



## What is holding women and girls back from realizing their rights?

### Addressing structural inequalities to assure sustainable development

#### LUNCH SIDE EVENT

*Eighth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals*

*4 February 2014; 13:15-14:30 Conference Room 7 North Lawn Building UN Headquarters*

This side event aims to support Member States in their design of a new sustainable development framework with improved development outcomes for women and girls, and for societies at large. A comprehensive and integrated approach is necessary to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, one that addresses the structural issues of gender inequality. Participants will discuss the barriers to achieving gender equality and provide examples of proven good practices towards realizing gender equality and women's empowerment. The side event is an opportunity for open discussion on four key cross-cutting topics: women's and girls' voice and participation in decision-making; women's access to assets, resources, and decent work, including addressing unpaid care work; violence against women and girls; and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**Structural barriers to gender equality:** Inequalities between women and men, and boys and girls, play out across all areas of life, in every country, in public institutions, governance systems and markets, and in the private sphere, in families and households. Gender inequality is closely linked to the social, economic, political and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Intersecting issues:** Political and economic institutions and policies shape the attainment of health, education, and other outcomes. At the same time, women's and girls' ability to engage in economic and political decision-making is necessary for them to be able to enjoy these rights. A lifecycle approach that takes into account the intersection of gender with income, location, race/ethnicity, and other factors is crucial for tackling the heterogeneous needs of women and girls. Addressing the rights of adolescent girls is particularly urgent, given that decisions made early in girls' lives shape the paths open to them in terms of education, decent work and the children they may eventually bear. In turn, this has long-term implications for social, economic, environmental and political sustainability.

**Remarks by UN Women's Executive Director:**  
**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**

**Independent Experts:**  
**Magdalena Sepulveda Carmona**  
Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

**Gita Sen** Professor and Member  
High Level Task Force for ICPD

**Aili Mari Tripp** Professor,  
University of Wisconsin

**Remarks by UNFPA's Executive Director:**  
**Babatunde Osotimehin**

**Remarks by Member States:**

**H.E. Rasmus Helveg Petersen**  
Minister of Development  
Cooperation, Denmark

**Moderator:**  
**Olav Kjørven** Special Adviser on  
Post-2015, UNDP

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