



Women's Major Group –Welcome Remarks and Way Forward

Thank you moderator; I greet you all in your distinguished capacities and wish you a fruitful 2015. Speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Group; I am Irene Kagoya working with [Akina Mama wa Afrika](#).

The ending of poverty in all its forms and achievement of gender equality, girls and women's rights and women's empowerment remains unfinished business. We commend various processes of the post2015 agenda that have affirmed gender equality; however some recommendations have missed opportunities that need consideration. It is evident areas explicitly not covered in MDGs received less attention leading to uneven progress or regression, an experience we ought to learn from. As negotiations commence we call on Member states to address and strengthen the following areas of the framework:-

- a) **A Transformative standing goal on gender and gender equality as a cross- cutting issue critical.** Gender equality and women's human rights are a central ambition. Structural barriers to achieving it can only be addressed through a stand- alone goal. It is essential that gender-focused targets and indicators underpin all goals with critical attention to issues of violence against women and girls, economic empowerment, maternal mortality, sexual and reproductive health and rights and political participation¹
- b) **Ensure girl's and women's full and effective participation in decision making and equal opportunities for leadership.** The framework should catalyse women's participation, representation and leadership in decision-making across the public and private sector. Any post-2015 target/should go beyond mere representation in parliament to encompass a wider range of decision-making bodies that impact on women's lives.

¹ For further suggestions on what transformative targets look like see the following report: Smee, S. and Woodroffe, J., 2013.

- c) **Eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls – in policies, laws and practices.** Structural underlying root causes and social norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls must be analyzed in the framework. Although child early and forced marriage is an issue of justice, delinking it from the goal to gender equality and women's empowerment, may prompt strategies narrowly focused on enactment and enforcement of laws rather than addressing the deep seated gender discrimination and resulting inequalities.
- d) **Universal access to sexual reproductive health and rights.** We would like to emphasize that sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights. If we cannot control our own bodies, sexualities and fertility, we cannot exercise any of our other civil political and economic social cultural rights. Universal access to sexual reproductive health and rights will address unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality, teenage pregnancies, transmission of STIs, HIV/AIDS. Member states are called to address this gap by including reference to the full realization of sexual rights in addition to sexual health.
- e) **Education.** The framework needs to recognize the complexity between barriers to education, gender, poverty, violence and equality to ensure that millions of marginalized girls and boys have access and successfully complete a full cycle of quality education. We call for the framework to encompass comprehensive sexuality education to enable adolescents and young people make informed choices about their health and lives.
- f) **Secure rights to land, other resources and assets.**
We call for the framework to secure rights of women for resources and assets including land, energy, credit, information and technology; as well as indicators that measure how much land is controlled by women and men over time. In addition to commercialization, modernizing of agriculture, entrepreneurship training and support to SME's need to be addressed to improve women's livelihoods.
- g) **Social Protection, Decent work and a living wage;** We need to commit to human rights at work addressing the right to social protection, pay for work of equal value, maternity and parental rights, decent work , employment security and living wages , sustainable livelihoods and environmental concerns . A living wage is a necessary element to reduce inequality.

- h) **Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work** –We must reduce women’s time burdens through recognition, value, reduction and redistribution of unpaid domestic and care work. We call for a co-responsible engagement of the state, private sector, communities, households, and families, women and men in addressing the problem.
- i) **Financing and Means of Implementation.** We have to address the asymmetrical international economic order that has historically stripped developing countries of resources and limited their domestic policy space. Urgent action needs to be taken to create a more equitable multilateral trading system, fair representation of emerging and developing countries in international financial decision making processes, sustainable debt solutions. And prohibition of attachment of harmful conditionality to ODA and other forms of financing.
- j) **Accountability and Monitoring.** In finalizing the agenda we should ensure that it engages all levels of government, stakeholders and partners in attainment of its implementation. The accountability framework should be people centered and reflect human rights based approach to development. The mechanism needs to encourage member states to share best practices and callout states that fall short of expected progress, with mechanisms for women’s participation and other stakeholders including CSOs.
- We urge Member States to commit to strengthening the already proposed goals and targets and ensure that the sustainable development goals are accompanied by a forward-looking and uncompromising narrative that puts human rights, gender equality, justice and accountability at its core². We continue to urge you to keep the spaces open for meaningful CSO engagement in all the final stages of the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the framework.

Let Our History, Our realities, Our Commitments and Our Aspirations inspire us for a truly transformative agenda for all.

Thank You!

² Women’s Major group response to the Secretary –General’s Sythesis Report “ The Road to Dignity by 2030”