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Note to the Secretary-General

Gender-specific content of the general debate and high-level meetings
of the 68th session of the General Assembly

23/10/13

1. I have the pleasure of attaching a short analysis of the gender equality-specific content of the general debate of the 68th session of the General Assembly, as well as of the high-level events held between 23 September and 8 October 2013.
2. UN Women is very pleased with the continuing importance that Member States attribute to gender equality, ~~women's~~ rights and women's empowerment. Japan's new focus on gender equality was particularly pronounced, with the Prime Minister declaring his intention to create "a society in which women shine"; stating his country's respect for the activities of UN Women and its intention to become one of UN Women's leading contributors; and announcing that Japan would spend US\$3 billion in ODA within the next three years on three pillars, namely women's participation in society and of the empowerment of women; women's participation and protection in the areas of peace and security; and health and medical care for women.
3. We were especially gratified by Member States' recognition of the centrality of gender equality to sustainable development, peace and security and human rights, and the growing support for a stand-alone gender equality goal in the post-2015 development agenda, together with the reflection of gender perspectives in all other aspects of the agenda. The commitment to gender equality demonstrated by Member States at the highest levels of Government bodes well for a strong reflection of this core issue in the post-2015 development agenda. Your advocacy and support for such a stand-alone goal going forward will be essential and we count on your continuing full support for this goal.
4. The high-level/special events convened during the early part of the session confirmed this trend of attention to gender equality. UN Women contributed to the preparation of several of these and participated within the established modalities. We also convened and participated in side events to demonstrate the evidence on gender equality and good practices for accelerating progress in the realization of this common goal.
5. Your outspoken support for the promotion of gender equality, including your call to "Let the 21st century be the century of ~~women~~" resonates very positively with the UN membership. I appreciate, and look forward to your continued leadership as we proceed with preparations for the 20-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

23 October 2013

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General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Gender-specific content of the general debate, 24 September – 1 October 2013
Gender-specific content of the high-level meetings on: Disability; MDGs; international migration and development; and financing for development.

A. General debate

Of the total number of (193) speakers, 14 were women: 6 Presidents (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Liberia, Lithuania and Malawi), 1 Vice-President (Honduras), 3 Prime Ministers (Bangladesh, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago) and 4 Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Australia, Barbados, Liechtenstein and Maldives).

Three countries spoke extensively and forcefully about gender equality, namely Canada, Japan and Sweden. Most prominently, Japan discussed in detail its commitment to empowering women both nationally and internationally and announcing new policy efforts and significant financial commitments. Sweden focused on gender equality and women's empowerment as a means for improving a country's productivity, economy and rule of law. Canada paid particular attention to girls. An additional **34 speakers** devoted notable attention to, and **92 speakers** referred to women or gender equality issues.

Speakers referred to, or expressed their continued support for **UN-Women**, namely Iceland, Japan, Nicaragua, Spain, Sweden, and Solomon Islands. Japan stated its intention to become a leading contributor to UN-Women, and to spend US\$3 billion in ODA within the next three years on the three pillars of women's participation in society and of the empowerment of women; women's participation and protection in the areas of peace and security; and health and medical care for women. Iceland noted UN-Women's strategy on Beijing+20, including a proposed twelve-month focus on the thematic areas of the Platform for Action. Liechtenstein thanked the **Secretary-General** for his leadership on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Significant attention was given to the **post-2015 development agenda**, with many speakers stressing the centrality they accorded to gender equality and calling for the reflection of gender equality/women's empowerment therein. Some made specific proposals, such as India, which called for equal attention to discrimination against women and women's equal access to economic opportunities; Netherlands who called for the promotion of women's rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights; and Guatemala, Iraq and India who singled out violence against women.

Issues pertaining to **women and peace and security** received extensive attention. Many speakers deplored, in passing, the plight of women and children in Syria. The **UK-sponsored Declaration to Prevent Sexual Violence in Conflict** was praised as an important new initiative by some countries that had committed to it (including Senegal, Republic of Korea and Timor-Leste), while many others called for steps to prevent and end such violence. More attention also needed to be given to **women's role in conflict resolution, mediation and implementation of resolution 1325** (including Netherlands, Japan, Montenegro and Finland). Denmark insisted

that no durable peace could be attained without the full and equal participation of women in peace-making and peace-building processes.

A number of **speakers** emphasized the importance they accorded to **gender equality/women's empowerment in their foreign and/or development policy** (including Croatia, Italy, Monaco, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden). Iceland called on governments in Arab states to show leadership and respect of human rights and the equal treatment of women and men.

The **protection and promotion of human rights including a focus on women's human rights** received broad support. While some speakers (including Gabon, Estonia and Netherlands) identified this issue as a priority including through their membership on the Human Rights Council, several other delegations singled out their commitment to the protection of persons on grounds such as LGBT, sexual preference or sexual identity, including Sweden, Austria, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Iceland and Canada. Ireland strongly condemned laws that discriminate against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and commended the **Secretary-General** for announcing in April that he would lead a global campaign on LGBT rights. While there were few references to violence against women, Canada made a strong call for action against **forced marriage** and **early forced marriage**, calling the practice 'abhorrent and indefensible' that needs to be addressed.

Many speakers reported about **national efforts to achieve the MDGs**, highlighting both progress and areas where countries were on track, but also indicating where they would be falling short. Speakers also referred to other areas of national action for gender equality and women's empowerment. These included: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Botswana, Burundi, Congo, El Salvador, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Ireland, Liberia, Malawi, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Qatar, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St Kitts and Nevis, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

B. High-level/special events

- **High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development, 23 September**

Some Member States recognized the particular vulnerabilities of women and girls with disabilities, and the related need for explicit attention to their situation. The need for data collection and analysis disaggregated by sex and age was stressed. The outcome document stresses the need for the participation of women and girls with disabilities for a disability inclusive development.

- **Special Event of the President of the General Assembly towards achieving the MDGs, 25 September 2013**

Many Member States called for a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda, with Iceland and Norway supporting a stand-alone goal on gender equality. The outcome document recognizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is key to progress on all MDGs. It also reinforces the commitment of Member States to poverty eradication and sustainable development, and provides a roadmap for the process towards a single and universal framework which should


promote peace and security, democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equality and human rights for all.

- **High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, 3-4 October**

Member States drew attention to the vulnerabilities of women migrants in the migration process, and the need to protect all women migrants, in particular domestic workers and victims of human trafficking, from human rights violations at all stages of migration. Women migrants' contributions to development were noted. Calls were made for the protection of women migrant workers' labour rights and ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers; and for the development and implementation of gender-sensitive policies, legislation and programmes. The outcome document reaffirms the need to protect and promote the human rights of all women migrants, including domestic workers; recognizes the vulnerability of migrant women and girls and the need to incorporate a gender perspective into policies and strengthening existing laws, institutions and programmes to combat gender-based violence, human trafficking and discrimination.

- **Sixth High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development on "The Monterrey Consensus, Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and related outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits: status of implementation and tasks ahead", 7-8 October 2013**

Member States generally agreed that financing for development was critical for the **achievement** of the MDGs and in the post-2015 development agenda with sustainable development at its core. Only two interventions reflected a gender perspective, with Belize linking gender equality and **poverty** eradication and the United Republic of Tanzania identifying women as beneficiaries of loans together with other groups such as farmers and young entrepreneurs. The Chair of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing called for access to credit to empower women, a critical aspect for sustainable growth. Two civil society speakers called for measures to address gender inequality and provide funding for gender equality programmes, including for women's organizations.

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