Second Regular Session of UN Women’s Executive Board

Ms. Lakshmi Puri, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director

Suggested remarks: Presentation of UN-Women’s Youth Strategy

*Check against Delivery*

Let me begin by thanking the Executive Director for her vision that youth are indispensable game changers in creating a Planet 50-50 by 2030 and we have therefore embarked on this process of mainstreaming and highlighting youth in the Gender Equality Project and making sure that gender equality perspectives are mainstreamed into the Youth Agenda and the specific challenges and opportunities for the empowerment of young women prioritized and invested in.

It is also an imperative for us considering that the 600 million young women in developing counties and another 300 million elsewhere constitute the most critical actors in determining the pace and success of gender equality and women's empowerment achievement. If we can't educate, economically empower young women, make them confident and resilient to deter and fight violence and discrimination and defend their human rights including sexual and reproductive health, if we cannot inculcate leadership qualities and give them opportunities for voice and participation, we will go nowhere with the gender equality project or the Youth Project for that matter. Equally unless young men take on responsibility for changing social norms and gender stereotypes and join and drive a solidarity movement for gender equality we will stall or even regress.

Moreover we are at a historic juncture where Beijing plus 20 review and commitments have been made, gender equality is being centred into and prioritized in the most ambitious, comprehensive and transformative and universal 2030 Agenda on Sustainable development, Women Peace and Security Review within a broader Peace and Security review including on countering violent extremism. So it is imperative to integrate the Youth dimension in these processes, outcomes and their implementation.
Empowered young women and young men as partners of gender equality are fundamental to creating a Gender equal world.

The strategy has been developed over the past few months through an inclusive bottom-up process. This started with an in-depth desk review of UN Women’s existing work on youth and gender equality followed by an assessment of annual reports from 2014 and by establishing a task force on youth and gender equality. What we found was a revelation. We were already ‘enyouthing’ our gender equality work in many countries and regions particularly youth bulge ones.

As a first step, the comprehensive desk review evaluated UN-Women’s existing engagement with youth for gender equality and assessed UN-Women’s strategic positioning, both in terms of its normative mandate as well as its institutional capacity to work with young women and men in realizing Planet 50-50 by 2030. Following the desk review, an in-depth analysis of the organization’s work at the national and regional levels was undertaken, which allowed for a deeper understanding of emerging practices on youth engagement for promoting gender equality in the social, political, and economic spheres.

To get a wide array of perspectives from across the world, UN-Women established a Youth Task Group with representation of youth focal points from the country, region and head office levels, which was continuously engaged with through all the stages of the youth strategy development process.

UN-Women gets its mandate on working on youth and gender through CEDAW, the various political declarations in CSW, the Beijing Declaration - Beijing+20, 20th year anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth and through the more recently adopted SDGs. The strategy also responds to various youth statements including the ECOSOC Youth Statement made in 2015 on gender equality.

Coming to the focus of the strategy, I am very pleased to introduce you to the **LEAPs FRAMEWORK**. The framework will lead us to strengthening youth participation in the SDGs with a strong youth participation framework:

**L:** Leadership of women in all spheres strengthened.

**E:** Economic empowerment and skills development of young women.
A: Action on ending violence against young women and girls.

P: Strengthening participation, voice, and partnerships with young women and their organizations.

P: Partnerships with young men as partners of gender equality.

P: Strengthening intergenerational partnerships throughout the life cycle to achieve gender transformative society.

The strategy will be implemented through policy / knowledge work, UN system coordination, programmatic, and intergovernmental normative, strategic partnerships with governments, civil society and private sector and advocacy.

**Key Levers of the strategy include:**

- Data and Knowledge Generation on Youth and Gender Equality
- Norms, Policies, and Standards
- Strengthening Intergovernmental Processes
- Enhance Capacity Development for Youth in Gender Equality
- Strengthen Advocacy with Youth on Gender Equality
- Promote Youth Partnership and Youth-Led Campaigns
- Enhance communication (online and offline) through technology and expertise

UN-Women will work to strengthen youth perspectives in existing programmes through its programming in country and regional offices. It will enhance specific youth and gender equality programmes in countries experiencing a youth upsurge, such as in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia including in the context of our Key Flagship Programming Initiatives.

Further, UN-Women will particularly look at important issues affecting and engaging young people in conflict and post-conflict and humanitarian settings such as gender-based violence, unemployment, denial of their rights and in
such new and emerging issues such as preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism.

We envision a multilateral approach to leveraging partnerships and promoting youth participation: UN Inter-Agency Networks especially on Youth Development, Civil Society Organizations, Youth-led Organizations and Networks, Youth-Focused Organizations, Private Sector, Foundations, Media and Academia

**We call upon Members States to give us feedback and support the implementation of the strategy in all 193 countries.**

The revised draft will be shared with the wider UN audience through the UN Inter-agency Network for Youth Development.

Concerted efforts are being made to incorporate opinions of field experts and garner greater buy-in for UN-Women's Youth and Gender Equality strategy through a series of online and offline consultations with a wide array of partners from the civil society, particularly youth and youth-led organizations, private sector organizations working on youth issues, and public sector institutions.

We hope to formally adopt the strategy by the end of the year, mobilize resources and launch this in early 2016.