



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Uganda National Theme: "Women's Economic Empowerment: A Vehicle for Sustainable Development"



UNITED NATIONS THE SECRETARY - GENERAL



Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary General

MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY "FROM THE GLASS CEILING TO A CARPET OF SHARDS" 8 March 2016

For more than nine years, I have put this philosophy into practice at the United Nations. We have shattered so many glass ceilings we created a carpet of shards. Now we are sweeping away the assumptions and bias of the past so women can advance across new frontiers.

I appointed the first-ever female Force Commander of United Nations troops, and pushed women's representation at the upper levels of our Organization to historic highs. Women are now leaders at the heart of peace and security – a realm that was once the exclusive province of men. When I arrived at the United Nations, there were no women leading our peace missions in the field. Now, nearly a quarter of all UN missions are headed by women – far from enough but still a vast improvement.

I have signed nearly 150 letters of appointment to women in positions as Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General. Some came from top government offices with international renown, others have moved on to leadership positions in their home countries. All helped me prove how often a woman is the best person for a job.

To ensure that this very real progress is lasting, we have built a new framework that holds the entire UN system accountable. Where once gender equality was seen as a laudable idea, now it is a firm policy. Before, gender sensitivity training was optional; now it is mandatory for ever-greater numbers of UN staff. In the past, only a handful of UN budgets tracked resources for gender equality and women's empowerment; now this is standard for nearly one in three, and counting.

Confucius taught that to put the world in order, we must begin in our own circles. Armed with proof of the value of women leaders at the United Nations, I have spoken out for women's empowerment everywhere. In speeches at parliaments, universities and street rallies, in private talks with world leaders, in meetings with corporate executives and in tough conversations with powerful men ruling rigidly patriarchal societies, I have insisted on women's equality and urged measures to achieve it.

When I took office, there were nine parliaments in the world with no women. We helped to drive that number down to four. I launched the UNITE to End Violence against Women campaign in 2008; today, scores of leaders and ministers, hundreds of parliamentarians and millions of individuals have added their names to the action call.

I was the first man to sign our HeForShe campaign, and more than a million others have joined since. I stood with activists calling for the abandonment of female genital mutilation and celebrated when the General Assembly adopted its first-ever resolution supporting that goal. I am echoing the calls of many who know women can drive success in achieving our bold 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and advancing the Paris Agreement on climate change.

On this International Women's Day, I remain outraged by the denial of rights to women and girls – but I take heart from the people everywhere who act on the secure knowledge that women's empowerment leads to society's advancement. Let us devote solid funding, courageous advocacy and unbending political will to achieving gender equality around the world. There is no greater investment in our common future.

Statement by Hodan Addou, UN Women Country Representative

On International Women's Day, Step It Up for Planet 50-50: Gender Equality by 2030!



Hodan Addou
UN Women Country Representative

This year's International Women's Day is being celebrated at a pivotal moment, when gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls have been globally recognized as a precondition for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5) on gender equality aimed at ending discrimination and violence against women and girls and ensuring equal participation and opportunities in all spheres of life, important provisions for gender equality and women's rights have been included across the other sixteen goals.

In Uganda, International Women's Day 2016 is focusing on women's

economic empowerment as a vehicle for achieving sustainable economic and social development. Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards achieving key SDGs. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on family farms, as entrepreneurs and employees, but most especially through the unpaid care and domestic work in the communities.

Women's economic empowerment is increasingly being recognized for its multiplier effect in ending poverty, achieving food security, improving family health and general welfare of societies. Increasing women's income and control over family spending has been shown to improve child nutrition, family health and education, thereby helping to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Yet, in Uganda, as in many other countries round the world, women still face a multitude of challenges in economic development. Women still lack access to productive resources, such as land, livestock and finance. Too often women are compelled to engage in uncompetitive economic activities for survival, using poor production techniques and with limited access to appropriate markets, due to lack of information and limited mobility opportunities. This vicious circle of exclusion limits their productivity and choices and confines them to the lowest strata of the value chain within the informal sector. This leads to heavy economic dependence on male members of the family which often makes women vulnerable to violence and exploitation and reduces their opportunity to access development interventions. The long hours women spend on unpaid care and domestic work are generally unrecognized and unaccounted for in planning and resource allocation, in total disregard of its significant contribution to national economies and social welfare.

Despite the existence of legislations such as the 2004 Land Act and the Equal Opportunity Act, women still face discrimination in inheritance, access, control and ownerships of land and other productive assets, which have wide-ranging adverse effects on their ability to advance economically. Other obstacles include lack of collateral which inhibits women from accessing credit, poor access to markets and related facilities and limited decision-making on issues concerning production, productive capacity and family spending.

UN Women's programme on women's economic empowerment aims to ensure that women are economically empowered and benefit from development. It focuses on four key interventions: (i) improving perceptions and practices of communities on gender norms and relations that impact on women's property rights and land rights; (ii) strengthening policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote women's land tenure security and property rights and Women Entrepreneurship Development (WED); (iii) increasing access to financing and markets (including public and private procurement) Women Business Enterprises (WBEs); and (iv) improving the employment conditions, advancement opportunities and social protection for vulnerable women, especially the elderly.

UN Women applauds the Government of Uganda for establishing the Women's Economic Empowerment Fund, which will go a long way in addressing the challenges mentioned above with special focus on economically marginalized women, especially those in rural areas.

In another welcome development at the global level, the United Nations has recently established a High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, "to provide thought leadership and mobilize concrete actions aimed at closing gender gaps in economic opportunities and outcomes that persist around the world". Specifically, the panel, through rigorous analysis of evidence and extensive consultation, will provide recommendations for policy directives needed to improve economic outcomes for women and promote women's leadership in driving the implementation of Agenda 2030. The panel will galvanize private sector leadership in tackling discrimination and improving opportunities and outcomes for women, and equip civil society with further arguments to address norms and perceptions that inhibit women's economic empowerment. In announcing the establishment of the Panel, UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, called for a "quantum leap in women's economic empowerment" noting that the empowerment of the world's women is a global imperative.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we call for reaffirmation and commitment to implement Sustainable Development Goals through visible and measurable actions. Reaching Planet 50-50 is everyone's business. We call upon men and boys to join women and girls to say **No** to discrimination and violence against women.

Step It Up for gender equality by enabling women to exercise their full potential for accelerated economic development, at national and global level.

Message for International Women's Day, 8 March 2016 UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

This year's celebration of International Women's Day is the first within the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are confidently asserted in that Agenda as intrinsic to progress.

The new Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals include a specific goal to achieve gender equality, which aims to end discrimination and violence against women and girls and ensure equal participation and opportunities in all spheres of life. Important provisions for women's empowerment are also included in most of the other goals.

In conjunction with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, more than 90 governments have answered UN Women's call for action to "Step It Up for Gender Equality". Heads of State and Government have pledged concrete and measurable actions to crack some of the fundamental barriers to the achievement of gender equality in their countries.

Unanimously at the 59th Commission on the Status of Women in 2015, governments reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action. Businesses large and small are committing to, and implementing, shifts in culture and practice that foster greater equality and opportunity. Women individually, and civil society together, have called for lasting and transformative change by 2030.

With these unprecedented expressions of political will, the countdown to substantive gender equality by 2030 must begin, accompanied and underpinned by monitoring of accountability and evaluation of progress.

We draw strength from this solidarity as we face world events such as severe population displacement, extreme violence against women and girls, and extensive instability and crises in many regions.



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women

To arrive at the future we want, we cannot leave anyone behind. We have to start with those who are the least regarded. These are largely women and girls, although in poor and troubled areas, they can also include boys and men.

Women and girls are critical to finding sustainable solutions to the challenges of poverty, inequality and the recovery of the communities

hardest hit by conflicts, disasters and displacements. They are at the frontline of the outbreaks of threatening new epidemics, such as Zika virus disease or the impact of climate change, and at the same time are the bulwark to protect their families, work for peace, and ensure sustainable economic growth and social change.

On International Women's Day, we reiterate the greater participation of women as one of the necessary conditions for an inclusive Agenda 2030. Their leadership is insufficiently recognized but must emerge with greater participation in decision-making bodies. Each one of us is needed—in our countries, communities, organizations, governments and in the United Nations—to ensure decisive, visible and measurable actions are taken under the banner:

Planet 50-50: Step It Up for Gender Equality.

We build on the commitments that have already been made by all governments. We also build on the legacy of determined and vocal participation by the small group of founding women from all parts of the world, who were in San Francisco in 1945 when the UN Charter was adopted. They laid the foundation for all that has followed in the struggle for the fulfilment of women's rights.

The participation of women at all levels and the strengthening of the women's movement has never been so critical, working together with boys and men, to empower nations, build stronger economies and healthier societies. It is the key to making Agenda 2030 transformational and inclusive.

Happy International Women's Day.

Statement by the Ambassador of Sweden to Uganda, Mr. Urban Andersson, on the occasion of International Women's Day, March 8th 2016



Urban Andersson
Ambassador of Sweden

Today, the world celebrates International Women's Day. A day which for more than a decade has been used to celebrate the social, economic and political achievements of women, and to reflect, advocate and take action against persisting inequalities.

The national theme for this year's celebrations is "Women's Economic Empowerment: A Vehicle for Sustainable Development."

Women's economic empowerment is one of the most important factors contributing to equality between women and men, and it's a win-win strategy: The economic empowerment of women is a realisation of human rights, social justice and human dignity, and at the same time it will accelerate poverty reduction, economic growth and human development.

Women's economic empowerment is however hampered by customary practices discriminating against women in questions of access to productive resources and assets such as land, finances and property. Although 3 out of 4 women in Uganda are active in the labour force, women often concentrate in feminized occupations, low-value chains and informal employment.

The Swedish government has pronounced itself as a feminist government. Through its feminist foreign policy, Sweden will enhance gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls through the three R's: Rights, Representation, and Resources.

Although Sweden is a strong advocate for gender equality, we can still do better. Occupational gender segregation is still present in the Swedish labour market, with many occupations being either male- or female-dominated and with limited cross-over between sectors. This will not change unless we critically reflect on the underlying social and cultural attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality.

While gender norms may be rigid, they are not static. In Uganda,

Sweden supports initiatives that challenge traditional gender norms, for example by engaging communities and households to openly discuss men's roles and responsibilities with regards to family planning, child care and household work.

Sweden's development cooperation with Uganda focuses on ensuring that women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development.

In concrete terms, Sweden works to promote women's economic empowerment by strengthening women's business networks, supporting women entrepreneurs and advocating for women's access to productive resources, including land and credit facilities.

Sweden also places great emphasis on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women's active participation in peace and security. Evidence shows that women's participation lead to more sustainable peace, yet women's experiences, knowledge and expertise are too often excluded in peace processes. In this regard, Sweden is pleased to note the significant role the Women's Situation Room has played - and continues to play - in promoting peaceful elections in Uganda. Peace and stability is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable economic development.

Sweden remains a strong and committed supporter of gender equality and women's empowerment – globally and in Uganda. I am proud to represent the world's first feminist government, and I firmly believe that greater gender equality will have a direct and positive effect on prosperity and development for this and future generations.

Gender equality is a central and cross-cutting theme in the Sustainable Development Goals, with target 5a clearly articulating the importance of women's economic empowerment in achieving overall gender parity.

Happy Women's Day 2016!