

**Statement of
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**Open Working Group
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**Promoting equality, including social equity, and
gender equality and women's empowerment**

***A safe and sustainable world demands women's
rights, women's empowerment and gender equality***

Distinguished members of the Open Working Group,

I am pleased to join you today as we discuss the vital matter of promoting equality, including social equity, and gender equality and women's empowerment. All of which is key to sustainable development and the future we aim for.

Just last week I was in Addis Ababa at the African Union Summit where the theme was Agriculture and Food Security. This was supported by side events with a focus on *young women and agriculture* co-hosted by UN Women, and another on *Youth Unemployment and agriculture*.

This focus on agriculture as well as youth and women is critical because 1 out of 5 Africans is food insecure.

And this is a problem for which solutions exist.

In large part, the solutions require gender equality and true empowerment of women and girls.

Today women farmers have less access to productive resources—extension services, credit and loans, and inputs such as seeds and fertilizer.

All too often, they are not legally allowed to own or inherit the land they work on. All of this is entrenched inequality.

These are problems for which solutions exist.

Distinguished members,

The post 2015 development framework must be firmly anchored in the principles of human rights—universality, equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, and accountability.

It must recognize that realizing the rights, wellbeing, and human development of **all** people—men and women, young and old, rich and poor – AND not only the achievement of economic growth - is the hallmark of successful and sustainable societies.

Today there is widespread acknowledgement that women's empowerment and gender equality are essential to environmental, social and economic progress.

This was recognized in the Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals and MDG 3 on women's empowerment and gender equality.

This was recognized in the Rio+20 outcome reaffirming the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development and of gender-sensitive indicators to measure and accelerate progress.

And, more recently, this was recognized by Member States at the General Assembly as they called for “the goal of gender equality and women’s empowerment to be considered as a priority in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda and for the integration of a gender perspective into the new development framework”.

The women’s agenda is the agenda of half the population in all countries, and has to be an integral part of everything we do to score high on any Sustainable Development Goals.

Women’s rights, women’s empowerment and gender equality have to be embedded in the post 2015 agenda for far reaching and inclusive change to be achieved.

It must aim to transform gender relations for the sake of both men and women, our communities and for the sake of future generations. We must take advantage of the progress made and insights gained from the past decades. A less ambitious plan will not take the world to a much better place.

Putting women at the center of the post 2015 agenda will unleash the potential of the millions of women whose contributions are historically excluded, and also affirm the contribution of men.

Distinguished members of the Open Working Group,

The agenda for women and gender equality remains unfinished as we stand at this crossroads, and it requires renewed commitment and bolder action.

The MDGs have played an important role in galvanizing attention and highlighting resources needed for gender equality and women's empowerment, with what we now know we can make the progress that women and girls deserve and demand.

In every region of the world, women are more likely than men to have jobs characterized by poor pay, insecurity and a lack of basic rights.

Women continue to earn less pay for work of equal value.

The gender gap in unemployment widened between 2007 and 2012 by an estimated 13 million jobs.

More than 100 countries have laws that prevent women from playing their full role in society, banning them from certain jobs, accessing finance, owning businesses or conducting legal affairs.

An estimated 800 women continue to die every day, due to childbirth and other pregnancy related complications. And adolescent girls are particularly at risk of complications from pregnancy and childbirth, often stemming from forced and so-called early marriages.

Women are disproportionately affected by climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, and are often more dependent on natural resources for their survival and livelihoods.

They walk hours to fetch wood and carry water, denying them opportunities for education and economic participation.

In sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls spend 40 billion hours a year collecting water, equivalent to a year's labour by the entire workforce in France.

Today women remain under-represented in decision-makings at all levels– from the family to the parliament - and only around 1 in 5 parliamentarians are women.

And a global pandemic of violence against women and girls affects one in three worldwide, including children who become sanctioned sex slaves to adults sometimes referred to as child brides, which destroys the future we want for all communities.

These are manifestations of gender inequality: and structural barriers that hold back women and girls. We need new approaches which make transforming gender relations and integral part of **all** we do.

These are problems for which solutions exist.

Unless we tackle inequality at this fundamental level, at its roots, we cannot expect to make the progress to which we aspire as humanity.

Thus a transformative, ambitious and bold approach is needed. Our member states, and this working group, are eminently qualified to take us in that direction, and make the 21st century the time and place to conquer gender inequality and injustice.

Gender equality and women's empowerment and rights must be addressed in a stand-alone goal and in integrated gender targets across all other development goals.

We must build on MDG 3 to address three core areas:

- The first is freedom from violence for women and girls;

- The second is equality in human capabilities, access to opportunities and resources;
- The third is equality in agency, voice and participation across the full range of decision-making arenas in public and private institutions.

This approach is detailed in a paper that UN Women released last year with proposed targets and indicators. Let me now address them briefly.

First, **freedom from violence for women and girls.**

This violence violates the rights and dignity of women and girls. It constrains the ability of women and girls to fulfill their potential and it carries great economic and social costs for them, their families and for society.

We cannot allow ending violence against women and girls to be omitted again, as it was in the MDGs. Violence against women is the most prevalent human rights violation of our time. One in three women worldwide is subject to violence in her lifetime. Concrete actions to eliminate this violence must be a priority.

This is a problem for which solutions exist.

Secondly, we turn to **gender equality in capabilities, opportunities and resources.** This represents the essence of the economic and social rights of women and girls.

It means:

- Recognising, reducing and redistributing the invisible burden of unpaid care work;
- Ensuring women equal access to assets and resources such as education, land and finance;
- Improving working conditions and pay and social protection coverage for all women workers; and
- Guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights across the life cycle.

This also means tackling gender-based social norms, roles and expectations that perpetuate gender inequality.

Finally, **Gender equality in decision-making power in public and private institutions.**

From the kitchen table to the cabinet, from the peace table to the boardroom, gender equality in decision-making is a matter of fairness and human rights. It is also a driver of sustainability and good governance. On all these levels women face discrimination.

Distinguished Delegates,

In addition to these three core areas for a stand-alone goal, relevant gender concerns and targets should be comprehensively integrated across all goals.

For example, a future goal on employment must include targets on women's access to decent work.

A sustainable energy goal should include targets on access to sustainable energy for women's economic empowerment.

And gender equality in education and health should be addressed in other goals covering those topics.

With our bold, transformative efforts and within predictable time, we must aim to remove the structural and systemic barriers to women's development and attainment of rights in particular reproductive rights, and to ensure women play a role in attaining climate justice.

Now I would like to address the important matter of accountability.

As we all know, identifying goals, targets and indicators is not enough.

We must focus on implementation and this means adequate resources and funding— in terms of capacity building, finance and technology.

We should align international development cooperation and aid, trade, investment and technology transfer frameworks that are responsive to women.

Future Goals should also be aligned with the commitments set out in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and other instruments.

A total of 187 countries have ratified CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action was unanimously adopted. UN Member States have made and continue to make progress in ending discrimination and violence against women and girls. But much remains to be done for full implementation and to build accountability.

We need strong accountability mechanisms and transparency, to enable ordinary men and women and civil society to monitor progress and hold decision-makers accountable.

We need a concerted effort to address the under-investment in gender equality. From UN Women to grassroots civil society organizations, under-investment stifles women's voices and further progress.

We must also end years of under-investment in the production of gender statistics. We need a gender data

revolution! Every country should collect and analyse data on vital matters such as time use, and violence against women.

Targets and indicators should be chosen based on what is important to measure, not simply on what data is available!

In conclusion, the post-2015 framework needs to be **bold**; it needs to be ambitious, and it must be comprehensive to address the challenges of the 21st century. It must take advantage of the new reality of technology, build on what we have achieved, and learn from the challenges we have faced in the past and still face today.

Our approach to change and the transformation of gender relations must be embedded in all our post 2015 work.

A sustainable world that is without poverty **depends** on gender equality. Our collective action, and resolve for post 2015, will have to reflect that.

This is a problem for which solutions exist, the meaningful and full inclusion of women.

Together let us make the 21st century the century to empower women and girls, and achieve equality between

men and women, which will lead to a better life for all of humanity.

I thank you.