and the representation of women that had emerged during the decade had consolidated, with the highest and lowest proportions of women continuing to be found at the P-1 and D-2 levels. In 2011, women represented 30.0 per cent of UG, 26.9 per cent of D-2, 30.4 per cent of D-1,

32.7 per cent of P-5, 39.0 per cent of P-4, 45.5 per cent of P-3, 57.1 per cent of P-2 and 61.0 of P-1. Interestingly, the overall representation of women at the D-1, D-2 and ungraded levels increased by 1.1 per cent points between 2009 and 2011. This progress was greater than at the Professional levels (0.8 per cent) demonstrating that, with determined leadership and focused policy and practice, gender equality in the UN system could indeed be meaningfully accelerated.



<sup>3</sup> Data on the representation of women in the UN system as a whole are available only as of 2003.

<sup>4</sup> UG indicates "Ungraded" and includes Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General, Director-General, Deputy Director-General and Assistant Director-General.



# PRESENT

By **December 2013**<sup>5</sup>, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the UN system had reached **41.6** per cent, with an increase of 0.7 percentage points since 2011. It has taken 10 years since 2003 to increase the overall representation of women in the Professional and higher categories by a mere 5.3 percentage points, with an average annual growth of only 0.5 percentage points.

**During the 2003-2013 decade**, on the other hand, some grade levels registered unprecedented gains. In particular, the representation of women at the UG level increased by 7.7 percentage points, while that of the D-2 level improved by 7.4 percentage points. The gains registered at the D-1 level are even more significant, as women directors at that level increased by 10.6 percentage points over the decade, thus almost doubling the average overall increase. An acceleration of progress seems to have occurred since the appointment of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Thanks to his consistent commitment and persistent advocacy, the above categories progressed by approximately 2, 7 and 5 percentage points respectively over the period 2007-2013.

It is important to note, however, that during the 2003-2013 decade, progress was uneven across professional levels and years, with some years registering

a regression and a loss of the gains previously attained. For example, the UG level reached its highest representation of women in 2010, but has since then registered a decline. This shows that gains towards parity are not automatically sustained, indicating that focused attention to this aspect should receive priority.

Furthermore, as in 2003, the representation of women continued to negatively correlate with grade in 2013, decreasing with each increase in level: P-1 (55 per cent), P-2 (57.5 per cent), P-3 (45.1 per cent), P-4 (40.4 per cent), P-5 (34.0 per cent), D-1 (32.3 per cent), D-2 (30.1 per cent) and ungraded (27.1 per cent).

This trend demonstrates that considerable numbers of women at the entry levels does not equate to an increase of women in decision-making positions, unless initiatives to support retention, recruitment and promotion are also consistently developed and applied. For example, there is currently an inverse relationship between women's share of promotions and seniority: women in the UN system are 1.7 times more likely to be promoted at the P-2 level than at the D-2 level. If not corrected, this is likely to create a glass ceiling for women that are entering the UN system from the lowest ranking levels. Progress will only emerge as a result of independent targeting and monitoring of each level to attain and sustain the equal representation of women.

<sup>5</sup> Data on human resources within the UN system is collected every two years. For this reason, the latest available data refers to 31 December 2013.

# FUTURE PROJECTIONS

Thus it is evident that, despite the commitment to achieve the equal representation of men and women affirmed in Beijing twenty years ago and restated many times thereafter, the progress of the UN system in this regard has been disappointingly limited, both overall and when broken down by grade.

Extrapolating from the 0.5 average percentage point annual rate of progress of this past decade, the UN system could potentially reach overall parity only in 2029, 14 years from now. However, when future projection based on past

trends are applied to the different grades, significant variations appear. For example, at the current average annual increment based on the decade trend, the P - 3 level could potentially reach parity in 2041 while the the P-4 level could potentially reach parity in 2025 - four years before the overall projection of 2029. The D-1 level could potentially achieve parity in 2030, while the D-2 and UG levels in 2040 and 2043 respectively. In the case of the UG level, this means that parity could potentially be reached only 14 years after the overall projection for the UN system.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN EMPOWERING HUMANITY PICTURE IT!





# TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS: UN SYSTEM

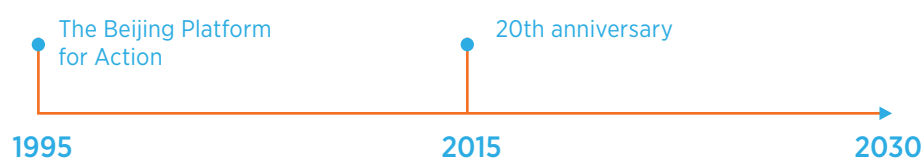
## Representation of women in the United Nation system with appointments of one year or more

December 2003 – December 2013

Representation of women : Trends for 31 December 2003 – 31 December 2013																		
	UG		D2		D1		P5		P4		P3		P2		P1		Total	
	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013
Representation of women %)	19.4	27.1	22.7	30.1	21.7	32.3	27.1	34.0	32.7	40.4	43.3	45.1	56.3	57.5	61.1	55.0	36.3	41.6
Change in Representation of women (percentage points)	7.7		7.4		10.7		6.8		7.7		1.8		1.2		-6.1		5.3	
Average annual increment (percentage points)	0.8		0.7		1.1		0.7		0.8		0.2		0.1		-0.6		0.5	

Projections for reaching gender parity at current average annual increment (December 2003 – December 2013), starting 2013																
	UG	D2	D1	P5	P4	P3	P2	P1	Total							
Year at which gender parity will be reached	2043	2040	2030	2036	2025	2041	Reached	Reached	2029							
Number of years to reach parity	30	27	17	23	12	28	Reached	Reached	16							

## BEIJING + 20: Past, Present and Future



Required average annual percentage increase to achieve the equal representation of women and men by 2020 and 2030										
	UG	D2	D1	P5	P4	P3	P2	P1	Total	
Required average annual increase to achieve the equal representation of women and men in all categories by 2020*	6.0	6.1	5.6	6.2	6.0	6.9	Reached	Reached	6.4	
* Applicable between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020, and based on the 2003-2013 trend										
Required average annual increase to achieve the equal representation of women and men in all categories by 2030**	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.8	Reached	Reached	2.6	
** Applicable between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2030, and based on the 2003-2013 trend										

Prepared by the Focal Point for Women for the UN system, Coordination Division, UN Women, March 2015.  
(Note: Allow for 0.1 discrepancies due to rounding)  
Website: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/women-in-the-united-nations/current-status-of-women#data>



# DETERMINANTS

Limited growth, stagnation, and negative trends result from a combination of many factors, including in particular the absence of a dedicated policy for the equal representation of women at all Professional and above levels, and absence of a comprehensive approach to addressing gender disparities in each UN entity. Gender policies assigning priority to the equal representation of women constitute one of the primary and most effective drivers for change. They can be particularly effective when they comprehensively address recruitment, career development, mobility and retention issues, gender imbalances in hiring and biases in the selection processes, lack of accountability for meeting gender balance goals and lack of effective monitoring tools, the

provision and application of flexible work arrangements and facilitative policies, as well as informal barriers affecting work climate and organizational culture.

Furthermore, the modest and sometimes negative trends emerging from the past decade point to the need to adopt and sustain temporary special measures to accelerate progress, backed by tireless political will and committed and unwavering leadership, increased investments in the advancement of women, and strong accountability mechanisms. It is evident that the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action has been hampered by the absence of effective accountability mechanisms to enable women to hold decisions-makers answerable for their actions.



# THE UN-SWAP: AN ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK INCLUDING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

In response to the lack of adequate progress in gender mainstreaming, including the equal representation of women across the United Nations system, the CEB (Chiefs Executive Board) endorsed the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) for gender equality and women's empowerment in 2012. The UN-SWAP is an accountability mechanism with 15 performance indicators clustered around six functional areas. All UN entities, irrespective of mandate, are required to report on the indicators annually.

The framework addresses key areas of importance to improving gender mainstreaming within institutions and helps shape a common route to mainstreaming gender equality considerations into the work of the UN. It also sets minimum requirements that each entity is expected to meet as well as aspirational progressive targets that each entity can strive towards. The accountability framework thus strengthens the UN commitment to and the implementation of the multiple facets of gender mainstreaming, *including*

*that of the equal representation of women at all levels of the institution.* It also facilitates a systematic analysis of strengths and challenges across the UN system and identifies the human, financial and knowledge resources required.

The UN-SWAP has proven to be a motivating call to action for senior leadership and has opened the door for increased knowledge sharing and partnerships across the UN system, minimizing duplication of work, increasing innovation and better allocation of human and financial resources to monitor aspects covered by the UN-SWAP, with spillover benefits including enhanced inter-agency cooperation and coordination. It has also rejuvenated networks of gender equality advocates within and across entities, department and offices of the UN system and has served as a model for accountability frameworks for other theme areas, indicating that accountability for gender equality has the potential to lead the way.

Three of the UN-SWAP indicators refer specifically to the representation



of women within UN organizations. Performance Indicator 1 requires the adoption and implementation of gender equality including policies for the equal representation of women in all UN entities. Performance Indicator 10 sets the UN-wide standards for gender balance in staffing and gender architecture, and Performance Indicator 11 refers to organizational culture.

Performance Indicator 1 requires entities to adopt, implement and monitor gender policies including to attain and sustain an equal representation of women, based on clear targets, reasonable timelines for implementation and monitoring and accountability mechanisms. With the technical support and coordination of UN Women, by the end of 2015, approximately 75 per cent of UN reporting entities are expected to have

a gender equality policy in place, thus meeting requirements for Performance Indicator 1. When the UN-SWAP was launched in 2012, only approximately 20 per cent of entities had gender equality and parity policies in place.

However, performance remains unsatisfactory for indicators 10, gender architecture and parity and 11, organizational culture. Performance Indicator 10 is a particular area of weakness across the system, ranking 14<sup>th</sup> among the 15 UN-SWAP indicators.

All entities should prioritize the continued implementation of the UN-SWAP indicators to meet the CEB deadline of 2017 with particular focus on the provisions relating to gender parity and organizational culture, the more challenging of the standards.

## THE WAY FORWARD

It is clear that much remains to be done in the UN system to ensure that the equal representation of women becomes a reality. The UN bears a special responsibility to lead by example in the equal representation of women at all levels. It must be a standard bearer demonstrating its own commitment to the doctrine of gender equality. Trends, no matter how seemingly insignificant, will warrant focused attention including in the area of attrition and removal of hidden bias, from which no institution is

immune, as repeatedly documented by experiment and study.

To close the gap, strong special measures and a multi-pronged approach articulated in a comprehensive policy are necessary, also backed by the active, consistent and sustained support of executive heads and senior officials. The following action points are needed:

# ACTION POINTS:

- ✦ **Ensure the highest level of leadership, commitment and active participation by the senior management** in actions for gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women's equal representation at all levels. Departmental Heads have a critical role and should be held accountable. Support at the top remains one of the strongest drivers for change, without which success will remain elusive. Constant vigilance and sustained focus is required to ensure that regression does not occur and that progress is ongoing. Hold senior managers accountable for their responsibility to contribute to the attainment of an equal representation of women.
- ✦ **Build networks of gender equality champions** across and within institutions – a middle level architecture consisting of formal champions for the issue and located in all Entities, departments and offices of the UN system. Champions should report to the highest levels of management allowing them to retain independence, withstand pressures and enhance effectiveness. Create a dedicated position to coordinate the network, facilitating cross fertilization of ideas and extending support to this endeavor.
- ✦ **Set and monitor medium term and short term quantitative targets** and/or rates of advancement of women at each level in the Professional category, within the overall goal of the 50:50 representation. This propels progress, shining the spotlight on each level, unraveling problems within the personnel pipeline, encouraging morale. Such measures also allow the tracking of career advancement, very important to harnessing the full potential of all. Evidence shows that entities that have specific, time-bound parity targets in place, and where progress is measured in real time, are also more effective in achieving or significantly approaching targets. Investing in statistical capacities to support effective monitoring and evidence-driven decision-making in real time is fundamental. Post-facto monitoring results in lost opportunities to recruit and retain women and adequately address unhelpful organizational culture issues.
- ✦ **Implement quotas and temporary special measures in staff selection**, including (i) the obligatory inclusion of women candidates in shortlists; (ii) the selection of women, when women remain underrepresented and when their qualifications and experience meet the competencies of the job requirements; (iii) the placement of women not selected, on a roster from which they may in the future directly be selected for similar functions at that level; (iv) the requirement to produce written justification from senior managers for the selection of male candidates for posts at levels where parity has not yet been attained.
- ✦ **Implement temporary special measures related to retention**, including (i) policies to secure the promotion of women to the P-3, P-5 and D-2 levels, and (ii) specific procedures or exceptions, for retention of experienced women staff, especially in

mid-level positions which represent a critical threshold for career advancement and progress toward parity, (iii) mandatory gender training for all staff, (iv) the establishment of dedicated leadership training programs, and (v) specific procedures or exceptions for retention of experienced women staff, especially in mid-level positions. Furthermore, support women staff in their continuing professional development and performance improvement, recognizing the differential access that women have to such opportunities, networks and mentors.

- ♦ **Identify and address organizational culture issues** as they constitute a key component of sustainability. The pulse of the organization is determined systematically through annual mandatory staff and exit surveys. Identifying the primary reasons for unhelpful issues faced by women including in career advancement or for separation through an exit interview can assist entities to reduce attrition rates and increase pools of qualified female candidates. Exit interviews should be implemented routinely, with the lessons learned providing orientation for strategic policies and practises relating to gender balance.
- ♦ **Implement facilitative gender relevant policies**, such as maternity, paternity and adoption leave, breast feeding breaks and space, child care on premises, and sick and family leave.
- ♦ **Implement flexible work arrangements** as an essential ingredient for organizational success, and a key factor in attracting and retaining qualified female candidates and staff members. Modern technological advance has embedded the possibility of flexibility and the productivity resulting from it, into most work streams. Encourage clarity in the specifications of application, in the implementation of a performance accountability (or honor) system and where the honor system is not used, require written justifications from managers only for requests denied. Support training of both managers and staff on the need to encourage trust and discourage stigma, as essential prerequisites for effective implementation. Gather and analyze data on the request, approval, denial, use and satisfaction rate of work-life policies and practices, identifying and targeting pockets of resistance and difficulty.
- ♦ **Provide independent resources** so as to enable reasonable investment in the work related to mainstreaming gender including for the equal representation of women at all levels. A minimum modicum of investment is necessary to attain goals and then sustain them, in addition to messaging the priority of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the institution.
- ♦ **Develop and promulgate** policies that bring all of the action points above together, covering accountability, architecture, monitoring and reporting, temporary special measures, organizational culture, facilitative policies and flexible working arrangements. These policies must be backed by adequate accountability mechanisms and resources for implementation.



# CONCLUSION

Progress has been slow and uneven and major gaps remain. Obstacles persist in the implementation of the areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, including on the equal representation of women. Further concrete actions are necessary to ensure the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including through strengthening and increasing support for institutional mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and robust accountability systems that monitor and evaluate the implementation of existing commitments backed by comprehensive and quality data collection instruments, adequate investment and resourcing for the various aspects of implementation and last but not least, a comprehensive and clearly articulated policy that brings all of the elements together into a coherent whole.

**Let's make the UN system 50-50 by 2030: Step it Up for Gender Equality!**









For more information on the representation of women in the UN system please visit:  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/women-in-the-united-nations>