

Closing Remarks by the Executive Director of UN Women at the Annual Session of the Executive Board, delivered by Ms Anita Bhatia, Deputy Executive Director

Tuesday, 23 June 2019

[As delivered]

Our Executive Director sincerely regrets not being able to join this closing session due to the lateness of the hour but I am very pleased that my dear colleague, Åsa Regnér, is also with me, and joins me in these comments.

First of all, we would like to thank the President of the Executive Board, Mr. Jukka Salovaara, for leading us through. It was the first time that we had a virtual session, and on behalf of our management we would like to say a very big thanks to you. We would also like to thank the vice-presidents for their contributions, and the delegations for all their engagement over the past two days. This session was actually very interactive despite being virtual.

We are very appreciative, as UN Women, of the Executive Board and the invaluable support that it provides to enable the implementation of UN Women's mandate. Our relationship with the Board is crucial as we respond to this global crisis and as we continue implementation of UN reform and chart the future of UN Women as we enter our second decade.

We welcome the opening statements that we heard from 30 Member States with high-level participation and engagement.

We very much appreciate the positive comments made by several Member States on UN-Women's response to the COVID-19 crisis. This agile response was only possible due to the flexibility of our main donors as well as close and coordinated systemwide collaboration.

We are also very thankful for your encouragement of the progress we have made on the implementation of the Strategic Plan as highlighted in the Mid-term Review.

We have taken very good note of the joint statement made by the Netherlands and other Member States and reiterate that we remain fully committed to the implementation of our Funding Compact commitments.

On joint collaboration – we nearly met our 2019 target programme expenditure from joint programmes and please rest assured that we intend to fulfill the 25 per cent target by 2021. However, as highlighted by the Netherlands, by yourself, Mr. President, and by a number of other Member States, we need a better balance between core funds and non-core funds, so we can deliver to our full potential on our triple mandate. We do need to address, and we seek your support in addressing, the trend of the decline in core contributions so as to ensure predictability and to avoid strategic fragmentation.

We note that we have managed to address some of the financial concerns associated with this imbalance in 2019 and we are thankful to all the Member States who have contributed. We will make sure that we continue to diversify our funding and seek innovative private sector partnerships as well as innovative partnerships of other forms, including innovative financing.

UN Women agrees with its Member States that UN Women provides a critical role at the country level as part of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and in its support to Resident Coordinators (RCs) and we will continue to do this while urging system-wide coherence and joint efforts.

As part of our change management process we have, as many of you noted, focused on strengthening country offices where support is needed, and we intend to look at how to strengthen the path of our staff to become candidates for RCs.

We agree with Switzerland and other Member States that the Common Chapter has created the impetus and the incentives for collaboration within the Common Chapter and beyond. So far, as we noted on more than one occasion, we have made pretty good progress in providing support to UNCTs and RCs. We note with pride that our collaboration at the country level goes beyond the Common Chapter, while acknowledging that there is room for improvement, and will continue to work both at the technical and the high-level to make progress on this, including through strategic dialogues with other Funds and Programmes.

We note the points raised by the EU with respect to participation in the UN Trust Fund on Ending Violence Against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, and we want to express our appreciation of the support for UN Women's work with civil society organizations in sub-Saharan Africa and more broadly.

Mr President, we share your concerns on the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls, which has exacerbated existing inequalities. We are very keen that the socio-economic recovery does not leave women and girls behind. And we welcome the gender-responsive initiatives that you have shared with us, both in this forum and in your own country's responses.

We know that the economic fallout will be significant for women, especially in the informal sector. We are working, as you heard us say, with partners to ensure that measures on economic security, decent work, the care economy and economic autonomy for women are prioritized in the responses.

We continue to work on this with the UN but also with the broader multilateral system, including the international financial institutions.

Several Member States also highlighted the importance of gender disaggregated data as being essential in paving the way to an adequate COVID-19 response. This is an effort that we are proud of, that we will focus on, and that we will continue to push jointly with other UN agencies, including through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), where we will be launching later this week the [Women Count Gender Data Platform](#), which already brings together efforts from across the system to aggregate data.

Many of you emphasized the importance of leaving no one behind. We will heed the call for greater mainstreaming towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and commitment of the Paris Agreement on climate change, where there is resonance with our Strategic Plan.

In 2020, we will continue to celebrate the progress made on the commitments to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, while looking at where there are persistent gaps and where our efforts within Generation Equality, for instance, can close these gaps.

We have carefully listened to your guidance on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and reaffirm our commitment to implement all recommendations produced by the review. As we noted, we have already implemented 60 per cent of these but intend to move swiftly to implement the rest of the recommendations.

We take note of the recommendation on increasing transparency on reporting, continuing capacity building and training, despite current constraints, and remain fully committed to progressing further on this, maintaining the victim-centred approach and mainstreaming this into both our human resource and policy operations.

We also take due note of your recommendations on the evaluation function and we hope we have conveyed to you the seriousness with which management takes this function and our efforts to maintain funding, notwithstanding other cuts. We will continue, please rest assured dear delegates, to be ambitious in terms of our coverage and our spend as well as, most importantly, the actual use of the evaluations to make sure that our policy, programming and all work is influenced positively by the lessons learned from these evaluations. We find that the independence and efficiency of the evaluations is very valuable to us in providing accountability and learning and therefore we will not compromise its strengthened quality.

In conclusion, distinguished delegates, despite the magnitude of challenges that we are undergoing this year, which we believe we have given you a glimpse of, UN Women, we are proud to note, is keeping up the momentum on the 25th anniversary celebration of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the 20th anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. We very much look forward to your continued support and collaboration, including through your participation in the Generation Equality Action Coalitions.

In closing, Mr. President, I would like to thank you and the Bureau once again and would also like to extend my sincere appreciation and thanks to the presentations made over the course of these two days. I would also like to thank and recognize the Secretary of the Executive Board and the very effective team that once again delivered on a successful Board session, and indeed our historic first virtual session.

Thank you very much.