UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS First Regular Session of the Executive Board 2013

UNDP Segment: Agenda Item 2 - Gender in UNDP

Joint Statement, delivered by the State of Israel

Mr. President,

Members of the Executive Board,

I am pleased to be delivering this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherland, New Zealand, Switzerland, United Kingdom, the United States, as well as my own country, Israel.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Administrator for her Oral Report of the UNDP gender equality strategy and action plan. I would also like to thank the Associate Administrator for highlighting the main elements of the report and for reporting on UNDP's future plans.

Allow me to also congratulate UNDP for its important efforts in mainstreaming gender equality across its projects and programs, and for its achievements in all four focus areas of the strategic plan. In particular, we are pleased to see gender results in the areas of democratic governance, political participation and in recovery and reconstruction processes. It is also encouraging to see successes in developing national capacities to integrate gender into economic planning and policymaking.

As for the internal processes within the organization, we are pleased to learn that the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, GSIC is a valuable mechanism for mainstreaming gender equality in the organization and we encourage the management to strengthen this important tool and to share its experiences with sister organizations.

We would like to emphasis the importance of implementing the UN-System Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP) as a mechanism to enhance coherence and UN system-wide accountability for gender equality. We would ask UNDP to include in its future reports to the Executive Board the steps UNDP is doing to implement the SWAP.
Mr. President,

The vital importance of achieving gender equality in the context of the UN's development activities has recently been reaffirmed by the General Assembly resolution on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

For this reason and given the strong correlation between gender equality, poverty reduction and sustainable development, we believe that UNDP's gender capacities, and in particular UNDP’s gender team must be well-equipped and well-staffed. This team should be provided with all the necessary resources to advance gender equality and women's empowerment objectives in the next cycle of planning. This is of paramount importance and is one of the key recommendation of the mid-term review on the implementation of UNDP GE strategy, and I cite: “UNDP should increase or at least maintain the level of its total investment in gender mainstreaming across the organization”

Gender equality and women's empowerment must be fully integrated into all components of the next strategic plan. We would be interested to hear more about how UNDP is planning to operationalize gender mainstreaming in the context of this plan. We note the lack of evident progress in drafting the next gender equality strategy of the organization, and we would like to hear more about the way forward as we look to finalize this strategy. We would also like to hear how and when this strategy would fit in the process leading to the next strategic plan.

Gender is also a vital element in the context of the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. We would appreciate learning more about UNDP's involvement in making sure that gender remains a critical component of this agenda, and to learn more about the challenges that UNDP is facing in this regard. We stand ready to give UNDP our full support in its efforts.

Mr. President,

While the background document on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy is useful to understand the broad and multi-year successes of UNDP, it does not provide a full picture of what UNDP has achieved within the last year. The purpose of having a standing item on the Board agenda related to the Gender Equality Strategy is for the Executive Board to hear about progress and challenges that have emerged over the last year. We would therefore encourage UNDP to systematically capture the yearly reporting on gender equality in future reports.

The document demonstrates that in 2012 there has been a further reduction in projects making a significant contribution to gender equality. In fact, comparing data between 2009 and 2012, there has been a constant decline in UNDP projects contributing
principally or significantly to gender equality. We would appreciate explanations as to the reasons for this trend and the efforts to address it.

We remain concerned by the continuous lack of gender parity in the middle and senior management of the organization. This year's data does not indicate any significant improvement from last year. We are particularly troubled by the fact that women comprise only 19% of those at the RR-RC-HC level. While we realize that reaching gender parity at this level requires incentives and commitments by the entire UN system, we continue to encourage UNDP to step up its efforts to achieve progress on gender parity and would appreciate more clarification on how UNDP plans to approach this.

Mr. President,

Later on this week, the Executive Board will have the opportunity to discuss at length two important thematic evaluation reports. Without preempting these discussions, let me offer specific remarks in the context of today's agenda item. Although the report on poverty reduction does not offer fresh insights about the connection between gender equality and poverty reduction, we were happy to see in the document before us that progress has been made in specific areas. We encourage UNDP to further improve gender dimensions and measurement in poverty reduction in all of its future planning, monitoring and evaluations.

As far as UNDP's contribution to conflict-affected countries is concerned, we were pleased to learn that UNDP has made progress in supporting opportunities for women to participate more fully in the emerging political and legal landscape to post-conflict countries. In this context, we encourage UNDP to heighten its efforts to collect gender-disaggregated data and to develop more gender-sensitive assessment tools as indicated in its 2009 Early Recovery Strategy.

Mr. President,

We appreciate the effort made ahead of this Board session in preparing and submitting the document that we have before us. We find the document comprehensive and very useful to our deliberations. However, we strongly believe that the time has come to formalize the discussion on gender. In the future, we would welcome a formal annual gender report to be submitted to the Executive Board to better inform our consultations.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the importance of strengthening the partnership between UNDP and other UN agencies, particularly UN Women, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment especially in the context of preparing the next strategic plan and operationalizing the decisions of the QCPR.

Thank you.