

Sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly Third Committee 11 October 2010

> Introductory Statement by Ms. Michelle Bachelet Under-Secretary-General UN Women

Chairperson, Distinguished delegates, Colleagues and friends,

It is a great honour for me to address the Third Committee of the General Assembly in my first formal interaction with Member States as the first Executive Director of UN Women.

I express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his confidence in entrusting me with the privilege and responsibility of building the newly established United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Let me congratulate the General Assembly for having the vision and commitment to put words into action. The quote that we heard so often at the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals just three weeks ago -- that gender equality and women's empowerment are goals in their own right and central to all other goals -- must be more than a mantra. It must become a lived reality for women and men and boys and girls in all countries. The establishment of UN Women sends a clear message that this General Assembly understands that far more is needed.

I am well aware that the journey to the establishment of UN Women was a long process that involved many different government partners, non-governmental organizations and women's rights networks worldwide, as well as the UN's leadership and the staff of the four existing entities. In that process, we have built both committed constituencies and high expectations. We cannot let them down.

In establishing UN Women, you have made three changes that have the potential to deliver important benefits for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Firstly, by elevating the leadership of UN Women to Under-Secretary-General, you have sent a clear message that gender equality must be given a priority that is on par with other development priorities. This is important for the United Nations system; but it will also have reverberating effects on the ground, causing national partners, as well, to re-examine how gender equality expertise is positioned within government ministries, cabinets and civil society coalitions.

Secondly, we have taken an important step towards greater coherence, a central tenet of United Nations reform. We now are well positioned to bridge the operational and normative aspects of the UN's support to Member States to advance gender equality, and also to have a stronger voice to ensure a more coherent UN system response. In this regard, let me express my deepest appreciation to the leadership and staff of the four entities, namely the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), for their professionalism and unswerving commitment to the shared goal of women's empowerment, rights and equality.

And, thirdly, in establishing UN Women, you have acknowledged that financial investments in gender equality must also be commensurate with the ambition of our vision for change. We must reverse decades of accepting minimal resources for work on gender equality. In almost every field where we examine budgets through a gender lens – whether in post-conflict reconstruction or in support to agricultural development – we see that rarely is more than 6 per cent of the budget visibly dedicated to women's empowerment and gender equality. A strong UN Women will advocate for larger investments and a commitment to make budgets respond to gender equality considerations. In that regard, let me also congratulate the Secretary-General and the many partners who joined in the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health announced during the Summit on the MDGs. An initiative that promises investments of up to \$42 billion -- where the slow rate of progress has been unacceptable and holds back all of the MDGs -- is encouraging for all those who are committed to women's rights and gender equality.

The 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in March 2010 showed promising trends, with a continued impressive record of countries agreeing to constitutions, laws and policies that advance women's rights. But the implementation challenge persists.

The Ministerial Declaration

we can start a new era where the gender equality support from the entire system, including UN Country Teams on the ground, achieves greater coherence, depth and impact, and where we truly can deliver as one. This is crucial in every country and in every se

Over the next weeks and months, we will embark on a consultative process involving all stakeholders to develop UN Women's future strategy. The hallmarks of the strategy will align with the founding resolution. It will focus on expanding support to Member States at the national level, in line with national priorities; strengthening coherence between the normative support provided to global intergovernmental processes and the technical and thematic advice provided to national partners at the country level; and strengthening leadership, coordination and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment and support to gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system.

Chairperson,

As we move forward, UN Women has the unique opportunity to strengthen coherence between the policy/normative guidance generated by intergovernmental bodies and operational support provided to national partners at the country level. This Assembly plays a primary role in policy-making for gender equality and women's empowerment, and in follow-up and monitoring the implementation of these policies and norms.

This brings me to the reports which have been prepared for consideration by this Committee by the offices that now make up UN Women, and which I have the pleasure of introducing. I also draw delegations' attention to the briefing note on these reports of 1 October, by Ms Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and Ms Joanne Sandler, Deputy Executive Director of UNIFEM, now part of UN Women, which is available in the room.

One area that has clearly moved to the centre of global and local attention is ending violence against women. Two reports before the tt4]dib0414a5 f/T89(oOvi[O redr i Execation this)Tj0.00010

Main Committees did not explicitly address gender equality aspects. There is thus a need for improved monitoring and reporting on progress in relation to policies, strategies, resource allocations and programmes. This Committee should continue to take a leading role in monitoring measures taken and progress achieved.

Also before this Committee is a report on the improvement of the status of women in the