Mr. President,

Members of the Executive Board,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Austria, Germany, New Zealand and the United Kingdom as well as my own country, Israel.

I would like to thank the Administrator for the report on the implementation of the United Nation’s Development Programme’s (UNDP’s) Gender Equality Strategy in 2013 as well as for the presentation of the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017.

We appreciate the effort put into developing the new Gender Equality Strategy through a consultative and transparent process. This important document provides a framework, aligned with UNDP’s Strategic Plan 2014-2017, for reducing gender inequalities, empowering women, and promoting and protecting their rights.

UNDP’s renewed commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment is evident in the inclusion of a separate outcome dedicated to gender in the organization’s strategic plan. The new gender equality strategy before us, is yet another important milestone in the organization’s effort to ensure that gender equality lies at the heart of its development work. The new gender equality Strategy clearly builds on lessons learned from the strategy that has just come to completion, and it shows the organization’s ability to learn from past experience and refine its approach.
Mr. President,

Comprising half the world’s population, women globally still constitute the majority of the people living in extreme poverty. Less than 22% of legislatures are female and HIV infection rates among young women are still twice as high as those among young men. Women still lag behind in paid employment rates, they suffer from social and legal discrimination, and are victims to ongoing sexual and gender-based violence. When we address these inequalities, not only do women and girls benefit, but also their children’s prospects are improved, and the entire economy reaps the gains.

Mr. President,

Let me now offer a few specific comments on the 2014-2017 Gender Equality Strategy.

First, we are very pleased to see that in addition to the targeted gender outcome, the Strategy has clearly and extensively mainstreamed gender considerations throughout UNDP’s activities. There are many forms of inequalities, and the UNDP programmes, activities and operations must address them all. We voice our full support for a wide and systematic gender mainstreaming in all areas of UNDP work.

Second, the plan to increase the number of dedicated gender advisers in larger country offices is commendable. This focused attention should lead to greater impact on the ground. We also support the proposal to rationalize available resources by sharing gender expertise among smaller country offices.

Third, concerning the allocation of financial resources, we are pleased to see that 15 percent of the organization’s resources from Strategic Planning Period 2014-2017 will focus on addressing women’s specific needs and advancing gender equality. Adequate allocation of resources is crucial for effective mainstreaming and achieving results. We would appreciate further clarification on the promise to use additional 15 percent of resources from
UNDP’s funding of “peace-building contexts”. Also, we would welcome more information on the Strategy’s statement that “all global, regional and country programmes will set aside resources for ensuring that gender equality results are met.”

Fourth, as to coordination within the UN System, including sister agencies, such as UNICEF and UNFPA, we are pleased with the emphasis on UNDP system-wide collaboration. UNDP’s cooperation with UN-Women on important initiatives is central in this respect. We would like to see a further expansion on this cooperation in future reports. In this regard, we would be interested in hearing more on the UNDP and UN-Women collaborative effort to prevent duplication of work and effective use of limited resources, including specialized staff.

Fifth, concerning institutional gender parity, we note with concern that the gap between the numbers of men and women employed by UNDP widens as one goes up the management ladder. Only 35% of staff at D1 and D2 levels are female and equally only 39% at Resident Coordinator level. We would like to know what actions the management intends to take in order to make sure that this gap is gradually being closed.

Sixth, we would welcome further information on the process for assessing progress during the Strategy’s four-year cycle, so that programmes can be adjusted mid-cycle, if needed. Attention to gender should not just emphasize women-focused activities. For real impact we need to make rigorous gender analysis in micro-economics to reveal whether impact in societies have been positive and sustainable. Evaluations have reported on positive progress but also pointed out that results are mixed and uneven. Incorporating the lessons learnt from the gender equality evaluation is therefore an important occasion in the process.

Seventh, on reporting. We urge UNDP to align reporting against the UNDP gender equality strategy, 2014-2017 with annual reporting against the strategic plan to ensure more accurate reporting data and avoid duplication of efforts. This entails moving the gender in UNDP agenda item to the
Annual Session of the Executive Board, with the first report to be presented to the executive board in June 2015.

Mr. President,

There is a considerable amount of evidence on the links between gender inequality and sustainable development outcomes, and many of the key actions needed to address gender inequality are well known. We are now in the midst of the process leading to the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP’ effective engagement in this process is important to ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment is fully reflected and integrated in the new development framework. We appreciate the efforts the management has done thus far and would encourage it to continue to be vigilant and proactive in the way ahead of us.

In conclusion, we believe that the Strategy provides a solid framework to guide the organization’s activities to advance gender equality. It has the potential to make UNDP more results-based, focused and effective, and to make a real difference on the ground.

Thank you, Mr. President.