



**EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**“Promoting equality including social equity, gender equality and women’s
empowerment”**

3-7 February 2014

Key Notes on behalf of Bulgaria and Croatia

Statement by Danijel Međan, Deputy Permanent Representative,

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to UN

Mr. Co-Chair,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of Bulgaria and my own country, Croatia.

Our two countries share the opinion that the discussions about any Post-2015 Agenda must address the structural obstacles and political barriers that prevented the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this light, we see the issues of equality including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment key building blocks of sustained prosperity for everyone.

Despite all efforts at global, regional and national level, inequalities remain unacceptably high across all main dimensions of human life and their manifestations, today more than ever, represent one of the most persistent challenges for sustainable and inclusive development.

Inequalities, and the barriers associated with them, reduce both the efficiency of economic growth for income poverty reduction and the efficiency of growth and public spending for improving social service coverage and social outcomes. Inequalities also closely correlate with political marginalization, as well as underemployment, and are underpinned by various forms of discrimination and social exclusion. Inequalities and associated exclusions can also have, particularly for young people, serious consequences for the fulfilment of their life aspirations and reduce their chances for realizing their full potential. Inequalities also increase the risk of violent conflict and harm not only the people who themselves are the most deprived, but also their wider societies. Exclusion, discrimination and violence have not only highly negative impacts on the development progress of the people affected and on their

societies, but are also contrary to legal obligations under international human rights treaties and intrinsically objectionable on moral grounds, based on common notions of justice and fairness.

Mr Co-Chair,

Croatia and Bulgaria believe that the Post-2015 Agenda need to address disparities and promote equity-focussed policies and measures that tackle both the manifestations of inequalities and their structural drivers. We also believe that such policies and measures should be underpinned by human rights standards and principles of universality, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability. This implies using human rights principles and standards to frame the way in which the Post-2015 agenda integrates issues of equality, as well as social equity, as a concept of justice and fairness.

In this regard, Croatia and Bulgaria strongly support a transformative shift in development that would “leave no one behind”, proposed in the Report of the Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. As stated in the Report, “we should ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities.”

However, across the world, in all societies, women and girls consistently face a range of barriers to equality - such as wage gaps, gender-based violence, child and early marriage and female genital mutilation. The poor and otherwise socially disadvantaged women are further marginalised through crippling combinations of gender discrimination and poverty. Gender inequality is the most pervasive form of inequality around the world and a pressing human rights concern.

Therefore, tackling the gender inequalities and critical barriers that prevent women and girls from exercising their rights and empowering themselves must be at the heart of our efforts to create sustainable, prosperous and resilient societies. Gender equality has a catalytic effect on the achievement of inclusive and progressive human development, good governance, sustained peace, and harmonious dynamics between environments and human populations – all of which are at the core of our actual discussions on sustainable development, human rights, peace and stability.

Mr Co-Chair,

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is not only a means to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development, it is an important end in itself. Promoting gender equality in the post-2015 framework includes finishing the work that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) started. In this regard, Croatia and Bulgaria strongly support a stand-alone goal on gender equality with focus on four priority areas - violence against women and girls, access to education for women and girls, women's economic empowerment, and women’s voice, leadership and participation. Alongside with this specific goal for gender equality, we also support a comprehensive integration of gender-specific targets and indicators across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure meaningful achievement of those goals by addressing the structural causes of gender based discrimination.

In conclusion, Mr Co-Chair,

Croatia and Bulgaria reiterate their commitment to engage constructively within this Group, as well as within other relevant forums, in order to help to ensure that the post-2015 agenda is truly universal and inclusive.

Thank you.