President,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

Colleagues and Friends,

It is a pleasure to be here today to report to you on our progress implementing UNDP’s Gender Equality Strategy. This year, we are at a critical juncture – closing UNDP’s 2008-2013 planning cycle and embarking on the development of a new strategic plan. For that reason, my remarks today will take a view back over the entire cycle 2008-2013 while highlighting particular achievements from 2012.
I will begin by focusing on the organizational mechanisms we have put in place since 2008 to mainstream gender equality into the work of UNDP, and by reporting on gender parity within the organization itself.

Then I will go through the four thematic goals of the Strategy, and highlight some of the results of our gender mainstreaming work of the past five years. A more in-depth accounting and analysis of this can be found in the background paper to this oral report which was distributed last week.

Allow me to start by reminding all of us just how far UNDP has come in addressing gender equality in the recent past.

In 2005, an external evaluation of UNDP’s gender
mainstreaming performance concluded that UNDP lacked a systematic approach to gender mainstreaming and had neither adopted clearly defined goals, nor dedicated the resources necessary to set and achieve them. This evaluation propelled UNDP to take widespread action.

We developed our first-ever Gender Equality Strategy, 2008-2013, which put in place critical institutional mechanisms for accelerating progress on gender equality. Chief among these was the Gender Steering Implementation Committee (the GSIC), which I am proud to Chair.

The GSIC process provides an effective, on-going mechanism for:

- regularly monitoring progress against the Gender Equality Strategy by Bureau and Practice area;
• identifying bottlenecks and brainstorming sessions to find solutions; and,

• securing leadership commitment to gender equality results throughout the organization.

In 2011, at the recommendation of the Executive Board, the GSIC tasked all Bureau Directors to take concrete actions to better integrate gender equality in the Country Programme Documents coming to the Board. As a result, each of the 13 Country Programme Documents submitted to the Executive Board in June 2012 demonstrated a marked improvement on the integration of gender equality, through the incorporation of gender disaggregated indicators; a gender context analysis; and, gender explicit outcomes.
We further strengthened the GSIC in 2012 by incorporating the findings of the Gender Marker to measure the extent to which each unit’s investments promoted gender equality and women’s empowerment. The gender marker – considered a best practice for the UN system - is proving to be a useful tool for understanding trends and identifying gaps and we have learnt to be more accurate in its use through the years since we first introduced it.

Through the GSIC, we are also addressing organizational challenges in achieving gender parity. I am proud to report that UNDP’s workforce is entirely gender balanced, with 50 percent female staff.

Women now represent 42 percent of international
professionals, 46 percent of national officers and 57 percent of General Services staff. For senior leadership positions, at the country level, 46 percent of our Country Directors and 41 percent of our Deputy Country Directors/Deputy Resident Representatives are now women.

If we look at the number of women at the Resident Representative/Resident Coordinator level, we also see some very encouraging trends. The percentage of Resident Representatives/Coordinators who are women is 46 percent, excluding those who are also Humanitarian Coordinators. Women make up only 19 percent of those who hold the titles of Resident Representatives/Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators, however.
UNDP has made aggressive efforts over the past five years to boost the number of women serving in leadership positions. Of the women candidates nominated to the RC pool, UNDP has nominated 68 percent of them. Clearly, reaching gender parity at the RC/RR/HC level will require efforts not only by UNDP, but by all agencies working together.

Where we can make a difference internally is by better addressing persisting challenges in achieving gender parity at middle and senior management positions. While women account for 53 percent of the P1 to P3 posts, this figure drops at P4 and P5 levels, where women account for 37 percent of posts.

This year all Bureaux presented gender parity action plans to
the GSIC and based on these, I have tasked the Office of Human Resources to develop a corporate strategy for overcoming persistent challenges. The goal is for this strategy, to be presented to the Executive Group by April of this year, to suggest innovative mechanisms and policies, including those designed to reconcile women’s work and family responsibilities, to respond to obstacles in reaching parity.

Other innovations which we are piloting include the Gender Equality Seal, which is a corporate certification process modelled on our very successful program with the private sector that recognizes UNDP offices and units for delivering gender equality results. The programme offers three levels of certification – gold, silver and bronze. I’m pleased to report that the three pilot countries – Argentina, Kyrgyzstan and Bhutan – each were awarded the gold seal. We will be
expanding this pilot in the coming year.

President and Members of the Board: Let me now turn to providing some highlights of results from our thematic work under each goal in the Strategy:

Since 2008, UNDP has invested considerably in tools and capacities to bring gender analysis into our work on poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The MDG Acceleration Framework, implemented by UNDP in collaboration with governments, UN Country Team agencies and other partners at country level, offers a systematic way for countries to identify bottlenecks to MDGs that are lagging. As of late 2012, 16 of the 44 countries applying this tool were
focusing on improving maternal and reproductive health outcomes, as these were identified as their greatest challenge requiring cross-sectoral action and plans to address them. Several other countries also have had action plans with strong gender equality components, such as Nepal, which is targeting access to sanitation facilities for girls as a measure to boost school enrolment and completion.

We have also invested heavily in building national capacities to ensure gender is addressed in economic policy making and that poverty reduction and economic policies deliver equally for women and men. Through the Gender and Economic Policy Management Initiative, UNDP has been developing expertise on integrating gender perspectives into economic planning, policy and budgeting processes as well as providing country-specific technical and advisory services in these areas. By the
end of July 2012, UNDP had trained hundreds of policy makers from 58 countries with tools for gender responsive economic policy making. We saw results of this work in countries like Zambia, which following a training for policy makers began integrating unpaid care work and gender-responsive budgeting into its national budget.

We have also worked to expand the use of sex-disaggregated performance indicators even in very difficult environments. In Saudi Arabia, for example, UNDP supported the drafting of a National Youth Strategy which mainstreamed gender disaggregated data into its analysis and recommendations.

Advocacy on gender-responsive policy making continues to be a critical aspect of UNDP’s multi-dimensional approach to poverty reduction. This has been a central feature of UNDP's
Human Development Reports globally and regionally, but I’d like to highlight two flagship products from 2012: the first Africa Regional Human Development Report on Food Security, which highlighted women’s empowerment as key to achieving food security and human development, and a UNDP-ILO-UN Women report on the social protection floor and gender equality in Central America.

Turning to our second goal, Fostering Democratic Governance:

Since the beginning of the Strategic Plan cycle in 2008, UNDP’s democratic governance work has focused heavily on promoting women’s participation and empowerment. Our electoral assistance work, for example, has strengthened the capacities of electoral management bodies throughout the world to design
and implement approaches to electoral administration, voter education and voter registration that ensure the participation of women and take into account the different needs of women and men.

For example, UNDP is supporting the Women’s Citizen Initiative in Egypt, under which two million women will obtain national ID cards that will enable them to vote, engage in economic opportunities, seek membership in political parties, access government services and facilitate processing property titles or deeds.

In 2012, UNDP supported gender-responsive electoral assistance in 24 countries. An evaluation of UNDP’s contribution to Strengthening Electoral Systems and Processes, presented to the Executive Board in September 2012,
concluded that UNDP support in this area has led to “increased voter turnout for women and marginalized groups as well as increased the number of elected female officials.”

For example, as part of a larger initiative that addresses economic, social, political and legal empowerment of women in the State of Uttar Pradesh, India, UNDP helps increase women’s political participation, by strengthening their understanding of their constitutional roles, sensitizing them on gender issues and improving awareness of programmes implemented or monitored by the local government. Political awareness campaigns resulted in over 100% increase in voter registration in some pockets, and there was a sharp increase in the number of women elected in local self-governance institutions in three districts, from five to 278. The programme is not only building capacities of elected women leaders but is
also building community confidence in women’s leadership capabilities and transforming the way women’s roles in society are perceived.

Over the past five years, UNDP has also actively supported women’s legal rights, including by strengthening women’s access to and control over land and resources and focusing on family law reform, gender equality in laws and constitutions, and laws affecting women with HIV.

Supporting legislation and capacity-building to address violence against women has also been a critical area of work in every region. More than a third of our Country Offices are actively engaged in multi-sectoral initiatives to combat this form of violence, including by building more gender-sensitive legal and judicial institutions, strengthening the capacities of
police officers, judges and courts to ensure women’s access to justice; and advocating to prevent violence against women.

In Mexico, for example, advocacy by UNDP together with UN Women and other UN agencies, facilitated a decision by President Peña Nieto, in his former capacity as the Governor of the State of Mexico, establishing important means to support victims of gender-based violence and criminalizing femicide.

To further strengthen policy advice in this area, UNDP will launch a range of knowledge products this year, including guidance notes on multi-sectoral programming for gender-based violence and on domestic violence law reform and a policy brief on political violence against women in elections.
Members of the Board, as you well know, supporting sustainable crisis prevention and recovery, Goal 3 of our Strategy, requires involving women, addressing their concerns and paying attention to gender inequalities in all post-crisis processes. Yet development practice in this area has been insufficient. Women continue to disproportionately suffer the effects of crisis and miss out on the benefits of recovery.

This is a critical part of our mandate; UNDP co-leads the UN system in three out of seven priority areas of the Secretary-General’s Report on Women’s Participation in Peace-building namely: economic recovery; inclusive governance; and rule of law and access to justice for women.

In addition to addressing issues of gender-based violence, to which I referred to earlier, UNDP is also working to ensure
that livelihood and employment creation programmes target men and women in a balanced manner. This approach bore results in Haiti, where in 2012 women accounted for 69 percent of the people benefiting from employment generation programmes.

We have also continued to support the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution. In the Asia Pacific region, we have undertaken a range of activities to foster the skills of women leaders and activists in conflict prevention, dispute resolution, reconstruction and peace-building through the N-Peace network which spans across Afghanistan, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor Leste. As part of the effort, N-Peace awards are given to recognize and profile women leaders and peace builders. In October 2012, nine N-Peace laureates were honoured by Philippines President
Benigno S. Aquino III for their contribution to peace and security in their respective countries.

And now, to our work in the area of Goal 4, Managing environment and Energy for sustainable development:

UNDP has worked actively in the past five years to ensure the participation of women and the inclusion of gender issues into global policy debates and national work on environment, energy and climate change. With our partners in the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, UNDP has made great strides in bringing women’s voices and concerns into global climate change policy and to make sure that gender equality principles are firmly entrenched in climate change outcome documents as well as climate finance mechanisms. So we were happy to see
that in COP-18 in Doha, a new decision on gender was adopted to increase women’s participation in UNFCCC negotiations and bodies and provide a space for gender deliberations in the official COP agenda.

This expertise has also helped programme countries integrate gender considerations in their environmental planning work. Cambodia is an example of including gender in the national Climate Change Strategic Plan.

At Rio+20, last June, UNDP and partners organized several events and provided substantive technical input on the gender aspects of sustainable development, including in such areas as food security and health. And we followed it with a high-level event during the General Assembly in September last year, where I was particularly proud to launch our report,
“Powerful Synergies: Gender Equality, Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability,” which includes a collection of evidence-based papers highlighting the links between gender equality and sustainable development across a range of issues and the critical link between environment, poverty and gender.

Looking forward, as you know, we are now in the early days of developing our Strategic Plan. I can assure you that the Gender Team is fully engaged, and we have asked for specific gender equality inputs to the drafting process. In the next few months, UNDP will convene a working group of external experts to aid us in ensuring that gender equality and women’s empowerment are central from the start in the next Strategic Plan. In the second half of this year, we will draft a new Gender Equality Strategy, following the UNDP Strategic Plan.
We are also heavily engaged in ensuring that gender equality is central to the post-2015 development agenda and goals. As you know, UNDP and UN Women are together co-chairing the UNDG MDG task force which is overseeing the national, thematic and global consultation process currently underway on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members of the Board and our partners more broadly for their ongoing support in this process.

Ensuring that these strategies and planning frameworks, and their accompanied reporting tools, adequately mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment will require both investments and vigilance – on your side and ours. The gains we have made over the current reporting cycle must be
expanded upon and we rely on your continued strong support in moving this vital agenda forward.

I would like to thank you, Members of the Board. Your close monitoring of gender equality results, as well as your thoughtful inquiries about our work, have helped improve our delivery to programme countries. We continue to rely on your support and guidance to maintain and sustain the gains made.

The importance – the absolute necessity – of gender equality and the empowerment of women for achieving our international development goals is a given. As we delve into the important work of developing our new Strategic Plan, I would like to assure you that gender equality will remain central to our mission to empower lives and build resilient nations.
I would like to thank Helen Clark, Olav Kjorven and Winnie Byanyima for their leadership on gender equality over the past six years. I’d like to congratulate Winnie, who has just accepted a job at Oxfam International and who will be leaving UNDP. Lastly, I would like to thank all the UNDP staff who continue to be strong champions for gender equality and the Gender Team for a work well done.

I welcome your comments and questions.

Thank you.