Second Regular Session of the Executive Board of UN-Women, September 2014

Swiss Statement on the Meta-analysis of Evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2013

Mr. President,
Madam Executive Director
Members of the Executive Board,

I would like to thank the Executive Director for her excellent statement providing us with an interesting and informative update of the work of UN-Women. I would also like to thank UN-Women’s Evaluation Office for the presentation of a very well structured and insightful report on the meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2013. We strongly welcome that UN-Women took the initiative to carry out this meta-analysis of corporate and decentralized evaluations, which allows us to gain a relatively broad overview of the results of the work of UN-Women and provides invaluable knowledge and evidence for organizational learning. We also appreciate the occasion to discuss the challenges, the lessons learned, the recommendations and the institutional response of UN-Women at the Executive Board and welcome the intention that meta-analyses of corporate and decentralized evaluations will be carried out on an annual basis.

We recognize that the 23 corporate and decentralized evaluations under review concern projects that were conceived before the creation of UN-Women and were implemented in 2011-2012, which is a period of time when many field offices underwent major changes and a lot of field staff were in the process of being recruited or taking their function. However, despite the fact that the field offices and the organization as a whole was in a process of transition and consolidation, we consider the findings of the meta-analysis as extremely useful for learning. As we all know, we do not only learn from successes, but also from weaknesses and mistakes, sometimes even more from the later. Moreover, the meta-analysis is particularly timely given that we are in the process of the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action as well as in the planning the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. The findings are helpful not only for UN-Women but for all of us for the planning of future actions to accelerate the achievement of women’s empowerment, gender equality and the human rights of women and girls.
We take note with appreciation that the UN-Women programs are aligned with national priorities, are relevant to target groups and have largely been successful in delivering planned outputs due to internal factors such as the dedication and professional capacity of UN-Women staff and the use of participatory, inclusive and empowering processes, in short, human rights approaches as well as the good knowledge of local contexts by many staff. We recognize that factors which challenged effectiveness were largely external, such as constrained levels of funding and the known complex challenges to be able to make real progress in reducing gender inequalities. Lessons are to be learned in relation to insufficient organizational efficiency for UN-Women, but also for government institutions and implementing organizations, such as the problems of a high turnover of staff with a consequent loss of institutional memory, as well as for donors, such as the problems caused by certain contractual requirements.

Important insight that projects that are too short-term, have too limited a scope, such as micro-grants or few project participants, or are too dependent on individual initiative; such insights are useful for all development planners to take into account because they are unlikely to create a long-term change nor will they attain sustainability. The meta-analysis strongly confirms a crucial factor that we have pointed out in the last session, namely the tremendous need for strengthening human resource capacity for gender programming and implementation in different thematic areas at every level and among different actors. We called this the need for strengthening the professionalization of gender expertise, which we would like to emphasize here again because it needs the engagement of all actors. Moreover, in terms of general capacity building, we acknowledge that this is a difficult challenge faced in all development endeavors in order to attain sustainability. In fact, as we have stated before, providing training does not mean that the knowledge transmitted will be applied. Experience shows that coaching people in the application of the knowledge is often essential for an uptake of the learning and a real change in practices.

Overall, the meta-analysis shows that at the global level, UN-Women has achieved a lot of progress, but that a lot of attention still needs to be paid to the country and field level in this period of consolidation. We note the challenges and recommendations in relation to results based planning, strengthening the monitoring system, improving organizational efficiency by simplifying disbursement protocols for civil society organizations and streamlining human resource recruitment, building partnerships including with the private sector, strengthening the knowledge management system and the technical capacity of staff as well as clarifying and strengthening the UN coordination role of UN-Women at the country level. In regards to coordination at the country level, there are particular challenges, namely that UN-Women’s role is constrained in countries without a field office and major efforts need to be made to engage other partners in this role such as the UN Resident Coordinators. The question is also, what is coordination? Is it simply an exchange of information or
does it go beyond toward joint strategic planning and a clarification of the division of labor for the implementation. Moreover, in relation to joint initiatives or programs we have noted in the last session that they can be quite complex and require considerable resources for coordination, which may not always render them to be the most efficient way to achieve results. In regards to enhancing the role of men in supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women, we fully agree, but as stated before, we think it is necessary to demonstrate to men, that changing social norms can also be beneficial to them. This can be a win-win situation for all. In sum, we consider the lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation as very important and useful for the work of UN-Women.

Madam Executive Director
As the Program Director explained, UN-Women is aware of these challenges and has already started to address these issues since its creation and is systematically making improvements. We thank the management for the extensive information provided to explain the measures taken to address these challenges and the indication of the issues that UN-Women is giving priority attention to. A lot of the information from the management confirms what we have already learned from earlier reports to the Executive Board. Thus, we are confident that UN-Women is well aware of the challenges and we strongly welcome the numerous measures that UN-Women has taken and the continuing efforts it is making for further improvement.

In that regard, we would like to use this occasion to inform the Executive Board that Switzerland is working closely with UN-Women to contribute to address a number of these challenges. In that regard, we have concluded a partnership with the evaluation office to strengthen the evaluation function and an additional partnership to strengthen results-based management as well as the follow-up of the implementation of the UN-SWAP. Furthermore, we have been leading long discussions and are about to conclude a partnership to increase the capturing of knowledge and lessons from operations to strengthen the technical capacity development of staff in economic and political empowerment and gender responsive governance as well as to strengthen the collaboration with the World Bank Group. This shall also serve to strengthen the knowledge management system. With this support to strategic actions, in addition to the core contribution, Switzerland intends to contribute to the institutional strengthening of UN-Women in order to accelerate the implementation of the strategic plan. We would to thank UN-Women for its openness to engage in these different intense dialogs and reflections of how to strengthen its efficiency and effectiveness.

Finally, the lessons learned from this meta-analysis of evaluation can also be very useful for the planning the means of implementation and the monitoring and accountability of the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. Let us benefit from it. As the meta-analysis shows, political will, capacity building, monitoring and accountability are central factors to advance the achievement of the empowerment
and rights of women and girls, reduce gender inequalities and bring about positive change for all. Let us engage together to bring about this change.

Thank you.