

Check against delivery

Commission on the Status of Women..
Fifty-fifth Session
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Introductory Statement
by
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Madam Debun Secretary-General,
President of the Economic and Social Council,
Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends,

It is an honour for me to address you on this first day of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and the first session with its support by UN Women. Last year, you called for full implementation of the General Assembly's commitment to integrate women's concerns into a new and expanded entity of gender equality and women's empowerment. It is an achievement of this Commission and the many committed advocates for women's rights that the UN Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment or UN Women is now established and operational. I am privileged to be its first Under-Secretary General and Executive Director.

I extend a warm welcome to all Governments, particularly those that have travelled from Capitals. A warm welcome and not words alone are the key. I would like to express my appreciation to the Chair and the members of the Bureau of the Commission for the diligent preparation of this session, the consultations with all member and observer States, and the range of other stakeholders.

Distinguished delegates

Today I will brief you on the progress that we have made in operationalizing UN Women as well as introduce the main topics of this Session of the Commission.

But let me preface this by reminding all of us of the enormous responsibility we have - together with you as members of this Commission - to work strategically and collectively in support of our collective quest for gender equality. Development analysts increasingly present evidence that gender equality is not just a moral imperative, but a key to sustainable development. Around the world, we see more men and men's groups advocating to protect women's rights and we see more women take their place, alongside men, in using the new technologies in creative ways.

...as we have seen in recent weeks.

Here today are representatives from many countries that have made real progress in increasing women's political representation at national and local levels, in achieving parity in primary and secondary education and in reducing the numbers of maternal deaths. Many of you have worked with your colleagues from government and Parliament to secure passage of new or strengthened laws to penalize domestic violence, to eliminate discrimination in the labour market, to guarantee women's property and inheritance rights.

This Commission is a forum for each of you to share your innovations, your top best practices and experiences about what works and how the policy and legal reforms you secure are contributing to concrete changes in the lives of women and girls, as well as of men and boys. It is also the forum where you agree and commit to additional measures to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

At the same time, this forum knows better than others that despite encouraging examples, this progress is uneven and fragile. As we sit in this room today, there are still too many women and children who are trafficked, too many domestic workers who left their families to live in new places, unprotected by labour laws or policies; too many girls forced to leave school or married too early, too many women and girls with lack of access to services, whether agricultural extension, health clinics, affordable transportation or credit. And worldwide, there are too few women who are at decision-making tables when peace, trade or climate change agreements are being negotiated.

The global jobs crisis is still unresolved, and unemployment rates remain well above pre-crisis levels. Millions of workers have been busied by vulnerable employment, and a growing number of countries have introduced social protection measures. In times of crisis and recovery, we must seize new opportunities and guard against postponing action for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment until better or more stable conditions prevail, until we have tackled the current crisis; until we have progressed further on the road of development. Lack of equality between women and men and discrimination against women impede progress in development, peace and security, and the realization of human rights. Discrimination and inequality are the problem – women are part of the solution, and we must fully harness women's potential and creativity for a better future.

The crisis and recovery have been especially hard on the poorest women – in rural areas, in cities. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals is something that we need to bear more responsibility. The ways that women are affected by natural disasters, as well as conflict and displacement and the challenges they face in gaining access to decision-making in every sector are also important topics for this body.

This is the time to think about the challenges that different countries and regions are facing and how we can work together at national, regional and global levels to address these.

These issues have always been central to the work of UN Women, and we now have strengthened our partnership with UN Women, a new UN entity that has a unique and clear mandate to help ensure a more seamless relationship between the normative guidance provided by Member States and operational activities. That too makes this session of the CSW particularly important, as it is the time to strengthen the linkages between the WFP and UN Women and further these linkages into concrete changes for women and girls.

Distinguished Delegates,

Turning to our progress in making UN Women operational - I see this as a great opportunity to help me understand Member States' priorities and expectations and ensure that those are reflected in UN Women's first Strategic Plan, which I will present to UN Women's Executive Board this June. The Executive Board of UN Women, which oversees the operational aspects of our activities, was elected by the Economic and Social Council last November and held its first session in January. It will be supported by a voluntary support budget, a senior management team, to take steps for strengthening country-level and regional capacities and for initiating work in 2011.

I wanted to share with you how UN Women will implement the vision on which it is founded. This is a vision of a world where women have equal rights and opportunities and the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment are fully integrated in the development, human rights and peace and justice agendas.

To meet this objective, UN Women will: 1) lead as a world leader in setting standards and agreements and standards; 2) supporting integration of gender equality in national normative and policy framework on gender equality; 3) leading in women's empowerment, championing the rights of women and girls, particularly those who are most excluded; 4) leading and promoting coherence in UN system work on gender equality; and 5) acting as a global broker of knowledge and experience, aligning practice with normative guidance.

In my consultations with many stakeholders, I have heard a number of clear messages: that UN Women must focus on a few issues and achieve visible results; that we must work with the UN system, not in competition with it; that we must learn from what we have achieved, but improve and learn from our work; and that we must think outside the box of institutionalism. We must prioritize our work to national, regional and global levels.

Bearing in mind specific country contexts and capacities, UN Women will focus on five thematic priorities in its operational activities:

- 1) **Expanding women's voice, leadership and participation** with partners to close the gaps in women's leadership and participation in different sectors and to demonstrate the benefits of such leadership for society as a whole;
- 2) **Ending violence against women** by enabling states to set up the mechanisms needed to formulate and enforce laws, policies and services that protect women and girls, promote the involvement of men and boys, and prevent violence;
- 3) **Strengthening implementation of the women's agenda** through women's full participation in conflict resolution and peace processes, gender-responsive programming, protection from sexual violence and care for its survivors in accordance with humanitarian principles;
- 4) **Enhancing women's economic empowerment** through the delivery of global economic and environmental policies to women who work for governments and multilateral partners to ensure the full realization of women's economic security and rights, including access to productive assets and full social protection;
- 5) **Making gender equality priorities central to national, local and sectoral planning and budgeting** with partners. UN Women will support national, regional and local planning, budgeting and indicators.

... previous
... We are
... the new structure and finalizing a field capacity
... while this
... we have continued to support all ongoing programmatic
... of the former four entities.

There is much to be done. I hope that we will make the senior appointments very soon to
... our start in New York are working from one
... "institutional culture change" that we are expected to generate.

I am very grateful for the enthusiastic support that I have received from so many of you. I would
... UN Women to
... and, finally, that you hold UN Women
... and the UN system accountable for meeting the high expectations that you so rightly have.

Distinguished delegates,

Turning to the issue before this session of the Commission:

... Access to participation of women and
... the promotion of women's
... The two reports of
... and lead
... to segregation in the labour market. They also provide examples of measures taken by
... Governments, civil society and the private sector in various parts of the world, to ensure that
... women would be able to exercise their right to education, that there is an "equal access" to decent
... and applying the principles and tools of
... science and technology.

... analysis, based also on inputs from Member States, highlights five key points:

1. Expanding access to education is not enough - it is crucial to also improve the
... quality and relevance of education. This can be achieved through
... prioritizing professional development of teachers, improving learning conditions,
... and revising school curricula.
 2. Gender stereotypes are a root cause of occupational segregation - and must be
... tackled systematically. Measures can include, revising educational materials and
... sensitizing teachers, and exposing both girls and boys to role models in non-
... traditional fields such as science, engineering or sports. Kindergarten teachers.
 3. However: Education is not enough for women to gain access to decent work -
... proactive measures are needed to facilitate their transition from school to work,
... that is, equal access to labour market opportunities. Measures can include job
... search trainings and gender-sensitive social protection schemes.
- ... inefficiently responds to the needs of both women and
... member the relevant research and development should be gender-sensitive and
... user-driven.
- ... Innovation potential is underutilized - to benefit their societies, women
... empowerment to fully contribute to science and technology knowledge and
... production must become a priority.

Women must be encouraged to have equal access to training and education as well as the
... new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities generated by ICTs. Women globally are

The General Assembly has mandated the Secretary-General to provide an oral report to this Commission on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system. As a matter of urgency, organizations that have a particular responsibility to take gender balance and to lead by example while the current target is gender balance at all levels, in all occupational groups, by 2020, and by 2025 for certain organizations such as Special Representative and envoys of the Secretary-General, we still need to do more. Gender balance has been achieved only at the P-1 and P-2 levels, with consistency 23% of 400 or staff aff. at the D-1 level and above and 47% at the D-2, D-3 and D-4 levels respectively.

A recent survey has identified a number of constraints for reaching gender balance, including inadequate accountability; monitoring and enforcement mechanisms; lack of special measures for gender equality; weak implementation of flexible working arrangements; insufficient outreach; and a small number of qualified women applicants.

The Secretary-General's report in document A/65/234, on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, provides recommendations on how to overcome these obstacles. It highlights the need for senior leadership sponsorship, enhanced monitoring and accountability and more rigorous implementation of existing policies, including special measures for women and flexible working arrangements.

UN Women will work to implement the agenda of equal representation of women in the UN system through strategic leadership in coordination, advocacy, policy development, and implementation and accountability.

I hope to meet many of you in the coming two weeks - it is your political will and your commitment that will drive UN Women forward and we rely on your support to deliver on the many of our stakeholders.

The Director of UN Women joins me to assure you that together with my staff, I will do my utmost to support the crucial work of this Commission and in the follow-up to the session, so that you can complete your agenda and achieve the results you are aiming for in a new era of equality between women and men and boys and girls. This is the goal that must be within our reach. This is why we are here.

I look forward to an inspiring two weeks. Thank you.