

Opening of the SADC Gender Protocol@Work summit: "2015 – Action and Results"

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Ministers,
Government Officials,
Members of the SADC Gender
Members of the Southern Africa Development Community,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here with you today at this Fourth SADC Gender Protocol@Work summit.

Your theme, "2015 - Action and Results" is indeed timely, both globally and here at the sub-regional level.

The year 2015 is the 20th anniversary of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a landmark blueprint for gender equality.

This year also marks the endorsement of the Financing for Development agenda, which was concluded just last month in Addis Ababa.

Earlier this month, Member States of the United Nations officially adopted 17 new Sustainable Development Goals, including a standalone goal on gender equality and gender equality targets incorporated throughout other goals. And in a few months, an international climate change agreement will be in place.

For those of us in this room, 2015 has very specific significance because the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, which was aligned to the MDGs, has reached the end of its countdown of progress on gender equality. I take this moment to congratulate the Heads of State of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for having the foresight in 2008 to adopt a Protocol on Gender and Development. SADC is one of

the few, if not only sub-regions that has taken all the global and continental commitments to gender equality and wrapped them into one instrument with ambitious, time-bound targets.

I further congratulate the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance, for producing the annual Barometer to track progress. I am a firm believer in the dictum that *what is not counted does not count*. And the SADC region has set itself ahead of the pack with this protocol and its Barometer.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are indeed on the cusp of a new era at all levels. In our region, since 2009, the Barometer has assessed progress towards achieving the 28 targets of the Gender Protocol, counting down towards 2015. Well, here we are now. It is 2015. How have we done?

We can celebrate a number of major achievements of the region, which the Gender Barometer allowed us to track:

- Since the first 2009 Barometer, eleven countries have undertaken constitutional reviews of some kind that have a bearing on gender equality. Twelve countries (up from four in 2009) address the contradictions between the Constitution, laws and practices.
- Fifteen countries provide for non-discrimination on the basis of sex.
- The campaign against child marriages has gained momentum with Malawi raising the age of marriage to 18.
- As a region SADC is five percentage points ahead of the global average of women in parliament of 22 percent.

- There has been an unprecedented flurry of women in high office in SADC over the period. Twelve women in eight SADC countries have held high positions: two Presidents, six deputy presidents, two prime ministers and two deputy prime ministers
- 11 now countries have laws on domestic violence; 13 on sexual harassment and 11 on human trafficking.
- HIV and AIDS incidence has decreased consistently over the past decade as fewer people are becoming infected.
- SADC has reached the targets of the Protocol, the MDGs and the Education For All Dakar Framework (EFA).

These and quite a number of others show that we have not been stagnant and that watchfulness, activism and positive collaboration between of civil society and governments have led to towards progress on gender equality.

On the other hand, very sobering challenges remain. Across Southern Africa, the Barometer tells us that there are still big roadblocks to achieving gender equality:

1. **Backward movement in elections:** With few exceptions, the last set of elections have been disappointing: No country has reached the 50% target of women's representation in parliament, cabinet or local government. Over the past six years, women's overall representation in parliament has gone up by only two percentage points from 25% in 2009 to 27% in 2015.

If women were equally represented in our lawmaking bodies, do you think that in **146** countries, state or customary law would allow girls to marry with the consent of parents or other authorities? Or that women would remain legal minors for their entire lives? I

really don't think so. SADC must redouble its efforts to turn around the backsliding in this area.

2. **Patriarchal attitudes still abound**, reflected in gender stereotypes in schools; the work place and the media; as well as predominantly male decision-making structures in all areas. Customary law contracts constitutional provisions with few ramifications in many countries.

In fact, many countries around the world had enacted more and better laws promising gender equality. But laws can only go so far when attitudes, customary practices and discriminatory social norms remain unchanged.

It is time for us to stop hiding behind the excuse of “culture” to deprive women of their inheritance rights, and their property and land rights and to deny them access to productive resources.

We must stop making excuses for horrific acts of violence against women – FGM, child marriage, to name just two. Traditions around both are deeply rooted in social norms that are the most difficult to shift.

In this, we can learn from the inspiring example of Malawi's Chief Kachindamoto, who recently annulled 330 teenage marriages in that country.

Please take note: Chief Kachindamoto is a woman – and she has led the way with the kind of concerted leadership and commitment that is needed for transformative change.

3. **The economy is still male territory**: Women still lack access to economic decision-making , land, credit and other means of

production. They constitute the majority of the poor; the unemployed; the dispossessed and those who work in the informal sector.

In UN Women's flagship report, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*, we explore how the widespread failures to respect rights witnessed in the Beijing reviews have played out in economic terms.

The report contains solid recommendations on how we can build an economy that truly works for women.

We know where women are employed, for the most part, they are in poorly paid, insecure occupations, like small-scale farming, or as domestic workers, a sector in which 83 per cent of jobs are filled by women.

Even when women are also employed in the labour market, they are still expected to shoulder domestic and childcare duties in the home.

This is a **care penalty** that unfairly punishes women and girls for stepping in to provide missing public services, like safe water sources, enough health care workers, care facilities for both young children and elderly parents.

We need to bridge the gaps that keep women from decent work and equal pay.

Data from France, Germany, Sweden and Turkey suggest that women earn between 31% and 75% less than men over their lifetimes.

When women are empowered economically, economies benefit.

If female employment were to match male employment – we could increase GDP everywhere -- by 5% in the US, 12% in UAE and 34% in Egypt. (PWC 2012 (Booz and Co))

Strengthening women as entrepreneurs is another priority area for intervention.

We know that investing in women-owned businesses pays dividends in terms of jobs and development,

And we know that the economic empowerment of women is a powerful strategy to address the

4. global scourge of violence against women.

In fact, Gender Links is among the many NGOs globally that are testing and proving the strong hypothesis that economic empowerment will increase women's agency and self-realisation, and thereby increase their ability to negotiate safe relationships or to leave abusive relationships and make positive choices about relationships.

In the SADC region, like the rest of the world, **Gender violence remains the most telling indicator of women's lack of rights and agency.**

The shockingly high levels of gender violence revealed by recent prevalence surveys shows that one in three if not more women have experienced some form of gender violence over their lifetime, often multiple times, and multiple forms of violence.

These ranged from 25% in Mauritius to nearly 80% in four districts of Zambia..

And globally, 35 per cent of women today have experienced physical and /or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.

It is a very positive sign that at least 125 countries have outlawed sexual harassment and domestic violence, yet three-quarters of women in management and higher professional positions in the EU have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace.

And UNICEF reports that 120 million girls have been forced into intercourse or other sexual acts at some point in their lives.

5. There is, as we know, a strong link between violence against women and **HIV and AIDS, which continues to threaten the fragile gains that have been made.**

There is a shadow over the consistent decrease of HIV and AIDS incidence over the past decade, because young women remain the majority of those newly infected by HIV and AIDS as well as those who bear the burden of caring for People Living with HIV.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have only touched on some of the areas covered by the Barometer, yet those are enough to show that the advent of 2015 and the new development agenda is not a moment too soon. Each challenge I mentioned is integrally bound to all the others and deeply rooted in underlying, structural drivers. The new development agenda, now referred to as The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, gives us a

space to create the transformative change needed to meet this ambitious agenda.

To do this, we can learn from the example set here in the region. One of the most positive features of the Protocol is the extent that civil society and governments have worked together in partnership to achieve its goals.

The SADC Gender Protocol Alliance has succeeded in setting up affiliate networks in all 15 SADC countries, as well as across ten themes and cross cutting interest groups.

In great part due to these efforts and relationships driven by the Alliance, in May, SADC Gender Ministers resolved to review the Protocol and align it to the SDGs, the Beijing Plus Twenty Review, and Africa's Agenda 2063. Additional cause for celebration is that the ministers declared that they want the updated Protocol to be accompanied by a Monitoring, Evaluation and Results Framework.

This intertwined imperative for local, national, sub-regional, regional and global action is clear. While Alliance and its partners worked on one level, UN Women was working on another, and has supported and collaborating with partners to shape the global agenda, while using the same agenda to strengthen national and regional efforts.

While Alliance and its partners were working on the SADC Gender Ministers, UN Women and its partners were campaigning to ensure that gender was mainstreamed across all 169 targets of the SDGs.

On Sunday August 2, as Member States rose to their feet to acclaim agreement on the new agenda, it was a moment for real celebration - not just for them, but for our civil society partners, other stakeholders, global citizens around the world, and for us at UN Women.

It was not that long ago that we were not sure that there would be a stand-alone goal on gender in the new development agenda. Together with our partners like the Alliance – working at all levels - it was your energy, commitment and steadfast dedication that delivered the transformative Goal Five - and much more. Gender equality and the empowerment of women is truly embedded throughout the document, with an important focus on gender mainstreaming.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our ambitious new agenda and its goals will not be met without **transformative financing**.

At the recent Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa, Member States endorsed a global framework that will shape the development cooperation agenda for the next 15 years and provide financing for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

We must ensure that these financial commitments are implemented so that our good ideas are not merely words on paper.

We also need better **data monitoring and accountability**, so that we can track and measure progress and ensure our efforts are being effectively targeted. **The international community can look to the SADC region for inspiration** on how this has been effectively done through the Barometer since 2009; and which will continue even more effectively with its Monitoring, Evaluation and Results Framework.

UN Women will continue to work actively with our partners in **civil society**, who act as ‘watchdogs’ by placing women’s rights on the agenda and encouraging voters to use their voice at the polls.

The women's movement, civil society and social justice organizations must participate in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of the SDG related processes at the national level.

Governments and UN agencies must ensure an enabling environment - including transparent mechanisms and inclusive consultations - for civil society to contribute to policies, strategies, action plans, and allocation of resources that are aligned with the SDGs.

We will also continue to work diligently in strategic partnerships with the **private sector** to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are also corporate priorities.

The private sector has an enormous role to play in changing the work environment.

It is only by getting employers to confront their discriminatory practices that we can challenge them to change.

If we are to truly transform attitudes and social norms, we must also reach out to new and diverse constituencies.

Our traditional allies have gotten us to where we are today, but we do not want only to be preaching to the choir.

In that vein, I commend the Alliance members for emphasizing the importance of **grassroots mobilization in advancing gender equality, as well as the vital role that youth, men's groups and faith-based organizations.**

Achieving gender equality is above all a transformative enterprise.

It is about breaking social norms and harmful stereotypes that limit opportunities for women and girls and restrict men and boys to certain roles.

UN Women is mobilizing men and boys through our **HeforShe** initiative.

It calls for men and boys to take responsibility for gender equality and to work in solidarity with women to redefine masculinity.

We must continue to build on programmes that address and engage men in their roles as sons, fathers, husbands, partners, elders, educators, health providers, journalists, and policymakers.

By working together in strategic partnerships and finding new gender equality allies, we are moving ever closer to our ambitious post-2015 goals.

We will have succeeded when

- all women enjoy equal rights, live their lives free from violence and can freely make decisions about their bodies, health and sexuality;
- when women and girls can access quality education at all levels, are paid equally and have equal opportunities in the workplace, and are no longer constrained by a disproportionate share of unpaid care work;
- when women are no longer confined by gender stereotypes and enjoy equal voice, participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels.

The work that the Alliance does locally, regionally, and around the continent can have a global impact that will help us to reach these ambitious goals.

We value the collaborative relationship that has been established between UN Women and the Alliance and look forward to continuing this momentum even further - together.

Thank you.