Second regular session of UN-Women Executive Board

Statement of the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, Ms. Michelle Bachelet

28 November 2012
New York

Good morning!

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be here with you and address the Executive Board. Twenty-six months ago, I arrived at the United Nations. You just saw the video highlighting our work, partnerships and the impact being made in the lives of women and families around the globe.

We have come a long way in a short period of time. And I would like to pay tribute to our staff, and acknowledge the support we have enjoyed from within the United Nations, from UN member States, and from you as members of our Executive Board. Together we are making progress. From Haiti to Egypt, from Liberia to India to every country around the world, steps are being taken to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

UN Women exists for one reason and one reason only—to deliver results that advance gender equality and improve the lives of women. So, allow me to add to what you just saw in the video, and update you on some of the strategic results achieved in 2012 in our core priority areas.

To increase women’s political leadership and participation, UN Women is providing support in 71 countries to enhance legal frameworks and national capacities. For example, in May 2012, Algeria attained 31 per cent of women in parliament, becoming the first and only country in the Arab States region to reach the target threshold of 30 per cent, a significant step towards democratic reform and gender equality. In July, women of Libya gained an outstanding 33 seats or 16.5% representation in the country’s first free and fair elections in over 60 years. And in Senegal, after the July elections, the number of female parliamentarians
nearly doubled in the National Assembly to 45 percent, thanks to a law on parity to ensure women’s participation and gender equality.

To increase women’s economic opportunities and reduce poverty, UN Women is providing support to 67 countries that have prioritized women’s economic empowerment. In September, I joined leaders from the three Rome-based UN-food and agriculture agencies to launch a new programme to empower rural women so they can enjoy better economic opportunities and run successful enterprises. UN Women has also launched a new joint programme with the European Commission called “Spring Forward for Women” to empower women economically and politically in the wake of the Arab Spring. And I am pleased to report that 37 new companies have signed onto the Women’s Empowerment Principles since the last Board session which brings us to a total of 466 private companies now working to advance women’s equal opportunities in the workplace.

To end violence against women and girls, UN Women is working in 85 countries to prevent violence in the first place, to end impunity for these crimes, and to expand essential services to survivors. UN Women launched the “Safe cities” programme in New Dehli, which is now also operating in Quito, Kigali, Port Moresby and Cairo to enhance women’s safety on city streets, in buildings, in buses and subways, and to improve police response and services. And for the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women on 25 November, UN Women launched a global effort called COMMIT to showcase national commitments to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Later today we will hold a special event here in the United Nations.

To improve women’s role in peace, security and humanitarian response, UN Women is supporting gender equality and women’s leadership in in 37 countries. In September, I visited Colombia, where the President declared that women would be an integral part of the emerging peace process. I will continue to encourage women’s full and equal participation in the peace process in Colombia and in all conflict affected countries around the world. So far, UN Women has trained more than 200 senior level women peace and security experts from 25 countries so they can participate in peace talks, reconstruction and recovery. We know that lasting peace is built on a foundation of inclusiveness, justice and equality.

To build stronger institutional accountability for gender equality, UN Women is working in 65 countries to promote gender responsive planning and budgeting. Today 20 countries prioritize gender equality and women’s empowerment in their national plans and budgets, and the level of investments in these areas is rising.

This year for the first time, we commemorated the International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October, as decided by UN Member States. UN Women joined UN agencies and women’s civil society groups to issue a global call to action to end child marriage. During this 67th session of the General Assembly, we also advanced the rule of law with a focus on women’s access to justice.
And on 10th October, I hosted the first meeting of UN Women’s Global Civil Society Advisory group. Members include grassroots, rural and community-based leaders, leaders of indigenous people’s groups, feminist scholars, human rights lawyers and male leaders working on gender and women’s rights issues. The Global Civil Society Advisory Group is part of our global network of civil society advisory groups established at the country, regional and global levels. Civil society is one of UN Women’s most important constituencies, and I look forward to continued strong partnership to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment worldwide.

We have also progressed further in implementing our coordination mandate. We are rolling out the UN System Wide Action Plan, which establishes an accountability framework for the work of each UN entity on gender equality and the empowerment of women. I am pleased to report that seven agencies have fully aligned their gender equality policies, strategies and accountability frameworks with the UN SWAP Performance Indicators. Another six entities are in the process of doing the same.

The SWAP is recognized by ECOSOC and other bodies as a primary tool to ensure accountability of the UN system on gender equality and women’s empowerment. In fact, other agencies are now emulating this model for other themes, such as youth, and we look forward to engaging in these processes as well.

Mr. President,

At UN Women, we know that results must be institutionalized across all levels of the organization. We know that the results that matter the most are those experienced by women in their daily lives, results on the ground in the communities where women and men live. This is why UN Women needs a strong field presence and robust regional architecture to drive UN system coordination and strategic partnerships, to institutionalize a strong culture of results-based management and evaluation, to enhance organizational effectiveness and accountability, and to strengthen institutional capacity to deliver.

At UN Women, we derive legitimacy not from our mission and mandate, but from the results we deliver on the ground in response to national priorities. Of course, we need the appropriate and effective structures that allow us to do so. UN Women has taken great strides in organizational development but much more remains to be done. As they say, “Rome was not built in one day”. Success takes vision, planning and determination. And it takes strong change management.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT
Since we last met, UN Women has made great strides in building a unified and effective organization. I would now like to update you on the steps that we have taken for change management, through our initiative for efficiency and effectiveness, to deliver results in an accountable and transparent manner.

UN Women has adopted a consolidated change management strategy that builds on recommendations from regional workshops, a leadership retreat with field managers, the proposed regional architecture, and the recommendations of the first UN Women external audit.

As a first step, I have recruited a special advisor for accountability and transparency to support me in this strategic undertaking and help speed up the change management process.

As we move to decentralize through our proposed regional architecture, we have rolled out the necessary delegation of authorities to managers, the new internal controls, a new programme and operations manual, and we have trained managers on our priorities, programme and operations. We have made good progress on implementation of IPSAS—the International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

We have developed a new evaluation policy, established a new audit advisory committee and an anti-fraud hotline. Furthermore, we will publicly disclose internal audit reports, and UN Women has published data with the International AID Transparency Initiative.

**Regional Architecture**

Mr. President,

In June, we presented the Executive Board with the guiding principles for developing UN Women’s regional architecture. As Board members, you encouraged us to advance the regional architecture on this basis and requested the overall administrative, functional and budgetary implications as well as an implementation plan to be submitted now in November.

In response to your request, we are pleased to present our final report on UN Women’s Regional Architecture, together with the report of the ACABQ, the Advisory Committee of Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and our management response.

The regional architecture plan is essential to deliver the results expected of us. For this, we have benefited enormously from wide consultation. Your guidance and feedback as Board members, and continual support, has been invaluable throughout this process, and I thank you.

The plan before you is driven by the need to be close to the countries where the demand for our services and needs are highest, and where we can integrate with existing UN offices to
achieve as much interaction as possible with our UN system partners. In summary, this plan responds to the priority set out in our Strategic Plan to build UN Women’s capacity, and improve the support we deliver in countries, where women and girls live, and where we can make the greatest impact.

Only by strengthening our work in the field can we meaningfully support national ownership of women’s empowerment and gender equality, and that is the essence of this proposal.

We present a proposal of six regional offices, of which two are located in Africa. The regional structure is further supported by either one or two multi-country offices in each region.

Regional Offices will be an essential conduit between the field and headquarters. They will be responsible, through their oversight and technical guidance functions, for ensuring that UN Women’s work at the country level promotes the norms and standards coming from intergovernmental processes. At the same time, regional offices will draw from country experiences and feed this knowledge into intergovernmental processes, making this knowledge available to Member States either directly or as contributions to broader reports such as those of the Secretary General.

UN Women is presenting an architecture that has the reach and scope to promote the universal vision of gender equality and women’s empowerment in every country—either through programme presence or country office presence and to bring our expertise closer to the women and girls we serve. At its heart, the regional architecture allows us to make the changes needed to move from the structure and business processes we inherited to a structure that responds to UN Women’s universal mandate and Strategic Plan.

We applied four criteria in deciding on the location of UN Women’s six regional offices:

Firstly, from a programmatic perspective, we considered the presence of a UN hub and the proximity of UN Women’s main partners within the UN Development Group regional teams.

Secondly, from an operational perspective, the ability to serve the region and the ease of conducting business was evaluated.

Thirdly, the overall costs of establishing and running the regional offices were estimated.

Fourthly, UN Women assessed its ability to leverage its existing resources and those of its partners to gain strategic advantages.
The locations of the regional offices are presented as follows:

- Asia Pacific - in Bangkok
- East and Southern Africa - in Nairobi
- West and Central Africa – in Dakar
- The Americas and the Caribbean - in Panama
- Arab States – in Cairo
- Europe and Central Asia - in Istanbul

For five of six of these locations, the decision was relatively straightforward, given our regional offices are co-located in established UN regional hubs. However, for Europe and Central Asia, there is no single hub and we were fortunate that four member states made generous offers to host our regional office. We selected Istanbul based on the set criteria, including cost.

Our regional offices are designed and will be located so that we achieve the decentralization needed to function more efficiently and close to our clients. The regionalization also includes business process improvements: clearer accountabilities in day-to-day decision-making; streamlined programme and project approval; delegated authority for operational management and decision-making and simplified recruitment processes.

Each of these regional offices will have a core staffing of national and international officers including the Regional Director at D1 level. UN Women’s country representatives will report directly to their respective Regional Directors. Regional offices will also influence and support the work of regional partners both within and outside the United Nations.

The implementation of the regional architecture will take place in a phased approach to avoid disruption to UN Women’s operations, to minimize costs and to achieve the transition rapidly. By the end of 2013, we expect to have the Regional architecture completed.

To build the capacity of UN Women in line with the proposed new structure, we have embarked on leadership training for managers. Two training sessions have already been completed and the next is scheduled for February. In these trainings, managers including country representatives are learning new skills, policies and procedures to effectively manage teams and operations to deliver on UN Women’s strategic objectives.

This restructuring involves an increase in staffing levels of 39 posts in management, technical and operational support. The indicative costs for the regional architecture total $7.1 million, of which staff costs represent 93 per cent or $6.6 million.

To cover these costs, UN Women is not seeking additional funding, as these post increases can be covered within the existing 2012/2013 budget. This is possible due to our prudent approach whereby a number of recruitments were put on hold pending your decisions relating
to the regional architecture. This made funds available that can now be deployed against these additional costs with no additional funding required in this biennium. However, the cost increase of the regional architecture will be reflected in the integrated budget for 2014-2015, which will be presented in due course for your review and decision.

Once again, I thank you for the support and guidance you have provided to us as we have developed our regional architecture, and we look forward to a successful conclusion to our discussions.

**Accountability and Transparency**

Mr. President,

An effective and efficient organization is built on a foundation of accountability and transparency. I would like to update you on our progress in this vital area and begin with our new evaluation policy.

The UN Women Evaluation Policy supports the quality of our programmes, the credibility of our organization and is of central importance to accountability, learning, and decision-making. This policy has been developed following a review of existing evaluation policies in the UN system, wide consultations, and peer reviews of the evaluation function and the existing evaluation culture in UN Women. The policy is consistent with international standards for evaluation and adapts to the characteristics and mandate of UN Women.

The policy provides a framework for an independent, credible and useful evaluation function that provides evidence on the performance of UN Women towards achieving results in the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The policy lays out the definition of evaluation on gender equality, and the principles and standards that guide evaluation practice, such as national ownership, transparency, independence, and credibility. It covers both the UN Women coordination role for United Nations system-wide evaluation on gender equality, as well as corporate and decentralized evaluation of operational, normative support and coordination work undertaken by UN Women.

I also know that for this policy to be successful, it requires adequate capacities and a detailed implementation plan. This is why the Evaluation Office is working under my guidance to develop these components, starting with a Global Oversight Mechanism - the GATE system. This will ensure relevant and timely management responses to evaluations, a periodic report to the Executive Director on status and compliance; a public web platform that enables
tracking of actions committed; and the creation of a UN Women Evaluation Committee to
advise UN Women in evaluation.

The evaluation policy will be an important step forward in building a robust evaluation
function in UN Women and we count on your continued support.

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

Since we last met in June, the Board of Auditors presented its Report on the Financial
Statements of UN Women for the year 2011. In response to the modified audit opinion, we
have taken decisive action. UN Women has designed its internal control framework and
issued new delegations of authority to ensure clear accountability for roles and
responsibilities across the organization. The Board of Auditors issued 28 audit
recommendations, of which 25 have been implemented, and the remaining three are on track
for completion within the established timeline. And the implementation of IPSAS has
allowed UN Women to introduce new procedures to promote robust financial management of
assets and resources.

I am also pleased to report that UN Women has established an independent audit advisory
committee that met for the first time on 25 October. The committee is comprised of five
experts from academia, the UN and civil society and I value their advice in fulfilling
oversight responsibilities.

UN Women will further strengthen accountability and transparency measures through the
upcoming public disclosure of internal audit reports, in harmonization with UNDP, UNFPA,
UNICEF and UNOPS. We also encourage staff members to report any fraudulent activities
and have set up an anti-fraud hotline to protect whistle-blowers.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that UN Women is the 100th organization to publish data
with the International Aid Transparency Initiative. Members of the public can see
programme information in the countries where we work and the scope of what we are doing.
We are proud to be part of this aid transparency initiative to foster informed decision-making
on international development work.

Financial, administrative and budgetary matters

Mr. President,

I would now like to present, as requested by the Board, the principles, criteria and procedures
that will guide the use of cost recovery income, taking into account the methodologies and
policies adopted by the other agencies, specifically UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP.
UN Women is now a member of the inter-agency working group and we are aligned with the harmonized budget approach. Discussions and inter-agency workshops are well underway and we intend to present, together with the others, a proposal on cost recovery during the first session of the Executive Board in 2013. In addition, we are also presenting a proposed methodology for calculating and maintaining an operational reserve for UN Women, as is already required by Financial Regulation 19.2.

This operational reserve is required to guarantee the financial viability and integrity of UN Women and will be held fully funded and available in liquid assets. Any decision to drawdown on this reserve will be made by myself as Executive Director with a full report to the Executive Board to be required should this be the case. At this session, we will have a chance to discuss the technical details of our approach and I can assure you that we have taken a prudent approach to ensure that we maintain a sufficient level of cash resources.

I am also very pleased to note that this Executive Board session will be the first ever PaperSmart session. UN Women has decided to join the UN Secretary General’s initiative to make the most of the organization’s resources, reduce costs and our environmental footprint, and direct as many financial resources as possible towards programming on gender equality and the empowerment of women. I would like to thank the Integrated Sustainable PaperSmart Services– a division of the UN Secretariat to have worked so closely with UN-Women and have been so effective in making the UN Women Executive Board Papersmart a reality.

We are also being paper smart with our holiday greeting cards, which we will be sending out electronically this year.

Mr President,

Allow me now to comment briefly on our general funding situation. As you know resource mobilization is a vital part of the sustainability of our organization, and our strategy is to widen and deepen our donor base.

Despite the adverse financial and economic crisis-related environment, we are doing our best to sustain last year’s level through our outreach, increased support by some donors to fill gaps and mobilization of private and voluntary sector, including foundations.

In 2011, we managed to raise $227 million, which represented an 80 per cent increase in core resources and 60 per cent in non-core resources compared to previous years. This year, our projections bring us to a total of $233 million, which means we can surpass last year’s level, although we will still not reach our funding target of $300 million per year. We have made
significant headways with non-government contributions. For example, we have already largely surpassed our annual target of $3 million from the private and voluntary sector and we are looking at new partnerships with this sector. However, if we want to meet our projections, we need you, member states, to urgently honour your pledges and ensure that they are paid before 15 December so that they can be accounted for in 2012. We also need new pledges and we need member states to prioritize and front load your contributions at this critical time.

Now is the time to invest in women.

Conclusion

Mr President,

I would now like to briefly highlight three ongoing discussions that I believe are critical for the UN system to deliver results for women and gender equality, and for which we count on your strong support in moving forward.

These three discussions are those for the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, QCPR, for the upcoming 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2013, and for the Rio+20 follow-up on the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 agenda.

Firstly, as you know, the QCPR deliberations are already well underway. We look to the General Assembly to underscore the intrinsic value of gender equality and the empowerment of women broadly in development and specifically in the UN system’s operational activities for development. The Secretary-General’s report recognizes the role and mandate of UN Women in the new development landscape. We hope that through the QCPR, the General Assembly will call for boosting the use of programmatic and accountability instruments that enhance the effectiveness and coherence of the UN system’s gender related work and accountability for it.

Secondly, the upcoming CSW 57 priority theme is the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. We are very actively preparing by working closely with a core group of nine UN entities, governments and civil society. We will shortly conduct a stakeholder meeting in preparation for CSW 57, on 13-14 December 2012, with participation of a number of ministers to raise awareness of existing standards and commitments for ending violence against women, to identify areas and issues where consensus needs strengthening, and to build alliances and support. I invite all of you to attend this meeting. We rely on your support to ensure that the conclusions of CSW 57 strongly promote measures to both prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

Finally, UN Women continues to be closely engaged with Member States, the UN system and civil society in the post-Rio follow-up to develop the sustainable development goals and
the post-2015 agenda. We are working closely with UN Country Teams to ensure women’s voices are heard in country consultations. We are actively engaged in the UN task forces, co-leading the Inequalities thematic consultation with UNICEF. We are engaging closely with civil society and supporting and facilitating their participation. And tomorrow we will conclude an expert group meeting here in New York to develop the conceptual framework and priorities for gender equality in the post-2015 agenda.

We ask all of you as our partners and friends among Member States to not only support us as UN Women, but to be champions for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Let us work together to ensure that the UN system as a whole delivers results for women and girls, that women’s rights – including the right to live free of violence - are protected, respected and promoted, and that gender equality and women’s empowerment are at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you again for your strong support for UN Women and for advancing equality for all. We look forward to the day when every person can enjoy equal opportunity, dignity and freedom.

Thank you.