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## FOREWORD

Throughout its history from 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has been a strong advocate for gender equality and empowerment of women across the globe and

has provided a unique space for exchange of national experience and good practice and for bringing the voice of the women's movement to the work of the United Nations. With the support of Member States, the Commission continues to play a critical leadership role to ensure that the work of the United Nations has a positive impact on the lives of women at country level and remains a driving force for gender equality and empowerment of women.

Ghana joined other Member States of the United Nations to participate in the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSW from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 at the UN Headquarters in New York. This year's priority theme was **"Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development"**. It was a relevant test of world leaders' commitments to the implementation and financing of the Agenda 2030, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed upon last September. Particularly the specific goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG-5), and the commitment to the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda (paragraph 20 of the SDGs).

The Agenda is relevant to all of us, as it will heavily influence governments' domestic and foreign policies in the coming years, including what financial resources they will devote to gender equality programming.

This report represents deliberations during the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSW.

Ghana organized a side event on a breakfast meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 at Ghana Permanent Mission on the theme *"Ending Child Marriage in Ghana and West Africa "* and an event on *"Sexual and Gender -Based Violence in Ghana: Response, Prevention and Elimination (Highlight was on The Preliminary Report of Nationwide Research on Domestic Violence in Ghana)"* on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 at United Nations Building New York.

I wish to assure all stakeholders that Ghana will implement the agreed conclusions of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session to promote and protect the rights of women and girls for sustainable development.

**HON. NANA OYE LITHUR (MRS)**  
**MINISTER FOR GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is an annual event organized by the UN Women, one of the statutory structures created by the United Nations (UN). The CSW Sessions are organized in collaboration with key UN Systems which are mandated to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of women globally. These Sessions bring on board Governmental, Non-Governmental bodies, Intergovernmental organizations and individual entities throughout the United Nations Member States to deliberate on pertinent issues that promote gender equality and women empowerment.

The 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSW was held from 14<sup>th</sup> March to 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 at the UN Headquarters, New York for about 161 UN Member States and other UN entities, Civil Society Organizations and individuals. The CSW, at its sixtieth session, had a critical opportunity to identify the key enabling conditions for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It moreover had the opportunity to provide concrete guidance on how to translate the commitments and gains from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and its own 2015 Political Declaration into concrete steps and measures towards realizing 'Planet 50-50' by 2030.

## THEME

The Priority theme for the 60<sup>th</sup> CSW was *Women's empowerment and its link to Sustainable Development*. In addition, the Commission reviewed progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session (2013) on *'The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls'*. The nine day session included a ministerial segment with round tables and other high level interactive dialogues, a general discussion as well as interactive dialogues and panel discussions.

## THE BUREAU FOR THE 60TH SESSION'S COMPRISED THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

Chair

H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil), Latin American and Caribbean States Group

### **Vice-Chairs**

Ms. Fatima Alzahraa Hassan (Egypt), African States Group,

Ms. Šejla Đurbuzović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Eastern European States Group,

Mr. Jun Saito (Japan), Asia-Pacific States Group,

**Vice-Chair designate** Mr. Andreas Glossner (Germany), Western European and other States Group,

## PARTICIPATION

Around 4,100 non - governmental representatives from more than 540 organizations comprising UN Member States, UN Entities, NGOs, CSOs and individuals participated.

Hon. Nana Oye Lithur led a delegation of fifty-three (53) comprising government officials, Members of Parliament, representatives of CSOs, NGOs, Media and Private sector to participate in the nine day session.

Throughout the nine days period government representatives and feminist civil society groups emphasized that the goals will not be achieved without the full empowerment of all women and girls and stressed the importance of leaving no one behind in the implementation of Agenda 2030. In their statements several government representatives brought up issues such as the need to ensure the human rights of the growing number of refugee and migrant women, increasing women's contribution in peace and security efforts and combatting religious and political fundamentalisms that deny women their human rights. Several countries, such as Iceland, Colombia and Sweden, mentioned the important role of men and boys in their speeches, and Brazilian Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, the Chair of the Commission in his opening statement remarked:

"Realizing gender equality is a truly universal task, a common challenge for men and women in all corners of the world. Women's activism has successfully reshaped their reality worldwide. As a man, I support this cause and feel encouraged by the increasing number of men working alongside women towards our common gender equality goals."

After the statements to mark the Opening Session, there were general discussions focusing on Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first.

## GHANA'S SIDE EVENT

Ghana held two major events during the 60<sup>th</sup> session; a breakfast meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 at Ghana Permanent Mission on the theme "*Ending Child Marriage in Ghana and West Africa*" and an event on "*Sexual and Gender -Based Violence in Ghana: Response, Prevention and Elimination (Highlight was on The Preliminary Report of Nationwide Research on Domestic Violence in Ghana)*" on the 21st March 2016 at United Nations Building New York.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

The 60th session CSW resulted in a set of Agreed Conclusions in which governments committed to stronger laws, policies and institutions, better data and increased financing for gender equality. The Conclusions covered a wide variety of themes related to sustainable development. Governments committed to a gender-responsive implementation of all 17 goals, across government programmes and policies at all levels.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Sixtieth (60<sup>th</sup>) session of the Commission took place from 14<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016, with representatives from Member States, UN entities, and NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from all regions of the world participating in the session. Around 4,100 Non - Governmental representatives from more than 540 organizations comprising UN Member States, UN Entities, NGOs, CSOs and individuals participated.

The Commission sought to address as its priority theme '*Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development*'. In addition, the Commission evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session (2013) on '*The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls*'. The nine-day session included a ministerial segment with round tables and other high level interactive dialogues, a general discussion, as well as interactive dialogues and panel discussions. Stakeholders organized many side events to draw attention to critical aspects of work done on gender equality. As an expected outcome, Member States had negotiations to outline agreed conclusion on the priority theme.

During the session, a major concern was on identifying critical opportunities that would provide key enabling conditions for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, the session created the opportunity to provide concrete guidance on how to translate the commitments and gains from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and its own 2015 Political Declaration into concrete steps and measures towards realizing 'Planet 50-50' by 2030.

Emphasis was further placed on creating a conducive environment for a successful session and to generate momentum for gender-responsive localization and implementation of the SDGs.

Building alliances and strengthening networks to build the linkages and synergies with processes and mechanisms tasked with implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national, regional and global level.

## 2.0 OPENING SESSION

The Opening Session of the 60<sup>th</sup> CSW was well attended by delegates from Members States and UN entities. This session was notable for statements delivered by the Chairperson of the 60th Commission, His Excellency Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, the UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Mr. Ban Ki Moon for delivering his last statement to the CSW as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Other statements were made by the following; the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Ambassador Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland and His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70th session of the General Assembly, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences among others.

### 2.1 Opening Statement by Chair

The Chair of the Commission, His Excellency Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota in his opening speech, acknowledged the presence of Government Ministers, Senior Officials, Parliamentarians and experts who traveled from capitals to the sixtieth session. He further extended a warm welcome to the very large number of Civil Society representatives and applauded the commitment and determination of all participants.

He reaffirmed the collective commitment of the international community to achieve results for women and girls; he intimated that a new sense of urgency was required particularly at the 60<sup>th</sup> session. Noting that, the twenty year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2015 came to the weighty conclusion that no country had fully achieved equality for women and girls. He emphatically made reference to the political declaration adopted, where Member States pledged to take concrete actions to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota recognized gender equality as a truly universal task, a common challenge for men and women in all corners of the world. He further paid homage to women's activism which he believed had successfully reshaped the reality worldwide. The Chair pledged his support for this cause, adding that, he felt encouraged by the

increasing number of men working alongside women towards attaining the common gender equality goals.

"The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development now presents us with a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved over the next 15 years. Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, sets critical targets in a number of key areas, including eliminating all forms of violence, recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work, ensuring participation and leadership in decision rights." he reiterated.

He called on Member States to make provision for access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. He acknowledged that, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030 was crucial for poverty eradication and accomplishment of the entire 2030 Agenda.

The Chair was confident that CSW 60 will draw inspiration from the spirit of 2015, when Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, and the Paris Agreement on climate change. In all of these agreements he said, highlighted the centrality of gender equality to achieve sustainable development.

On the priority theme selected for consideration at CSW 60; the Chair, anticipated that, it provided an opportunity to focus on the gender responsive implementation of the Agenda; *"opportunity for the Commission to articulate clear guidance on the institutions policy and funding frameworks, and the mechanisms for participation and accountability that need to be in place so that gender equality remains at the center of all implementation activities"*.

He paid glowing tributes to Ministers and other actors who gathered in regional meetings in Santiago de Chile, Addis Ababa, Beirut and Bangkok. Civil society organizations who mobilized their membership at the national and global levels to build alliances and strengthen partnerships for the work ahead.

Furthermore, he looked forward to an inspiring and productive session, where Ministers would exchange lessons learned and good practices, reaffirm political commitments and converge on the way forward.

In his conclusion, the Chair called on all stakeholders "to move from commitment to action, now is the time to determine the HOW of implementation, for the benefit of all women and girls, everywhere.

*"I call on all of you to demonstrate the political will and commitment that will make a difference. We have the opportunity to lay the foundation for a world without discrimination and violence against women and girls, where all women and girls enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities, and all their human rights are respected and protected and their aspirations fulfilled."*

## **2.2 Statement by UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**

UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka indicated that the 60th Commission on the Status of Women was the first CSW of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She mentioned that the theme was on women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development. She paid her tribute to a defender of women's rights, Berta Cáceres, feminist activist, environmentalist, defender of indigenous and all human rights, who was shot dead in Honduras on 3 March 2016. She indicated that Berta is one of the latest victims of the fight to assert different values against the power structures that could compromise Agenda 2030.

She acknowledged the progress made so far in the last 20 years on gender equality and however indicated that for many women and girls at risk that change was not happening fast enough. Thus it was going to take fifty years to achieve parity in political participation, and one hundred and eighteen years for equality between women and men at the current pace of change.

She indicated that Governments cannot deliver alone on their strong commitments and therefore collaboration with Civil Society and Women's Organizations was important. It also meant that greater support and protection of civil society was needed to ensure greater political space and capacity for them.

Therefore, the CSW60 was the moment to 'Step it up' with Agenda 2030 plans that are decisive, implementable and transformative. For example, launching a partnership to take action on barriers to women's economic empowerment through the newly-announced Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. This will be jointly led by a Head of State and industry Chief Executive Officer and the participation of trade unions, women and civil society organizations, academics, IMF and the World Bank,

with critical support from the UK Government. Further, Flagship Programmes that have the capacity to transform the lives of women, girls and communities would be rolled out at global, regional and national level.

According to her, the Sustainable Development Goal 5 and its targets are the best example of how universal and relevant the agenda 2030 is to ensure gender equality as it gives the framework to end all forms of discrimination, including tackling discriminatory laws; eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices like child marriage, FGM and honour killings; recognize the value of unpaid care and domestic work; ensure substantive increase in women's participation in leadership and decision-making; ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action; and make reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, for example to close the gender wage gap, which globally was at 24 per cent as well as enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular ICTs in order to close the digital divide and the positive use and accountability of social and traditional media.

She further stated that there was a CSW for the youth for the first time to discuss the implementation of the SDGs as well launched the Youth and Gender Equality Strategy. This was because there are 1.8 billion young people aged 10-24 years old in the world and Agenda 2030 is largely about them and for them.

Globally, there are intense hardships, with extensive population displacement, extreme violence against women and girls, and widespread instability in many regions. The extraordinary challenges such as the current refugee and migration situation, require the need to work together to address the root causes in countries of origin as well as in countries of transition and destination.

This is why engagement should not only involve traditional partners, but also involve men and boys in large numbers, and reach out beyond comfort zones to those with different opinions, she concluded.

### 2.3 UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon's Statement

**Mr. Ban Ki-Moon;** recalled his speech to the General Assembly, in his earlier days as Secretary-General, where he promised to push for gender equality worldwide and within the United Nations, supporting his statement with a famous statement by Eleanor Roosevelt who said, "*human rights start close to home.*"

This according to him was evidenced in his last nine years as Secretary-General, " I have appointed more than 150 distinguished women as Assistant Secretary-Generals or Under-Secretary-General." He explained that, before his appointment, there were no women often as Special Representatives of the Secretary General in the UN. Today, nearly a quarter of UN missions are headed by women. That is not nearly enough but it is a major step in realizing the Security Council's historic resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. He remarked.

He added that, the United Nation is now shattering glass ceilings and further pledged his continuous commitment adding that, the deeply rooted prejudice that women are not capable of dealing with security matters is completely untrue.

Giving meaning to his commitment to the gender agenda, the Secretary General stated that, he has done his best to promote women at the United Nations. He further called on governments, businesses and other stakeholders to step up for gender equality which demands nothing less than full respect for the human rights of women and girls everywhere.

The Secretary General appreciated the excellent leadership of the President of Chile, Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet, who led as the first head of UN Women and also to the current UN women's outstanding Executive Director, Ms. PhumzileMlambo-Ngcuka. He stated that, the UN set up the "*Every Woman, Every Child*" movement because no mother should die while giving birth and no infant or child should die when we could have saved them earlier.

He mentioned the following as flagship campaigns and initiatives under his leadership aimed at protecting vulnerable women; they are

- UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign.
- The He4she campaign to mobilize men and boys which built up on his Network of Men Leaders fighting for full equality around the world. The Secretary General was the first man to sign up for this campaign.
- The new United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism; which sets out specific proposals to give women more influence in the global response, the
- Plan calls for ensuring that efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism never violate any human rights.

**Mr. Ban Ki-Moon** took the opportunity to make a personal appeal: *“I urge for action by all leaders of countries where not even a single woman is in the parliament or cabinet to end this injustice.”* He further, added that he will keep pushing until the world has no parliaments and no cabinets without women. **He** paid tribute to the thousands of heroines he had met along the way and also commended the men who have joined in movement.

The Secretary General reiterated the need for stronger partnership by stating that *“when we stay true to our principles, we stay on the right side of history and the winning side on this issue.”* He thanked all stakeholders for their support for all the successes so far and called for more action.

Ending his remarks the Secretary General, stated, *“Let’s work together to make this [world] better for all men and women, old or young, rich or poor can live with human dignity.”*

### 3.0 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

A hundred and Forty (140) statements were presented by Ministers and high-level officials during the general discussion on the theme "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". The discussions spanned from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

#### OPENING STATEMENT BY GHANA

Ghana's statement was given by Hon. Nana Oye Lithur, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection who led Ghana's delegation. In her opening statement to the Commission on the theme "*Women's Empowerment and its link to Sustainable Developments*" on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2016, she extended regards from the President of Ghana, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama. She indicated that the event provided a platform for deliberations on matters influencing the development of women in the world as well as various national interventions aimed at promoting the lives of women. The contributory role of women in their respective countries she said could not be overlooked with these strong words "*the opportunity to achieve sustainable development will be missed if the concerns of women, who constitute more than half of the global population, are not addressed.*"

The Hon. Minister in her statement informed participants that in the year 2014, Ghana achieved the feat of twenty (20) years of advancing women's economic, social and political rights under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and fifteen (15) years of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The theme was appropriate considering the emphasis on women's empowerment and gender equality which is crucial in promoting sustainable development. Notwithstanding these successes, there were still a number of hindrances that threatened the progress made and therefore called for unison in order to "*chart a common course: sustaining and building on the progress made in gender equality and empowerment.*"

On Ghana's efforts towards attaining the MDG targets, the Hon. Minister pointed out that there had been a number of recognized achievements through the implementation of the MDGs including; lifting over one billion people out of extreme poverty and an increase in the net enrolment of girls in developing regions by 91% as at 2015. She also highlighted on some of the progress made in Africa in the area of universal primary education, high primary enrolment rate, improved girls' enrolment and gender parity.

Hon. Nana Oye Lithur further reiterated that Africa's leading role with regards to women's representation in national Parliaments were as a result of high level political commitment considering the socio-economic factors that operate against women and girls in a traditional African society. She called for pragmatic steps especially for innovation and other strategic approaches with the use of technology in order to address the root causes of under development in Africa.

According to her, for Africa to make further progress towards advancing the development of women, there should be efforts at addressing the issues that hinder progress as a result of traditions, culture and belief systems. She therefore called on the traditional and religious leaders to provide their continuous support for their countries and on countries to work towards protecting gains made so far.

The Hon. Minister recounted the efforts made by Ghana's ancestors as well as Africa's first Affirmative Action Law to enable ten (10) women to be appointed as members of Ghana's Parliament as part of efforts to promote inclusive governance in 1960 by Ghana's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. On this legacy, she mentioned a number of the remarkable achievements of Ghana in mainstreaming women's concerns into the development process and added that Ghana considered women's empowerment and gender equality as an overarching goal in the implementation of the national development strategy and this was spelt out in the Ghana's Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) (2010-2013). As part of the interventions, Hon. Oye Lithur said that Ghana's achievement as being the first African country to halve extreme poverty (MDG 1A) before the target date of 2015. Other areas of achievements included, the MDG Goal for halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water (MDG7B) and attainment of universal primary education (MDG2A) and gender parity in primary school (MDG 3).

On the other hand, the Hon. Minister mentioned that there had been slow progress in some areas towards attaining the MDG targets; full and productive employment (MDG1B); equal share of women in wage employment in non-agriculture sectors; women's involvement in

governance (MDG 3); reducing under-5 and child mortality (MDG 4); reducing maternal mortality (MDG 5); reversing the loss of environmental resources and improving sanitation (MDG 7).

Also, the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection in her statement recounted how in 2013, as part of Ghana's efforts to mainstream issues regarding women's development into the development agenda, 2013 Executive Instrument 1, re-designated the former Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection with Cabinet status. This expanded the mandate of MoGCSP to address social services, the aged, children, vulnerable persons, social protection and persons with disabilities using a right based approach. This has further called for institutional capacity building at the national and decentralized levels of government for line Ministries and institutions to enhance gender mainstreaming across board. The interventions have included capacity building for staff, development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and a database management system to operationalize the framework. Gender focal points in the various line ministries have undergone capacity development programmes to enhance mainstreaming gender across all sectors.

In order to increase women's participation in governance and decision making; President John Dramani Mahama made history by being the first Ghanaian President to appoint the highest number of women into public office. Currently, 20 percent of Cabinet Ministers are women adding that *"we need to work harder in increasing the numbers of women in Parliament which is 10.9 percent and women in local government which is under 5percent."*

Another area of intervention which the Hon. Minister highlighted was the promotion of women and girls rights. She stated that in order to provide a legal basis and framework to protect women's rights, MoGCSP has undertaken a number of initiatives; strengthened the gender legal and policy framework to establish a strong foundation for the advancement of women and girls. In 2015, Cabinet approved the National Gender Policy, Social Protection Policy, Child and Family Welfare Policy and the Justice for Children Policy. MoGCSP in January, 2016 submitted for Cabinet approval, in January 2016, an Affirmative Action Bill which makes provision for not less than forty percent women's representation in both the private and public sectors.

Among the numerous interventions to promote women's inheritance over the past 30 years are the Intestate Succession Law, PNDC Law 111 which was promulgated in 1985. The Intestate Succession and the Property Rights of Spouses Bills have been introduced by

Government to secure women's property and inheritance rights and access to credit facilities which are before Parliament for consideration. As part of efforts to strengthen the implementation of existing laws on sexual and gender based violence, MoGCSP had led the process for passage of the Human Trafficking Regulations which was passed by Parliament in 2015 and the Domestic Violence Regulations will be passed by Parliament this year.

In addition to aforementioned successes MoGCSP is implementing and enforcing the Domestic Violence Act of 2008. This is being done by the specialised Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service which has a total of 102 units throughout the Country. The intervention is to strengthen systems to protect the extremely vulnerable populations, three gender based Violence Response centres have been created in some markets for porter girls 'kayayei' and market women to provide social and other services to women and out of school adolescent girls. Three government shelters are currently operational; one for missing children, survivors of gender based violence and the last for trafficked persons.

In order to provide accurate data for policy formulation and advocacy, MoGCSP will conduct the most comprehensive research on gender based violence, with support from the UK Government and this is expected to be launched in May 2016. The UK Government is also supporting MoGCSP to implement a gender based violence programme for adolescent girls. As part of the reforms in childcare and protection, MoGCSP launched the Child and Family Welfare Policy. The Children's Act 1998 was being amended to make it Hague compliant and also the drafting of the Adoption and Foster Care Regulations have been finalized.

On the subject of child marriage, Hon. Oye Lithur mentioned that President Mahama and the First Lady, together with seven other African First ladies launched a Campaign to end child marriage on 10th February, 2016, with support from UNICEF, the Netherlands and Canadian Governments with a strategic plan to end child marriages being developed.

The justice delivery system continued to be strengthened and make it accessible to all. These included the designation of some High Courts as Human Rights Courts and the creation of three gender based violence courts. Ghana's Legal Aid Scheme and Civil Society Organisations offer free legal services to indigent women and children who were most affected by violence.

The Human Rights Advocacy Centre, a non-governmental organisation, with the support of a network of 225 lawyers, provided pro bono legal services to 1,568 indigent clients between 2008 and 2015. They have also set up a desk to address human rights violations cases reported by CSWs, MSMs, PLHIVs.

On sexual and reproductive rights, the Hon. Minister affirmed that the rates of teenage pregnancy were quite high in Ghana. She noted that, with the support of the UNFPA, MoGCSP was putting together a 10 year strategic plan together with the Ministry of Health to address teenage pregnancy.

### **The Gender Dialogues**

According to the Hon. Minister, platforms had been created to discuss gender issues with the support of the African Development Bank. MoGCSP had instituted the National Gender Dialogues, and created a national platform to discuss emerging gender issues and so far three dialogues had been held. These platforms were; assessing Ghana's women's national machinery after 40 years, using affirmative action as a tool for gender equality and protecting inheritance rights under the intestate succession law. Dialogues and tens of community engagements had been held throughout the country on gender equality. These had additionally served as platforms for identifying workable solutions to address gender problems.

With respect to social protection, MoGCSP had implemented and coordinated the implementation of gender sensitive social protection intervention programmes to promote women's financial inclusion and enhance their capacity to support their households. The Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) programme currently provides cash grants to 144,980 poor households of which 69 percent of beneficiaries are women.

Ghana's cash transfer programme now targets pregnant women and women with children less than 2 years to address stunting and malnutrition. Currently, under *LEAP 1000*, 6200 households with pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers with children below 2 years in the Northern and Upper East regions of Ghana are beneficiaries of LEAP. At least one member of the CLIC LEAP committee at the community level has to be a woman.

The Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) offers seasonal employment opportunities to the poor and 60 percent of the beneficiaries are women. Microfinance programmes like

Local Enterprises Skills Development Programme (LESDEP) and MASLOC have improved women's economic prospects by providing business start-up resources for their beneficiaries. Under the Micro Finance and Small Loans programme of Ghana, 114,697 women have received small loans from 2010 to 2015. The loan portfolio for women is 89.16 percent, and the total amount disbursed to women is Gh¢ 60, 911,774.38.

For the elderly and the aged, there have been a number of interventions; 14,030 old persons above 65 years have been issued with the EBAN Elderly Welfare Card that enables them travel at 50 percent rebate on public transport and have priority access when using social services. Over 10,000 elderly persons and persons with disabilities have been registered free of charge onto Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme. Over 7000 prisoners have also been registered, the first ever in West Africa. Approximately 1500 out-of-school adolescent girls, called porter girls have also been registered free of charge to enable access health care services.

For the promotion of education and employment for girls, MoGCSP is partnering with the Ministry of Employment to provide skills training for 8500 out of school adolescent girls over the next three years. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) has also created a web-based reporting system to encourage vulnerable groups like key populations and Persons Living with HIV /AIDs (PLHIVs) to report cases of discrimination and violence. Since October 2015, 62 complaints have been filed with 63.6 percent from key populations and 36.4 percent from PLHIVs. The Ghana AIDS Commission has completed a Men's Study and adopted a MARPs Policy.

Various policies on girl child education have facilitated the near achievement of gender parity in schools. At the basic level of education, the gender parity index for 2014/2015 increased in comparison with 2013/2014 academic year. Gender parity index at kindergarten increased from 1.01 to 1.04; from 0.99 to 1.0 at primary level; and from 0.95 to 0.96 at the Junior High School level. Female enrolment at the secondary level of education has also increased from 46.9 percent in 2013/14 to 47.4 percent in 2014/2015 while gender parity index remains unchanged at 0.91. The completion rate for females has also improved from 38 percent to 42 percent. The Participatory Approaches to Students Success (PASS), a scholarship programme with support from DfID aims to increase enrolment, retention, completion and performance of girls at the Junior High School level in 75 deprived districts in Ghana. In the 2014/2015 academic year, the programme was scaled up to cover 45,000 girls, an increase from 15,700 girls in 2013/2014 academic year.

On 3rd July, 2014, Parliament approved the Secondary Education Improvement Project under which 10,400 senior high school students will receive scholarships over a three-year period. The scholarship package is to ensure that children from low income families in Ghana are supported by the Government to remain in school and complete their secondary education successfully. The scholarship package includes the provision of free sanitary towels for girls and 60% of the beneficiaries of this scholarship package will be adolescent girls.

At the tertiary level of education, public institutions have recorded an increase in female enrolment figures between 2012/13 and 2013/14 from 33.6 percent to 35.2 percent in universities; from 33.1 percent to 34.5 percent in polytechnics.

A Gender Strategy document was also developed to provide a blueprint for various interventions across the Technical and Vocational Education and Training landscape. The National Functional Literacy Programme, an adult literacy programme aimed at 'empowering people through non formal education and training' which has been running since 1992 recorded its highest enrolment of 66 percent for females in 2015.

MoGCSP in collaboration with the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre sponsored 21 female beneficiaries to undertake courses in accounting, electrical engineering and other related technical professions.

Within the health sector, a health sector gender policy has played a key role in the numerous health benefits and successes achieved in the promotion of women's health in Ghana. These include access to free and skilled maternal care under the National Health Insurance Scheme and the Community-based Health Planning Services (CHPs). Some significant achievements resulting from these measures include the increased rate in accessing ante-natal care from skilled providers from 82 percent (1988) to 97 percent (2014); 73 percent of deliveries occurring in a health facility as against 42 percent (1998); and 81 percent of mothers receiving post-natal check-up within the critical first two days after delivery.

These services have contributed to the decline in Ghana's maternal mortality rate from 760 in 1990 to 380 per 100 000 live births in 2013 (estimated to drop to 358 per 100,000 live births by 2015). Under-5 mortality rate dropped from 80 per 1000 live births in 2008 to 60 per 1000 live births in 2014 while infant mortality rate also dropped to 41 per 1,000 live births. Since 1998, under-5 mortality and infant mortality have declined by 44 and 28 percent respectively. The mother to child transmission of HIV has reduced to a single digit.

It is also noteworthy that MoGCSP in collaboration with the ECOWAS Gender Centre has undertaken 180 fistula repairs for women identified across the country.

As part of strategies and targets to promote women's empowerment and mainstream gender, Hon. Oye Lithur stated that, in order to ensure that these measures achieve desired outcomes, Ghana will advance on the progress made under the MDGs with the benefit of lessons learnt under the implementation of the goals.

Ghana has commenced the process of integrating the SDG Goals into the national development framework. In the wake of a strengthened legal and policy framework, Ghana will strengthen institutional capacity to promote the enforcement of gender relevant laws and provision of related services, and ensure that adequate resources are provided. Ghana will build a resilient economic environment to consolidate gains so far made on poverty reduction in order to secure women's financial inclusion and continue to devise innovative cutting edge programmes that ensure gender equality. She said Ghana would work to address the socio cultural and traditional dynamics of an African society that at times hinder our progress in achieving our goals. In reemphasizing Ghana's commitment, the Hon. Minister stated "*Ghana is committed to the advancement of women's empowerment and gender equality. We look forward to a robust sustainably developed world for the benefit of all persons by 2030.*"

## 4.0 HIGHLEVEL ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

There were four high level round table discussions held during the session. Themes for these discussions centered on the following:

1. Enhancing national institutional arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment
2. Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment
3. Financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda
4. Fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis and building the knowledge base

This section of the report focuses on the summary of these discussions; participants in the round tables exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### 4.1 Enhancing National Institutional Arrangements for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

#### 4.1.1 Ghana's Case

On 14 March 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women held a ministerial round table on the topic "*Enhancing national institutional arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment*", under the priority theme "*Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development*". The State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Yoji Muto, chaired the round table, and the Special Envoy on Gender of the African Development Bank, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, served as moderator. The meeting opened with brief introductions by the Chair and the moderator. Ministers and high-level officials from 28 Member States participated in the round table including Ghana's Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection

In her submission Hon. Nana Oye Lithur, Ghana's Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection pointed out that in spite of operational challenges; Ghana was committed to

ensuring gender mainstreaming. Nana Oye Lithur established the fact that Ghana, in line with the UN General Resolution passed in 1975, had established a National Women's Machinery.

She said the Women's Machinery now had Cabinet status in the form of Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

*"So having the national women's machinery is still the preferred best practice, Ghana believes it is solid, and in addition to having this machinery, we need to have a gender, legal and policy framework with constitutional provisions on gender equality,"* she stated.

She indicated that in Ghana: *"we have a National Gender Policy as a blueprint for implementation; we also have strategic framework and interventions to facilitate all-inclusiveness, especially for vulnerable women"*. She said through the Gender Ministry, the Government has set up gender-based centers within markets for the hundreds of head porter girls who were very vulnerable.

According to her, *"social Protection is the key strategy to empower women and scale up inclusiveness so we have introduced social protection,"* she stated.

Hon. Nana Oye Lithur explained that having a "national registry, which was gender sensitive was very important like gender budgeting, which had existed for five years.

She said Ghana was sustaining capacity building across sectors including civil society, and remained committed to utilizing international protocols to enhance national institutional arrangements for gender equality and for the empowerment of women.

The Minister also outlined Government's interventions through the enactment of laws such as the Children's Act, Domestic Violence Act, Human Trafficking Act, the amendment of the criminal offences Act, and the criminalization of Violence against Women and Girls. She said customary servitude had been criminalized, whilst sentences for Female Genital Mutilation had been increased, and that these formed part of holistic social, and legal interventions adopted by the Ghanaian Government to ensure gender mainstreaming.

The Hon. Minister stated: "Ghana has also set up a Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit under the Ghana Police Service with the establishment of offices located across the country for prompt interventions. "The Judiciary and Government have also set up two Specialist Gender-Based Violence Courts in the national capital of Accra, and at Kumasi in the middle-belt.

“We are also empowering girls and utilizing data and research to target causes of gender-based violence, we are working on enhanced technical support and forensic capacity to improve investigations and prosecution, and the adoption of a policy framework to address gender-based violence in the healthcare sector,” she reiterated.

#### 4.1.2 Summary from Other Countries

- Participants provided examples from their countries of national institutional arrangements across branches and sectors of government for decision-making, policy action and budgeting on gender equality and women’s empowerment. They described a wide range of frameworks and mechanisms and highlighted the diversity of arrangements available for this purpose.
- Constitutional guarantees of gender equality or non-discrimination were referenced frequently, as were national gender equality mechanisms, including ministries responsible for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Many participants described legislation, action plans, policies and programmes on a wide range of issues relating to gender equality, including initiatives promoting economic opportunities for women and addressing women’s unpaid labour, prevention of violence against women, promotion of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and protection of the rights of vulnerable women.
- A number of participants described temporary special measures to increase women’s representation in decision-making positions, including through mandatory quotas for women in parliament and local governance structures and on corporate boards. It was noted, however, that while increasing the number of women in decision-making roles was important, it was imperative that both women and men who were committed advocates for gender equality and women’s empowerment be in leadership positions.
- Institutional arrangements, such as parliamentary and ministerial committees on gender equality, were described as being useful tools for bringing together decision makers across different sectors of government and political parties. Several participants underscored the importance of partnerships between government and non-governmental actors, including through advisory groups comprising experts drawn from civil society, international organizations and the private sector, which can provide Governments with access to a broad range of technical expertise.

Expanding the capacity, decision-making power and visibility of national gender equality mechanisms.

- While participants shared a commitment to ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment were priorities for all branches and sectors of government, several participants stressed the importance of having a single entity responsible for the coordination of efforts and for monitoring progress at the national level. In this regard, national gender equality mechanisms provided a unifying framework for accelerating progress towards gender equality and helped to prevent the fragmentation of efforts.
- Participants discussed the importance of expanding the capacity, decision - making power and visibility of gender equality mechanisms, with a particular focus on the financing of such mechanisms, as well as data collection, monitoring and assessment. They emphasized the importance of adequate funding for their work within ministries and other gender equality mechanisms, and for gender equality generally.
- There was agreement that Governments needed to allocate more resources for achieving gender equality in accordance with the priority accorded to it at the highest levels of political leadership and in line with existing commitments, in order to achieve results. Participants described a range of efforts with regard to financing, including gender-responsive budgeting and allocating funds for projects aimed at women's empowerment.
- Ministers discussed the significance of reliable and comprehensive data disaggregated by sex and other factors and of gender statistics for their work. The relationship between data and gender-responsive budgeting was noted; a lack of gender-specific information on revenue and expenditure in the development of budgets may have negative impacts on gender equality that go unnoticed.
- Participants emphasized the importance of accountability in achieving tangible progress, and of data disaggregated by sex in measuring such progress. The role of non-governmental organizations in monitoring progress and assessing results was emphasized. Gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- Many participants noted the particular significance of their work in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ministers were in agreement that their efforts should go beyond achieving the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They emphasized that all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their targets should contribute to the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment. To that end, participants stressed the importance of Multisectoral partnerships for gender equality and the full involvement of gender equality mechanisms in all aspects of policymaking and programming for gender-responsive sustainable development. The role of the international human rights frameworks in those efforts, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, was stressed.
- Participants emphasized the important role of Heads of Government and political leaders as advocates for the centrality of gender equality in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They stressed that this commitment must extend from the highest levels of government to the regional and local levels. In this regard, several participants discussed the importance of women's participation, including women's civil society organizations, in the drafting of plans to implement the 2030 Agenda.

## 4.2 Strengthening Normative, Legal and Policy frameworks For Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The second round table discussion was on *“Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment”* under the overall theme *“Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development”*.

The Secretary of Policies for Women's Work and Economic Autonomy of Brazil, Tatau Godinho, chaired the round table, and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Climate Change, David Nabarro, served as moderator. Ministers and high-level officials from 25 Member States and a representative of the European Commission participated in the round table.

- Many participants stressed the importance of ratifying and implementing the international legal framework for the protection of women's human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and regional instruments such as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. There was consensus that strong national legal and policy frameworks were critical to ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment, and progress was reported on efforts to align national frameworks with international human rights instruments.
- Participants highlighted the adoption of constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex and the adoption of legislation on equal opportunities and gender equality. Progress was reported on legal and policy reforms aimed at the prevention and elimination of violence against women, including female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Provisions to ensure better work/life balance through measures such as parental leave and affordable and accessible childcare were mentioned as crucial enablers of women's access to the labour market. Other areas of legal and policy reform included changes to penal codes, labour and employment, land and productive resources, health and nationality.
- Many participants referred to the introduction of temporary special measures in national legal and policy frameworks to accelerate the achievement of equality between women and men. Increases in the numbers of women in political institutions and decision-making bodies, including parliaments, were attributed to strengthened laws on women's participation in political life. Similarly, laws and

policies on quotas and targets with regard to women's participation on corporate boards and in private sector management were also highlighted. Institutional mechanisms and other implementation measures.

- There was broad agreement that it was not sufficient to adopt laws and policies; they needed to be given full effect. Many participants referred to policies, mechanisms and other measures taken to support the implementation of laws aimed at realizing gender equality and women's human rights. National gender equality action plans and strategies were highlighted by a number of participants as important tools, together with integrating gender perspectives into sectorial policies and strategies, such as on poverty reduction. Participants also referred to the adoption of national action plans in specific areas, such as women's health and eliminating violence against women.
- Participants underscored the role of institutions and mechanisms to promote gender equality and to monitor the implementation of legislation and policies, including collaboration with key ministries and gender equality mechanisms. Multisectoral coordination with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was considered to be crucial for a more coherent and collaborative approach to promoting gender equality at all levels of government.
- A number of participants identified collaboration between government and other actors, including civil society, in particular women's and feminist organizations, the private sector and the media, as crucial for effective implementation and monitoring of laws and policies on gender equality. Efforts to enhance the capacity-building of public officials, including law enforcement officials, were highlighted as necessary for a gender-sensitive application of all legal and policy frameworks. Investing in education for women and girls, including education on their human rights, was discussed as being important for their empowerment and for enabling them to claim those rights. Gaps in progress and key issues for moving forward
- Despite progress in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls, gaps and challenges remain. Many participants stressed the need for further action to remove discriminatory laws and provisions against women, a prerequisite for the achievement of all the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specific measures were needed for women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination. Discriminatory social norms and

gender stereotypes were recognized as major impediments to the achievement of gender equality and required further attention, including in the education system. Participants raised the importance of increasing the engagement of men and boys in challenging discrimination and in nurturing social norms that promoted gender equality.

- Many participants stressed the lack of comparable high quality data collected over time. They highlighted the importance of improving the collection and use of data disaggregated by sex to monitor progress and gaps and to inform gender-responsive policymaking, including with respect to the realization of the commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Participants stressed the need for effective and better-resourced national accountability mechanisms and institutions and the critical role of women's organizations in the implementation and monitoring of national and international gender equality commitments. Participants reaffirmed their political commitment to making gender equality a priority for the national implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called for increased investment in achieving equality between women and men.

### **4.3 Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The President of the National Council of Women of Egypt, Maya Morsy, chaired the round table. The Secretary-General of the Ibero-American General Secretariat, Rebeca Grynspan, served as moderator with high-level officials from 22 Member States participating in the round table.

- Participants reaffirmed that making gender equality and women's empowerment a reality, required dedicated and consistent funding. Prioritized and dedicated resource allocation was an urgent, as is gender mainstreaming. It was agreed that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its comprehensive goals and targets, provided a historic opportunity to address gender inequality holistically and sustainably. That would require strong political commitment and increased investment from multiple and diverse sources. Many participants expressed concern that major gender equality gaps continued to exist and that much remained to be done to achieve the full implementation of the priorities identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.
- Participants emphasized that the priorities identified in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development provided a road map to address the systemic barriers that hindered the full and effective implementation of gender equality commitments. They highlighted a need to link the action agreed to in the Action Agenda with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to successfully deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment objectives.
- Participants agreed on the importance of generating domestic resources and allocating adequate public financing to achieve gender equality outcomes on a long-term basis. They gave examples of how gender-responsive fiscal policies and budgetary laws had been developed and implemented to enable Governments to increase spending in areas critical for women and girls, such as health, education, agriculture and social protection.
- Participants stressed the importance of strong institutional mechanisms and planning frameworks to deliver results, including national gender equality and women's empowerment policies and action plans and gender mainstreaming in government planning and budgeting processes across sectors. Gender-responsive budgeting was

increasingly being used to institutionalize gender equality and women's empowerment in government plans and budgets, at both the national and local levels, and to leverage resources for gender equality and women's empowerment commitments.

- Strengthening accountability systems with regard to public budgets and spending had a role to play in increasing financing for gender equality and women's empowerment. Assessing the effectiveness of public allocations through audits and monitoring the impact of government interventions through gender analysis and assessments were critical. In that regard, participants highlighted the role of national mechanisms for gender equality and called for improved mandates, better resources and strengthened capacities to ensure their effective role in monitoring the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. Many also stressed the importance of the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data in policymaking and planning, as well as in assessing the impact of public interventions on the lives of women and girls.
- Participants reaffirmed the importance of diverse partnerships, such as public-private partnerships, South-South cooperation and partnerships between Governments, United Nations agencies and civil society, for financing and implementing gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. Several highlighted the responsibility of the private sector and philanthropic organizations to contribute resources to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. An example was given of the use of revenue generated from private investment in petroleum and mining to increase financing for social services for women and girls. Partnerships between financial and public institutions could play a role in eliminating discriminatory practices relating to women's access to financial services.
- Several participants highlighted the importance of official development assistance to support countries to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. Many expressed concern at the low level of such assistance and the little share devoted to gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Participants called for an increase in and commitment to clear contributions in that regard in official development assistance. Countries in conflict or post-conflict situations required support to help them to meet the basic needs of women and girls, to address violence against women and girls and to provide services. Measures to accelerate financing for gender equality were also to be considered.
- Participants suggested that transforming the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into action and accelerating the implementation of the Beijing

Platform for Action required urgent action. As a universal agenda, the new framework represented Governments' renewed political will and should be used as a basis to mobilize and allocate the resources necessary to close all gender equality gaps.

- Participants called for revenue to be mobilized and resources redistributed efficiently to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. They suggested that the capacity of government institutions at the national and local levels should be increased to ensure the development of gender-responsive plans and budgets. Gender equality mechanisms needed to be strengthened to monitor public spending such as collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.
- It was emphasized that gender equality was not an expense, but an investment. All actors should work together through multi-stakeholder partnerships, increased domestic resources and targeted official development assistance and private sector engagement and accountability, to develop that investment and support the greatest emerging market women.

#### **4.4 Fostering Gender-Responsive Data Design, Collection and Analysis, and Building the Knowledge Base**

Ministerial round table on the topic *“Fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis, and building the knowledge base”*, under the overall theme *“Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”*. The Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany, Elke Ferner, chaired the round table, and the National Statistician and Civil Registrar General of the Philippines, Lisa Grace Bersales, served as moderator. The meeting opened with brief introductions by the Chair and the moderator. Ministers and high-level officials from 15 Member States participated. Forging partnerships within and among countries and with international development partners

- All participants confirmed that gender-responsive data was one of the core elements of the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Thus, participants noted the particularly urgent need to invest in the human, financial and technical capacities of line ministries and national statistical systems to produce gender statistics. Forging partnerships between women’s machineries and national statistical offices was considered key to fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis and building the knowledge base. A number of participants expressed appreciation for the technical and financial support provided to national statistical systems by United Nations agencies and other development partners, and many more called for greater support for Governments in that regard.
- Participants emphasized that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would require ownership at the country level as well as strengthened partnership and investment. Some participants also recognized the need to ensure the full and effective participation of civil society organizations in such efforts.

### **Innovating in data collection and presentation**

- Participants acknowledged the need to go beyond statistical conventions and develop innovative ways to measure gender equality. Participants highlighted a number of existing initiatives, including: (a) greater involvement of women’s groups in data collection processes to increase ownership; (b) initiatives to involve local governments in the production and use of gender statistics; and (c) greater collaboration with the private sector to ensure access to new sources of data, including big data.

## **Building capacities within the national statistical system**

- Participants highlighted specific areas where support for capacity-building was needed, including: (a) producing data in specific areas such as unpaid care and domestic work, violence against women, women in poverty, women and energy, and quality of reproductive health services; (b) developing a comprehensive framework for the production of data with which to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals; (c) building capacity for data analysis, particularly capacity of small island developing States; and (d) enhancing access to modern information technologies and making data accessible to stakeholders.

## **Coordination to ensure the provision of gender-responsive data**

- Many participants emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination systems to support the research mechanisms already in place. Participants highlighted the need to require all authorities, particularly line ministries and national statistical offices, to work systematically towards gender equality.
- Participants highlighted the fact that coordination mechanisms aimed at enhancing collaboration and promoting the provision of gender-responsive data included the conduct of regular meetings and seminars for data producers and users at all levels and the establishment of national groups to assess the increased requirements for data for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. Making statistical information from various sources available and accessible to all users.
- A number of national initiatives undertaken by national statistical offices and line ministries to produce gender-responsive data were cited by participants, including nationwide surveys related to gender equality, and central registries of births and deaths. A number of participants also recognized the importance of tapping into new data sources, such as big data, crowdsourcing and domestic violence hotlines. In that respect, the importance of monitoring and quality control was stressed.
- Participants also highlighted the need for greater data sharing and use of dissemination tools, while also ensuring confidentiality and privacy, particularly regarding violence against women. Producing user-friendly gender-responsive data and analysis.

- Participants recognized that progress had been achieved in the production and analysis of data using censuses and surveys. Participants also noted that, for gender-responsive data to be useful, the data needed to be communicated to users accurately, in a user-friendly manner and free of charge.
- It was noted by some participants that there is a need to strengthen the capacities of countries to analyse existing data and to conduct needed research on important areas such as gender pay gaps, the impacts of unpaid care and domestic work on women, engagement in the informal sector, and violence against women.

### **Ensuring an enabling legal, policy and financial environment**

- Participants highlighted the need to develop national strategies and mechanisms for creating an enabling environment for gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis and building the knowledge base, through: (a) legal provisions mandating national statistical systems to collect data; (b) national strategies for the development of statistics; (c) the formulation of gender-responsive statistical plans by all key government agencies; and (d) the development of comprehensive frameworks and monitoring systems to fully integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls into national planning.
- While all participants confirmed that carrying out the appropriate disaggregation of data was essential as countries embarked on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, some acknowledged the often prohibitive cost of doing so. To address those needs and gaps, ownership, partnership and strong leadership were required within and among countries as well as in the international community.

The Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Yannick Glemarec, made closing comments.

## 5.0 EVENTS ORGANIZED BY GHANA

Ghana held two major events during the 60<sup>th</sup> session such as;

1. A breakfast meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 at Ghana Permanent Mission on the theme *“Ending Child Marriage in Ghana and West Africa.”*
2. An event on *“Sexual and Gender –Based Violence in Ghana: Response, Prevention and Elimination (Highlight was on The Preliminary Report of Nationwide Research on Domestic Violence in Ghana)”* on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 at United Nations Building New York.

### 5.1 Breakfast Meeting on the Theme **“Ending Child Marriage in Ghana and West Africa”**



Hon. Nana Oye Lithur, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection Her Excellence; making a statement at the meeting



Her Excellence Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Ghana's Ambassador to the United Nations; making a statement at the meeting

The meeting was hosted by Ghana's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, and attended by scores of African Gender Ministers, development partners, diplomatic community, and development partners which included, UNICEF, UNDP United Kingdom, among others.

Her Excellence Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Ghana's Ambassador to the United Nations welcomed all invited dignitaries to the events and mentioned that the breakfast meeting was an opportune time for Ghana to outline its holistic national strategy to combat child, early and forced marriages, to make the practice a high risk marital engagement, and she further called for a regional collaboration.

Her Excellence Martha Ama Pobee expounded that, Ghana was using the international platform to engage development partners and stakeholders for the effective implementation of the campaign in Ghana and also serve as a platform for the ECOWAS Ministers and experts to discuss the development and adoption of an ECOWAS resolution on child, early and forced marriages. "The holistic national strategy includes, inter-ministerial action, feeding traditional and community leaders with updated information on the harmful

impact of the practices and collaboration with security agencies for enforcement of laws.” Martha Ama Pobee added.

Hon. Nana Oye Lithur, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection presented on the status report on the ending child marriage campaign in Ghana and gave an overview of Child Marriage in West Africa.

In her introduction, the Honourable Minister firmly stated that the practice of child marriage is a serious human rights issue. She added that the issue of child marriage has consequential effects on a female child’s education, health economic opportunities, security and results in sexual and physical abuse.

She revealed that, statistics on the practice was truly worrisome, as one out of five girls (21%) are married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and this leads to 256, 780 girls. The probability of girls in rural areas getting married is twice as high as girls in urban areas that is 36% for rural and 19% for urban areas with a national prevalence rate of 27%.

She additionally identified some influencing factors of child marriage in Ghana as teenage or adolescent pregnancy, fear of stigmatization by the society in case of pregnancy, protecting virginity and unwanted pregnancy, the readiness to conform to tradition/religion (gender norms and roles), poverty at the family and community levels; female children perceived as “financial burden” among others.

The Minister explained that Ghana's Criminal Code, 1950 (Act 29), criminalizes acts that are directly or indirectly associated with child marriage, while the Children's Act (Act 560) buttresses sections of the Criminal Code and classifies it as an offence to force a child to be betrothed, subjected to dowry transactions or to be married, adding that, on the global stage, international conventions and treaties, many of them ratified by countries including Ghana, are in place to promote child rights and protect children from human rights violations.

Elaborating more on the issue, Hon. Nana Oye Lithur said the Ministry had developed a resource guide on ending child marriage in Ghana, as part of an existing partnership between the Ministry and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The purpose of the guide is to provide information to professionals and service providers whose work brings them in contact with children, particularly where there are cases of child marriages, and that the focus of the initiative, which commenced in September 2015. It is to establish a national strategic framework and coordinating mechanism for eliminating the incidence of child marriage and its related consequences. These include teenage pregnancy, as well as

increase preventive action by traditional leaders, religious bodies and communities to promote and protect the rights of children.

She also said that Ghana, launched a child marriage programme in February this year, and identified goodwill ambassadors and celebrities and formed a network of media allies to champion the campaign and to coordinate efforts by various stakeholders. It is also meant to increase social action, improve resources for adolescent girls at risk of, and affected by child marriage, by empowering the girls, to champion the cause.

The Hon. Minister also said areas that require further attention are shelters for the affected girls, psychosocial support for child brides and 'escapees', as well as skills training, economic support and business capital for victims, adding that there were plans for the establishment of educational funds to support the education and re-entry for child brides who want to attain formal education.

Hon. Nana Oye Lithur reiterated the urgency for a collective action to end child marriage in Ghana in particular and West Africa in general.

The Director of the Technical Division of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Benoit Kalasa and Mr. Cornel Williams, Associate Director of Child Protection, UNICEF, commended Ghana for its campaign against child marriage, indicating that other countries in West Africa look up to Ghana to initiate programmes to invest in the growth and development of children and their education, to address the problem of child brides and to implement various national strategic plans to end child marriage.

The Ambassador, permanent of Zambia Mission to the United Nations shared the SADC experience; pointing out that in Zambia in 2015 there were eight hundred and seventy thousand 870,000 girls' in the age group in 15 to 19 of 31% (269,700) these girls are victims of child marriage. The speaker indicated that, the huge figures of girls wasting away all because child marriage made governments within the SADC to join forces to help curb the situation. There were Parliamentary meetings to see how outdated laws could be streamlined for more protective laws. All countries were to domesticate. She cited an example with Zambia where statutory law where moving side by side with traditional laws; the former stipulate marriage age at 21 years, whereas the traditionally a girl could enter into marriage after puberty. She questioned whether such girls are well developed enough to allow in a venture as serious as marriage. She stated that Zambia in its quest to curb child marriage has engaged multiple stakeholders and sectorial approach.

## GHANA'S COMMITMENTS

On her part, the Chairperson of the Gender and Children's Committee in Ghana's Parliament, Hon. Hajia Laadi Ayamba, said Ghana's Parliament has made it a point to support the girl-child with various initiatives, but this has been challenging adding that, as Members of Parliament, they would continue to undertake advocacy programmes and advise parents to understand the need for the girl-child to develop her fullest potential.

She also said the problem becomes complicated when a mother was labelled as a 'witch' and taken away and when girls as young as eight years, are offered for marriage in the name of religion and tradition, pointing out that, "*we should not narrow down the problem in the name of religion or tradition.*" She called on Ministers, parents and communities to come together to play their respective roles to solve the problem.

In her statement, Baroness Verma, the Parliamentary under Secretary of State for the United Kingdom, said her country was ready to support Ghana and other countries to tackle the broader issue of gender violence through meaningful and fruitful collaborations and advised that laws must be promulgated and negative traditions that are harmful to the people, modified.

The Minister of Gender for Liberia highlighted her country's support for a robust sub-regional and regional approaches in curbing issues that dehumanize people, particularly females, citing child marriage as case in point. She hinted on a bill on Domestic Violence currently before their parliament which seeks to criminalize Child marriage and female genital mutilation.

*"Africa must move away from tradition and culture; they are permanent with us, but it can be modified. We respect our culture and traditions but need stop hiding behind culture in perpetrating acts that harmful."* She added.

### **5.2 Event On "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Ghana: Response, Prevention and Elimination"**



Pictures from event

Ghana's side event at the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was the themed "*Sexual and gender-based violence in Ghana: Response, prevention and elimination*", which was held on **the 21st March 2016 at United Nations Building New York** and chaired by Ghana's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), Mrs. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, the event attracted representatives from other countries and Civil Society Organisations. Giving the background to the research Mrs. Pobee, stated that, the research of forms the new clause of our interventions to address gender-based violence. This is the first ever comprehensive research since 1998.

A lead researcher and study Director of the UK Institute of Development Studies (IDS), **Prof. Patricia Justino** presented the preliminary report on a nationwide research on Domestic Violence in Ghana. She mentioned that attitudes to Domestic Violence, determinants and consequence of domestic violence and abuse, access to support services were aspect of the study which covered 5,000 households carried by a team of researchers from IDS, and a team from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) led by Dr. Philomena Nyarko, Director of GSS.

She said the study which will be launched officially in May 2016 established that attitudes against domestic violence were strong and widespread but some definitions of domestic violence were seen as accepted norms with only physical violence between partners consistently perceived as violence and a strong correlation between exposure to domestic violence and mental health, particularly among women.

According to the Hon. Minister, Nana Oye Lithur, Ghana recorded 84,142 cases of sexual and gender-based violence nationwide from 2009 to 2013, adding that statistics according

to 2014 data, DOVSU had recorded 15, 426 cases of physical assault, 342 rape cases and victims were below the age of 16.27- 30% of rape cases, were recorded as at 1998.

Inferences were made to a research conducted by Human Rights and Advocacy Center (HRAC) on Gender Based Violence (GBV) in schools in 2011 which revealed that,

- 67% of students indicated that sexual comments are commonplaces within schools and 49% reported sexual touching;
- 19% of students indicated rape or defilement occurred in schools – significantly higher than previous findings;
- 16 % of teachers had observed sexual texting in class;
- 28 % of teachers had observed students were watching pornography.

According to a research conducted by Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre only 12.3% of women surveyed in 1999 had not experienced violence in their lifetime. As many as 11.2% of children have been victims of rape and defilement, with 90.3% of victims female (University of Cape Coast, 2002). 14% of children in three districts surveyed had experienced sexual abuse (Plan Ghana).

The Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service reported that, 15,426 cases of sexual and gender-based violence with 14,415 assault cases on women were recorded in 2014.

Nana Oye Lithur said, the national prevalence rate of harmful traditional practices such as child marriage was 27.2%, as one in four women, aged between 20 and 49, were married before age 18 in 2011. The likelihood of girls in rural areas getting married is twice as high as girls in urban areas (36% vs. 19%). The national prevalence rate of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) being four per cent, according to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of 2011.

The minister pointed out that Ghana has adopted a pragmatic approach to end sexual and gender-based violence and that the first-ever specialised unit of the Ghana Police Service, then known as the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU), now the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU), was set up in 1998.

In addition to this, Honourable Minister stated that, country had laws; the 1992 Constitution, Criminal Offences Act, (1960), the Criminal Code 1998), the Justice Act, the Human Trafficking Act (2005), and the Domestic Violence Act, (Act 732, 2007), among others, to provide broad policy guidelines and strategies for effective implementation but the continued prevalence cases of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly against women and children, was still a source of concern.

Nana Oye Lithur said Ghana had launched a campaign to end child marriage while a series of national and community dialogues were ongoing with key stakeholders and decision makers with civil society groups, all playing key strategic roles in responding to sexual and gender-based violence, and added that as part of institutional arrangements, the Ghana Police Service offers a one-stop service for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, while the Judicial Service has established three specialised gender-based violence courts.

She said to increase survivor safety and perpetrators' accountability; government has established two gender-based violence response centers in two of the biggest markets in the capital city of Accra, in addition to the setting up of a Domestic Violence Fund to assist in the rehabilitation and re-integration of victims.

Nana Oye Lithur however said that statistics from DOVVSU showed that out of 1,547 sexual and Gender-Based Violence cases sent to court in 2014, convictions were secured for 160 cases, representing 10.3 per cent and asserted that the way forward was to ensure that the laws were enforced and implementation tracked through an effective monitoring system. In addition to building the capacities of law enforcement institutions, social services and healthcare providers.

## 6.0 OTHER SIDE EVENTS

### 6.1 Ghana's Permanent Mission to the UN

There was another side event which was organized by the Permanent Mission of Ghana to the UN on non-communicable diseases on 23rd March, 2016. Mrs. Martha Pobee, the Permanent Representative of Mission of Ghana to the UN, chaired the function. Dr. Bente Mikkelsen of World Health Organization and Honourable Oye Lithur gave the keynote addresses.

Dr. Mikkelsen, pointed out that, Non Communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading causes of death globally, killing more people each year than all other causes combined. Contrary to popular opinion, available data demonstrate that nearly 80% of NCD deaths occur in low and middle income countries.

She noted that, despite their rapid growth and inequitable distribution, much of the human and social impact caused each year by NCD related deaths could be averted through well-understood, cost-effective and feasible interventions. Of the 57 million deaths that occurred globally in 2008, 36 million which represents almost two thirds – were due to NCDs, comprising mainly cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and chronic lung diseases.

Dr. Bente Mikkelsen, indicated that, the combined burden of these diseases is rising fast among lower income countries, populations and communities, where they impose large, avoidable costs in human, social and economic terms. About one fourth of global NCD related deaths take place before the age of 60.

The World Health Organization (WHO) representative identified that, NCDs are caused to a large extent, by four behavioral risk factors that are pervasive aspects of economic transition, rapid urbanization and 21st-century lifestyles: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, insufficient physical activity and the harmful use of alcohol. The greatest effects of these risk factors fall increasingly on low and middle income countries, and on poorer people within all countries, mirroring the underlying socio-economic determinants. Among these populations, a vicious cycle may ensue: poverty exposes people to behavioural risk factors for NCDs and, in turn, the resulting NCDs may become an important driver to the downward spiral that leads families towards poverty. As a result, unless the NCD epidemic is aggressively confronted in the most heavily affected countries and communities, the mounting impact of NCDs will continue and the global goal of reducing poverty will be undermined, she added.

A major reduction in the burden of NCDs will come from population-wide interventions, which are cost effective and may even be revenue-generating, as is the case with tobacco and alcohol tax increases, for instance. But effective interventions, such as tobacco control measures and salt reduction, are not implemented on a wide scale because of inadequate political commitment, insufficient engagement of non-health sectors, lack of resources, vested interests of critical constituencies, and limited engagement of key stakeholders. For example, less than 10% of the world's population is fully protected by any of the tobacco demand-reduction measures contained in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Improved health care, early detection and timely treatment is another effective approach for reducing the impact of NCDs. However, appropriate care for people with NCDs is lacking in many settings, and access to essential technologies and medicines is limited, particularly in low and middle income countries and populations. Many NCD-related healthcare

interventions are cost effective, especially compared to costly procedures that may be necessary when detection and treatment are late and the patient reaches advanced stages of the disease. Health systems need to be further strengthened to deliver an effective, realistic and affordable package of interventions and services for people with NCDs.

As the magnitude of the NCD epidemic continues to accelerate, the pressing need for stronger and more focused international and country responses is increasingly recognized by Member States. Much has been learnt about the causes, prevention and treatment of NCDs over the past three decades, as important achievements have been made in reducing mortality in many high income countries.

Honourable Oye Lithur stated that, according to research, women are affected by non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in different ways as compared to men. Not only are women's experiences of NCDs influenced by the social conditions of women's lives which are different to those of men, NCDs often manifest differently in women than they do in men. Moreover, women experience a higher burden from chronic disease and live more years of life with a disability from chronic disease than men. "In developing world's NCDs are not merely a health issue but a broad development issue in attaining the SDG goal 5".

Touching on Ghana, the Honourable Minister stated that, according to the 2010 National Population and Housing Census, Ghana has an estimated population of 24.2 million and a male to female sex ratio of 95:100. Analysis of institutional data in Ghana suggests several NCDs have been increasing in both absolute and relative terms. The reported outpatient cases of hypertension in public and mission facilities other than teaching hospitals increased from about 60,000 cases in 1990 to about 600,000 cases in 2009. Hypertension is ranked in the top five outpatient diseases for more than 15 years, accounting for 3.0%-5.0% of all new outpatient diseases across all ages and it ranks as the third most common newly diagnosed outpatient disease among adults.

Furthermore, according to information from the Ghana Health Service, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) contribute significantly to illness, disability and deaths in Ghana. Their burden is projected to increase due to ageing, rapid urbanization and unhealthy lifestyles. The proportion of women aged 15-49 years who are overweight or obese more than doubled from 13% in 1993 to 30% in 2008. The proportion of children under five years of age who are overweight increased from less than 1% in 1988 to 5% in 2008. Less than 5% of adults consume adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables. Given these unhealthy statistics, it is not surprising that up to 48% of Ghanaian adults have hypertension and 9% have diabetes.

She noted that, it was in recognition of their impact on public health that, the Ministry of Health introduced the Regenerative Health and Nutrition Programme in 2006 and developed a health policy which clearly prioritizes the promotion of healthy lifestyles and healthy environments and the provision of health and nutrition services. Furthermore, an NCD Policy that provide safe framework for planning and implementing NCD-related programmes have been developed. This policy recognises that effective implementation depends on enabling public sector-wide policies in trade, food and agriculture, transportation, urban planning, etc.

The NCD policy covers four major groups of NCDs which share common risk factors – cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases. It prioritises health promotion and early detection and proposes an integrated approach to implementation of NCD-related programmes. This approach has contributed to the reduction in the use of tobacco among men aged 35 years and older from 19.8% in 2003 to 15.2% in 2008. It provides the template for the development of a NCD strategic plan and is coherent with other related plans and policies such as the alcohol policy and the cancer strategic plan she acknowledged.

She recounted her experience at the market with a topical rural woman who was hypertensive but could not leave her wares unattended to for medical attention so she had to consult a table top drug seller within her community regardless of the consequences associated it.

She called for a multi sectorial approach, affordability of medication and a global engagement and political commitment the reduction in incidence of NCDs across the world.

Participants reiterated the need for the women’s movement to mobilize against NCDs a human right approach. Noting that, the significance of gender equity and gender inequities for women’s health has been recognized internationally.

Gender equity is a basic principle of the United Nations (UN) set out in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations; reaffirmed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo 1994 and the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 recognizes the significance of gender inequities for women’s health. This has been further noted in the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences including the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 and the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995.

## 6.2 The NGO Committee on Sustainable Development- New York

The NGO Committee on Sustainable Development hosted the Permanent Mission of Sir Lanka to the United Nations at their monthly meeting during the 60<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women on a side event themed *“Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls: a Major Obstacle to Women’s Empowerment”*. This was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2016

Speakers at the programme were; Honourable Mrs. Sicily K. Kariuki (Cabinet Secretary, Republic of Kenya), Honourable Oye Lithur (Cabinet Minister For Gender, Children And Social Protection, Republic Of Ghana), Ms. Lakshmi Puri Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations(Deputy Executive Director of UN Women).

In Her Opening Remarks, Honourable Ms. Chandrani Bandara Jayasingha (Minister for Women and Child Affairs, Sir Lanka) acknowledged that, Violence against women is a global pandemic. Adding that, according to researches, seven out of ten women suffer from abuse or violence in their life time, usually inflicted by intimate partners, husbands, fathers and brothers among others. Women and girls constantly suffer abuse ranging from rape, stabbing, being kicked in the stomach while pregnant, and slapped with all sorts of objects, starvation, poisoning and even murder. This notwithstanding, there is a psychological and emotional abuse which generally leads to trauma and a lifetime of hurt.

Domestic violence, in most cases, is a secret kept for a lifetime within families in various homes across a wide scale of societies. This is as a result of the feeling of shame and embarrassment they suffer. Victims continually live in perpetual fear and shadows of their abusers.

The Minister for Women and Child Affairs pointed out that, it was the aforementioned reasons that the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-NY recognizes that in order to attain the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the awful violence against women and girls has to end, for there can be no sustainable development when dreadful acts are persistently mete out against a large percentage of the world’s population. The NGO Committee on Sustainable Development partnered the Permanent Mission of Sir Lanka to the United Nations to organize the meeting.

Honourable Ms. Chandrani Bandara Jayasingha asserted that, though various notions and legislations like the Beijing Platform of Action, the Vienna Declaration and Program for action, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, among others,

domestic violence remains the most prevalent form of violence that affects women of all social strata across the world.

The panel, therefore, discussed the impact of domestic violence against women and girls with speakers addressing the domestic violence in their contexts; how it impedes the empowerment of women; share some of their legislation and successes in stemming the tide of domestic violence.

Honourable Oye Lithur, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, while sharing the Ghanaian experience at the meeting mentioned that, it was imperative to strengthen the protection of women and girls in order to achieve the goal number five of the Sustainable Development Goals. She further called for a more pragmatic approach where “we need to unpack, prevent and institute measures and interventions to end Gender Based Violence” she added. The Minister indicated that, one of the major interventions Ghana has made in her attempt to end Gender Based Violence was the passage of the Domestic Violence Act 2007. She further added that Ghanaian government through the National Women’s Machinery has sustained a continuous engagement with traditional leaders and societal heads to ensure that people adhere to the tenants of the law.

With regard to legal and policy framework, the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill was before cabinet and would soon be passed into law, she indicated. Other initiatives being under taking according to the Hon. Minister were as follows;

- We have also ensured that health care operators, centers and facilities have Gender Policy. This policy will help them address various degrees of gender-based violence. In addition, there is also a Child Assault Centre in Korle-Bu to address the parallel issues.
- Institutional strengthening is as critical as gender mainstreaming. The institutionalization of Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVSVU) under the Ghana Police Service in 1998 which engages in sectorial approach to address gender-based violence. There are 102 Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit in the country.
- The judicial Services have also helped in the creation of specialized Gender Based Violence courts. There are three of such courts in Ghana. In spite of this, conviction rate is less than 2% of all reported cases on Gender-Based Violence therefore more attention should be given to it.
- With the support of UNFPA the National Women’s Machinery through the Domestic Violence Secretariat has also set up a Gender-Based Violence Responsive Centre in two market places which offers support to victims.

In curbing issues of Gender-Based Violence, the Honorable Minister proposed for the need to strengthen legal and policy framework.

We need not to antagonize the male counterparts but be innovative to get them to understand the gender agenda and its related issues.

Addressing the cultural underpinnings in gender based violence; she gave instances where a woman would freely avail herself for her hair to be shaved only to prove her innocence and prove that she has honored her husband.

Factor and integrate, culture, tradition and socio-cultural perspective into interventions to help address Gender Based Violence

Research is also very important for evidence and helps us unpack the health implications of Gender Based Violence and to provide psychosocial support to victims.

She also mentioned that HIV/AIDS should be taken seriously when it comes to Gender-Based Violence; Victims of rape should be given medications to prevent the spread of the deadly virus. Child Marriage is violence and that is why Ghana has launched a campaign to end Child Marriage.

Honourable Mrs. Sicily K. Kariuki, Cabinet Secretary, Kenya in her statement noted that, the Kenya's constitution recognizes that violence against women and girls is a violation of their Human Rights.

Domestic Violence and all other forms of gender-based violence harm and hamper women empowerment and generally their development. It basically denies women the right to live In Kenya, one out of every five women has experienced violence in one form or other between the ages of 15 to 49 years. Nationally, FGM has dropped from 27% (in the last 5 years) to 21 % (last year). It is the most recent and dramatic drop in the world.

President Uhuru Kenyatta is a signatory to the "he4she initiative" and has also added his voice to gender equality.

Mrs. Kariuki also reiterated the need to strengthen institutional and legal framework to curb and promote Gender Based Violence and in essence promote gender equality.

She noted that, though mechanisms for legal frameworks have been adopted in most countries including Kenya, the challenges on Gender Based Violence currently persist in higher dimensions.

The Cabinet Secretary from Kenya, therefore, called for robust mechanisms to solve the dreading issue which mostly affect women and girls. Let's deepen our partnership by

going outside our usual partners and stakeholders, let involve other partners like men, the private sector, multilateral and bilateral, she concluded.

Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, related to all statements at the meeting and added that, hardly can there be a family that has not been touched by Domestic Violence. She inquired what the causes of Domestic Violence were, how best the high incidence could be reduced, if not possible to eliminate. Statistically, seven out of ten women globally suffer from this menace. Noting that, intimate violence and violence within the family was mostly suffered by women. The Deputy Executive Director, recognized the cost and difficulty associated with addressing Domestic Violence, though international, regional and nationally mechanisms have been put in place, she expressed her contentment with the commitment given by Global political leaders to end domestic violence at a meeting last year. China and Palestine were two countries who adopted DV legislations after the meeting.

According to Ms. Lakshmi Puri, national movement to criminalised Domestic Violence has been growing and 125 out of 191 Member States have criminalised the act. A situation which gives confidence to victims to report and build themselves get out of the violence, heal and serves as a deterring factor to others.

In identifying the cause, Ms. Puri mentioned the issue of power relations, "Patriarchy; a belief system that males hold primary power over females and it further defines females as weak and vulnerable in society as the root cause of Domestic Violence". She further called for change in this belief system through socialization; say women as home keepers have much to do in this direction.

Ms. Puri reiterated the need for a comprehensive and multi-sectorial approach in addressing issues of domestic violence; she referred to the four P's as cardinal factors;

1. Preservation – she called for action within three main key institutions, which were the Family, schools and faith based leadership.
2. Protection – she quizzed to what level are laws being enforced? Are the mandated institutions like the police, judiciary among others doing their work as expected?
3. Prosecution - are perpetrators walking around with impunity or are facing the full rigors of the laws?
4. Provision of services to victims – are victims getting the one-stop shop services?

Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, in her conclusion stated that, glaring examples could be learnt from South Africa and Uganda where progresses have been made to a larger extent on prosecution and community engagement respectively.

In conclusion, the panel proposed a Global Call to Action to Break the Cycle of Domestic Violence in order to truly **leave no One Behind**. It further called on Stakeholders to take major steps to offer better protection and safe havens for victims, as they could be help them with compassion and educational tools to empower and overcome their pain and achieve a lifetime that is sustainable with Justice for all.

## 7.0 SUMMARY OF AGREED CONCLUSIONS

The 60th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women concluded with UN Member States committing to the gender-responsive implementation of Agenda 2030. A set

of agreed conclusions called for enhancing the basis for rapid progress, including stronger laws, policies and institutions, better data and scaled-up financing.

The Commission recognized women's vital role as agents of development. It acknowledged that progress on the Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of Agenda 2030 will not be possible without gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

The agreed conclusions urge a comprehensive approach to implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals through thorough integration of gender perspectives across all government policies and programmes. The elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination depends on effective laws and policies and the removal of any statutes still permitting discrimination. Temporary special measures may be required to guarantee that women and girls can obtain justice for human rights violations.

The Commission endorsed significantly increased investment to close resource gaps for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Funds should be mobilized from all sources, domestic and international, ranging from fulfilling official development assistance commitments to combatting illicit financial flows that shortchange public resources for gender equality.

With humanitarian crises and other emergencies disproportionately affecting women and girls, the Commission underlined the imperative of empowering women in leadership and decision-making in all aspects of responding to and recovering from crisis. On the eve of the World Humanitarian Summit, it stressed prioritizing women's and girls' needs in humanitarian action and upholding their rights in all emergency situations. Every humanitarian response should take measures to address sexual and gender-based violence.

Members of the Commission united behind ensuring women's equal participation in leadership at all levels of decision-making in the public and private spheres, encompassing governments, businesses and other institutions, and across all areas of sustainable development. Depending on different circumstances, this may involve establishing temporary special measures, setting and achieving concrete benchmarks and removing barriers to women's participation.

Given the major contributions to Agenda 2030 of civil society, including women's and community-based organizations, feminist groups, human rights defenders and girls' and youth-led organizations, the Commission welcomed open engagement and cooperation with them in gender-responsive implementation. It emphasized fully engaging with men

and boys as agents of change and allies in the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

To guide systematic progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the 2030 Agenda, the Commission stressed enhanced national statistical capacity and the systematic design, collection and sharing of high quality, reliable and timely data disaggregated by sex, age and income. Members also agreed to bolster the role of national mechanisms for women and girls in championing their equality and empowerment.

Refer to appendix 1 for detailed Agreed conclusions

## 8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND OUTCOME OF THE SESSION

The outcome of the Commission's consideration of the priority theme takes the form of agreed conclusions, negotiated by all States. The CSW has ensued in a set of Agreed Conclusions in which governments commit to stronger laws, policies and institutions, better data and increased financing for gender equality. They span a wide variety of themes related to sustainable development and commit governments to a gender-responsive implementation of all 17 goals, and across government programmes and policies at all levels.

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## 9.0 PRIORITY THEME FOR 2017 CSW

Another adopted resolution addresses "Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women" in which priority and review themes are agreed on for the coming three years. The priority theme for 2017: "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work".

## 10.0 OBSERVATIONS

The following were some observations made during the session;

- Despite a number of positive outcomes mentioned above, concerns were voiced by feminist organizations and activists about the lack of progress in some areas, and the fact that several governments continue trying to backtrack on previous commitments and water down progressive language.
- The lack of recognition of sexual and reproductive health and rights is particularly contentious. Several conservative delegations such as Russia, the African bloc of countries and the Holy See (the representation of the Vatican at the UN) inhibited the inclusion of the rights of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. This is particularly worrying as the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights have previously recognized these rights, for example in resolutions.
- The reference to abortion in the agreed conclusions is also extremely disappointing, as it calls on governments to ensure access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, including 'safe abortion, where such services are permitted by national law'. This is disheartening, particularly as abortion has been recognized as a universal human right by the UN Human Rights committee earlier this year in this landmark case. Reference to Comprehensive Sexuality Education is also absent from the agreed conclusions, although it is included in the declaration on HIV/AIDS.

## 11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations to strengthen a gender transformative framework for sustainable development, at end of the sixtieth session of CSW includes:

- The Agreed Conclusions, which set out a roadmap for the why, what and how of implementation of all key SDGs for gender equality and women's empowerment should be used by Ghana to stress the importance of all SDGs and the entire agenda delivering for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
- Governments to fulfill international human rights standards and strive harder to uphold the human rights of all citizens.
- Scale up evidence-based gender-transformative interventions to prevent violence against women and girls while working in strategic partnerships with key public sector actors and civil society.
- Scale up programmes and policies to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, encourage greater contributions to caregiving by men and boys, and improve parental leave and other state support for child care.
- Integrate attention to engaging men and boys as partners and allies in the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Improve attention to men's health and needs within national policies and guidelines, as well as UN and international agreements.
- Ensure implementation of SDG target 4.7, which states that all learners need to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including education about human rights and gender equality.
- Implement, as part of SDG targets 3.7 and 4.7, comprehensive sexuality education, with reference to gender and engagement of boys and young men, alongside empowerment of girls and young women.
- Ensure positive roles for men and boys in changing attitudes towards male and female survivors of gender-based violence in interventions in conflict and post-conflict settings.

## APPENDIX

### CSW60 AGREED CONCLUSIONS - 24 MARCH 2016

#### Commission on the Status of Women

60<sup>th</sup> session

14 - 24 March 2016

#### Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development

##### Agreed Conclusions

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth, fifteenth and twentieth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
2. The Commission reaffirms that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other relevant conventions and treaties provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls throughout their life cycle.
3. The Commission reaffirms that the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, and also reaffirms the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development and that equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the promotion, protection and full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
4. The Commission reaffirms the commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation. The Commission further reaffirms commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls made at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the recognition of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change, and recalls the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment held on 27 September 2015 and the Meeting on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council held on 13 October 2015.

5. The Commission reaffirms that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of its reviews, and the outcomes of relevant major United Nations conferences and summits and the follow up to these conferences, have laid a solid foundation for sustainable development and that the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will make a crucial contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that will leave no one behind.

6. The Commission acknowledges the important role played by regional conventions, instruments and initiatives in their respective regions and countries in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including for sustainable development.

7. The Commission welcomes the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizes that women play a vital role as agents of development and acknowledges that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is crucial to progress across all Sustainable Development Goals and targets. The Commission stresses that the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if women and girls continue to be denied the full realization of their human rights and opportunities.

8. The Commission expresses concern that the feminization of poverty persists and emphasizes that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The Commission acknowledges the mutually reinforcing links between the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the eradication of poverty, and the need to ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls throughout the lifecycle, including through social protection systems.

9. The Commission reaffirms that the realization of the right to education contributes to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, human rights, sustainable development and poverty eradication. The Commission notes with concern the lack of progress in closing gender gaps in access to, retention in, and completion of secondary schooling, which is key to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as enabling other positive social and economic outcomes, therefore all women and girls must enjoy access to lifelong learning opportunities and equal access to quality education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as technical and vocational training.

10. The Commission recognizes that women's equal economic rights, economic empowerment and independence are essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It underlines the importance of undertaking legislative and other reforms to realize the equal rights of women and men, as well as girls and boys where applicable, to access economic and productive resources, including land and natural resources, property and inheritance rights, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance, and women's equal opportunities for full and productive employment and decent work, and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. The Commission acknowledges the positive contribution of migrant women workers for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

11. The Commission further recognizes that achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires the full integration of women into the formal economy, including through their effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life and through changing the current gender-based division of labour to ensure that unpaid care and domestic work is equally shared, and recognized, reduced and redistributed.

12. The Commission recognizes that conflicts, trafficking in persons, terrorism, violent extremism, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies, and other emergency situations, disproportionately affect women and girls. It therefore recognizes that it is essential to ensure that women are empowered to effectively and meaningfully participate in leadership and decision-making processes, that their needs and interests are prioritized in strategies and responses, and that the human rights of women and girls are promoted and protected, in all development efforts, as well as in conflict, humanitarian emergencies and other emergency situations.

13. The Commission stresses the need to ensure that no one is left behind in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in this regard recognizes the challenges faced by refugee women and girls and the need to protect and empower them, including in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and the need to strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, and underscores the importance of development support for those communities, particularly in developing countries.

14. The Commission reiterates its concern over the challenge climate change poses to the achievement of sustainable development and that women and girls, who face inequality and discrimination, are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and other environmental issues, including, inter alia, desertification, deforestation, dust storms, natural disasters, persistent drought, extreme weather events, sea-level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification. Furthermore, the Commission recognizes, in line with the Paris Agreement, that countries should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote, and consider gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

15. The Commission strongly condemns all forms of violence against all women and girls. It expresses deep concern that discrimination and violence against women and girls particularly against those who are most vulnerable, continues in all parts of the world and that all forms of violence against women and girls, including, inter alia, sexual and gender based violence, domestic violence, trafficking in persons, femicide, among others, as well as harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, are impediments to the full achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls, and to the development of their full potential as equal partners with men and boys, as well as to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. The Commission while welcoming progress made towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, emphasizes that no country has fully achieved gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, that significant levels of inequality between women and men, girls and boys persist globally, and that vulnerability and marginalization owing to, inter alia, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination throughout their lifecycle.

17. The Commission recognizes that gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires the acceleration of action on both recent and long-standing commitments to realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

18. The Commission reaffirms the importance of significantly increased investment to close resource gaps for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources, including domestic and international resource mobilization and allocation, the full implementation of official development assistance commitments, and combatting illicit financial flows, to build on progress achieved and strengthen international cooperation, including the role of north-south, south-south and triangular cooperation, bearing in mind that south-south cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, north-south cooperation.

19. The Commission stresses the urgency of full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and recalls that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is crucial.

20. The Commission notes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is of unprecedented scope and significance. It is accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, and it will be implemented within countries and at the regional and global levels, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policy space for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, in particular for developing States, while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments. The Commission affirms governments have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made.

21. The Commission welcomes the major contributions made by civil society, including women's and community-based organizations, feminist groups, women human rights defenders and girls' and youth led organizations, in placing the interests, needs and visions of women and girls on local, national, regional and international agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and recognizes the importance of having an open, inclusive and transparent engagement with them in the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

22. The Commission recognizes the importance of fully engaging men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and as allies in the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, as well as in the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the many women and girls experience Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in the gender responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

23. The Commission, in order to continue working towards full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which will make a crucial contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, urges Governments, at all levels, and as appropriate, with the relevant entities of the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates and bearing in mind national priorities, and invites national human rights institutions, where they exist, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, inter alia, women and community-based organizations, feminists groups, youth led organizations, faith-based organizations, the private sector, employer organizations, trade unions, the media, and other relevant actors, as applicable, to take the following actions:

**Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks**

a. Consider ratifying or acceding to, as a particular matter of priority, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their respective Optional Protocols, limit the extent of any reservations, formulate any such reservations as precisely and as narrowly as possible to ensure that no reservations are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Conventions, review their reservations regularly with a view to withdrawing them and withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the relevant treaty, and implement them fully by, inter alia, putting in place effective national legislation and policies;

b. Accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of its reviews and the International Conference on the Population and Development and its Program of Action and the outcomes of its reviews as a foundation for sustainable development, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and compliance of States Parties with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto as well as other relevant conventions and treaties;

c. Implement all goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a comprehensive manner, reflecting its universal, integrated and indivisible nature, while respecting each country's policy space and leadership while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments, including by developing cohesive sustainable development strategies to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and by mainstreaming a gender perspective in all government policies and programs at all levels;

d. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls through the development, where needed, adoption and accelerated and effective implementation and monitoring of laws and comprehensive policy measures; the removal, where they exist, of discriminatory provisions in legal frameworks, including punitive provisions; and setting up legal, policy, administrative and other comprehensive measures, including temporary special measures as appropriate, to ensure women's and girls' equal and effective access to justice and accountability for violations of human rights of

e. Enact legislation and undertake reforms to realize the equal rights of women and men, and where applicable girls and boys, to access economic and productive resources, including access to, ownership of, and control over land, property and inheritance rights, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance, and women's equal opportunities for full and productive employment and decent work;

f. Promote women's economic rights and independence, women's right to work and rights at work through gender-responsive policies and programmes that promote decent work for all; ensure equal pay for equal work or and work of equal value; protect women against discrimination and abuse in the workplace; invest in and empower women in all sectors in the economy by supporting women-led businesses, including by tailoring a range of approaches and instruments which facilitate access to universal public services, finance, training and technology, markets, sustainable and affordable energy and transport and trade;

g. Undertake all appropriate measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work by prioritizing social protection policies, including accessible and affordable quality social services, and care services for children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons living with HIV and AIDS, and all others in need of care, and promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men;

h. Promote a socially responsible and accountable private sector that acts in line with, among others, the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the fundamental principles and rights at work of the ILO, and labour, environmental and health standards, as well as the Women's Empowerment Principles established by UN Women and the Global Compact, in order to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

- i. Recognize the contribution of migrants, including women migrant workers to sustainable development, acknowledge the need to eliminate violence and discrimination against women migrant workers, and to promote their empowerment including through international, regional or bilateral cooperation among all stakeholders, in particular countries of origin, transit and destination;
- j. Take concrete steps towards eliminating the practice of gender-based price differentiation, whereby goods and services intended for or marketed to women and girls cost more than similar goods and services intended for or marketed to men and boys (also known as the 'pink tax');
- k. Urges governments to provide universal and equitable access for all to safe and affordable drinking water, and adequate sanitation and hygiene, in particular in schools, public facilities and buildings, paying special attention to the specific needs of all women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by inadequate water and sanitation facilities [and are at greater risk of violence and harassment when practising open defecation, and have specific needs for menstrual hygiene management; and to improve water management and wastewater treatment with the active participation of women; women and girls;
- l. Recognize the critical role of women as agents of change and leaders in addressing climate change, and promote a gender-responsive approach, the integration of a gender perspective and the empowerment of women and girls in environmental, climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies, financing, policies, and processes, towards achieving the meaningful and equal participation of women in decision making at all levels on environmental issues, and towards building the resilience of women and girls to the adverse effects of climate change;
- m. Ensure that the rights and specific needs of women and girls affected and displaced by conflicts, trafficking in persons, terrorism, violent extremism, natural disasters, humanitarian emergencies, and other emergency situations, are addressed in national and international plans, strategies and responses; and ensure the participation of women and girls at all levels of decision-making in emergency, recovery, reconstruction, conflict resolution and peace-building processes; provide education for all, especially girls, to contribute to a smooth transition from relief to development and address sexual and gender-based violence as an integral and prioritized part of every humanitarian response; and in this respect, encourages the World Humanitarian Summit to give due consideration to integrating a gender perspective into its deliberations;
- n. Refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries;
- o. ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women and their sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of

the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences, including through the development and enforcement of policies and legal frameworks and the strengthening of health systems that make universally accessible and available quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive health-care services, commodities, information and education, including, inter alia, safe and effective methods of modern contraception, emergency contraception, prevention programmes for adolescent pregnancy, maternal health care such as skilled birth attendance and emergency obstetric care which will reduce obstetric fistula and other complications of pregnancy and delivery, safe abortion where such services are permitted by national law, and prevention and treatment of reproductive tract infections, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and reproductive cancers, recognizing that human rights include the right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, in accordance with national laws and context, including sexual and reproductive health, free from coercion, discrimination and violence;

p. Promote and respect women's and girls' right to education throughout their life cycle at all levels, especially for those most left behind, by providing universal access to quality education, ensuring inclusive, equal and non-discriminatory quality education, and promoting learning opportunities for all, ensuring completion of primary and secondary education and eliminating gender disparities in access to all areas of secondary and tertiary education, promoting financial literacy, ensuring that women and girls have equal access to career development, training, scholarships and fellowships, and by adopting positive action to build women's and girls' leadership skills and influence; adopt measures that promote, respect and guarantee safety of women and girls in the school environment, and measures to support women and girls with disability in all levels of education and training;

q. Mainstream a gender perspective into education and training programmes, including science and technology, eradicate female illiteracy and support school-to-work transition through skills development to enable women's and girls' active participation in economic, social and cultural development, governance and decision-making, and create conditions that facilitate women's full participation and integration in the formal economy;

r. Adopt, review and ensure the accelerated and effective implementation of laws that criminalize violence against women and girls, as well as comprehensive, multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive preventive, protective and prosecutorial measures and services to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against all women and girls, in public and private spaces, as well as harmful practices;

s. Design and implement appropriate domestic policies at all levels that aim to transform discriminatory social attitudes and gender stereotypes as well as to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls;

t. Fully engage men and boys, including community leaders, as strategic partners and allies in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of all

forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls both in public and private spheres, design and implement national policies and programmes that address the role and responsibility of men and boys and aim to ensure equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in caregiving and domestic work, transform with the aim to eliminate those social norms that condone violence against women and girls, and attitudes and social norms by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys, including by understanding and addressing the root causes of gender inequality such as unequal power relations, social norms, practices and stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls, and engage them in efforts to promote and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls for the benefit of both women and men, girls and boys;

u. Recognize the important role and contribution of rural women and girls as well as local communities to food security, poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and sustainable development and commit to supporting their empowerment, and ensure rural women's full, equal and effective participation in society, the economy, and political decision-making;

v. Formulate and implement, in collaboration with indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women and their organizations, policies and programmes designed to promote capacity-building and strengthen their leadership while recognizing the distinct and important role of indigenous women and girls in sustainable development; and prevent and eliminate discrimination and violence against indigenous women and girls which has a negative impact on their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and which they are disproportionately vulnerable to, and that constitutes a major impediment to indigenous women's full, equal and effective participation in society, the economy, and political decision-making; w. Take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational, employment and other measures to protect and promote the rights of all women and girls with disabilities, ensuring their full and effective participation and inclusion in society, and to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they face;

x. Recognize the family as a contributor to development, including in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals for women and girls, that gender equality and women's empowerment improve the well-being of the family, and in this regard stress the need for elaborating and implementing family policies aimed at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and at enhancing the full participation of women in society;

**Fostering enabling environments for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls**

y. Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women by reaffirming the commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and pursuing policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors and to reinvigorating the global partnership for sustainable development;

z. Reiterate the need for gender mainstreaming, including targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies and adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation and transformative actions for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment at all levels;

aa. Support and institutionalize a gender-responsive approach to public financial management, including gender-responsive budgeting and tracking across all sectors of public expenditure, to address gaps in resourcing for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and ensure all national and sectorial plans and policies for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are fully costed and adequately resourced to ensure their effective implementation;

bb. Take steps to significantly increase investment to close resource gaps, including through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources, including public, private, domestic and international resource mobilization and allocation, including by enhancing revenue administration through modernized, progressive tax systems, improved tax policy and more efficient tax collection and increased priority on gender equality and the empowerment of women in official development assistance to build on progress achieved, and ensure that official development assistance is used effectively;

cc. Urge developed countries to fully implement their respective official development assistance commitments, including the commitment made by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income for official development assistance to developing countries and the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national income for official development assistance to least developed countries, and encourage developing countries to build on the progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help meet development goals and targets and help them, inter alia, to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women;

dd. Strengthen international cooperation, including the role of North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, bearing in mind that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation, and invites all States to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation focusing on shared development priorities, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in government, civil society and the private sector, while noting that national ownership and leadership in this regard are indispensable for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

ee. Implement macroeconomic, labour and social policies which promote full and productive employment and decent work for all in order to benefit women and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as to enhance economic efficiency and optimize the contribution of women to economic growth and poverty reduction, promote processes to develop and facilitate the availability of appropriate knowledge and technologies globally, and increase awareness among decision makers, the private sector and employers of the necessity of women's economic empowerment and their important contribution;

### **Strengthening women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development**

ff. Take measures to ensure women's full, equal and effective participation in all fields and leadership at all levels of decision-making in the public and private sectors, and public, social, economic and political life and in all areas of sustainable development;

gg. Take measures to ensure women's full, equal and effective participation, including through temporary special measures, as appropriate, and by setting and working to achieve concrete goals, targets and benchmarks, including by providing education and training, and by removing all barriers that directly and indirectly hinder the participation of women, and where applicable girls, in decision-making roles in all sectors and at all levels such as lack of access to quality and inclusive education, and training, as well as violence, poverty, unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, and gender stereotypes;

hh. Take measures to ensure women's effective participation at all levels and at all stages and in peace processes and mediation efforts, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peace building and recovery, as laid out in relevant Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security;

ii. Encourages States to recognize shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men to promote women's increased participation in public life, and take appropriate measures to achieve this, including measures to reconcile family, private and professional life;

jj. Promote a safe and enabling environment for all civil society actors so that they can fully contribute to the gender-responsive implementation and follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in line with the relevant provisions of the Agenda;

kk. Increase resources and support for grass-roots, local, national, regional and global women's and civil society organizations to advance and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls;

### **Strengthening gender-responsive data collection, follow-up and review processes**

ll. Include a gender-responsive approach in national follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development taking into account, where applicable, the agreed global indicator framework, and strengthen national statistical capacity, including by enhancing technical and financial assistance to developing countries, to systematically design, collect and ensure access to high-quality, reliable and timely data disaggregated by sex, age and income and other characteristics relevant in national contexts;

mm. Develop and enhance standards and methodologies at national and international levels to improve collection, analysis and dissemination of gender statistics on, inter alia, poverty, income distribution within households, unpaid care work, women's access to, control and ownership of assets and productive resources, participation at all levels of decision-making and violence against women to measure progress for women and girls on sustainable development in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

nn. Enhance technical and financial collaboration between countries, with the support of United Nations entities, within their mandates, and the participation of civil society organizations as appropriate, with the aim of collecting data and statistics to follow-up on and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from a gender equality perspective.

#### **Enhancing national institutional arrangements**

24. The Commission calls on Governments to strengthen the authority and capacity of, including by funding where possible, national mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, at all levels, including to support the mainstreaming of a gender perspective across all policies and programmes in all sectors of government in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and promote the visibility of and support for these mechanisms.

25. The Commission also calls on Governments to enhance coherence and coordination of national mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with relevant government agencies and other stakeholders, where appropriate to ensure that national planning, decision-making, policy formulation and implementation, budgeting processes and institutional structures contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

26. The Commission calls on the United Nations system entities within their respective mandates to support States upon their request in their gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

27. The Commission recognizes its primary role for follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in which its work is grounded and stresses that it is critical to address and integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout national, regional and global reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to ensure synergies between the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action and the gender-responsive follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

28. The Commission calls on UN-Women to continue to play a central role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and in supporting Member States upon their request, in coordinating the United Nations system and in mobilizing civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, at all levels, in support of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

29. The Commission recalls General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/163 and encourages the Secretariat to consider how to enhance the participation, including at the 61st Session of the Commission, of national human rights institutions fully compliant with the Paris Principles, where they exist, in compliance with the ECOSOC rules of procedure.

30. The Commission affirms that it will contribute to the thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals taking place at the high-level political forum and will exercise its catalytic role for gender mainstreaming so as to ensure that follow-up and review processes benefit all women and girls and contribute to the full realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by 2030.