Annual Session of the Executive Board UN-Women
June 2014

Statement of Switzerland on the Report of the
Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the Progress made on the
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
Strategic Plan, 2011 – 2013

Mr President
Madam Executive Director

Switzerland would like to thank the Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for her inspiring opening speech and commends UN-Women for the excellent, clear and very rich Report on the Progress made on the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2011-2013. The end of the three-year establishment and first strategic plan phase of UN-Women is an opportune time to take stock. As the report documents, in three years, UN-Women has made impressive progress. The consolidation of the institutional and organizational development, such as the change management and regional architecture are well on track and all along this process the organization has increasingly delivered results despite the difficult resource situation. We congratulate UN-Women for the very important progress made in the normative area as demonstrated by the Agreed Conclusion of the Commission on the Status of Women sessions of 2013 and 2014, the initiation of the Beijing + 20 review and the very substantial inputs into the post-2015 development agenda process, just to mention a few. We also note with appreciation the support to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the work with the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council.
Moreover, Switzerland commends UN-Women for the very significant progress made in UN system-wide coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women. This includes the strong commitment and contribution to the implementation of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution, the significant advances in gender mainstreaming and reporting with the help of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, the contribution to the development of the set of 52 minimum gender indicators, which will advance gender statistics, as well as the increasing efforts to integrate gender equality in regional collaboration and UN common country programming processes. All this work allows UN-Women to have an impact well beyond its organization, despite its limited resources. We welcome UN-Women’s expansion and deepening of partnerships with other UN agencies, the civil society advisory groups, the private sector, including the attainment of pro bono agreements, and the positive results emanating from these partnerships, such as in regards to the expansion of communication and outreach.

In regards to capacity development and national ownership of gender equality and women’s empowerment strategies, we agree that they are absolutely essential to achieving progress and we appreciate that UN-Women recognizes the need to enhance its own capacity. However, while capacity building should be an integral part of all project and program work, the education of girls is an absolute precondition. Given that basic education is not part of the mandate of UN-Women, partnerships with organizations that work in this area are all the more important. In that regard, we would be interested to know more about how UN-Women can have a positive influence on the schooling of girls, the elimination of sexism in curricula and the school environment as well as the elimination of gender inequalities at all levels of schooling. Partnerships with UNICEF, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education, the World
Bank, regional development banks are all ways to pursue. Switzerland would be interested to receive more information of where UN-Women stands in this regard and would like to recall decision 2011/3 on the first Strategic Plan, which stipulated that UN-Women reports during the annual sessions on efforts made in regards to education and training.

Mr. President

In regards to capacity development, I would like to address another issue: the need for the professionalization of gender expertise. One of the major difficulties for gender mainstreaming is the insufficient expertise in relation to gender theory and practice. We appreciate the development of a roster of United Nations gender experts. However, Member States also need to invest more in the development of gender expertise. We note that discussions on gender are often confusing and the expression “gender” is repeatedly used in an imprecise manner, often interchangeably with “women”, which is not correct. This creates misunderstandings and also a disinterest from men that do not necessarily feel concerned or included when we are talking about women. The focus on women can be necessary when it concerns gender inequalities that affect women and girls. However, there is a need for a better understanding of gender, the socio-cultural determination of the roles of men and women, the expectations that societies have towards men and women, the ideas of masculinity and femininity, the gender stereotypes and the constraints that this imposes on men and women. With the reduction or elimination of gender stereotypes, the gender roles can become more flexible, new options open up for men and women and gender relations can change based on a vision of partnership and complementarity with more choice. In sum, there is a need to increase gender expertise for analysis, planning and implementation, but also to make available sufficient professional gender experts for mentoring planners and
implementers. UN-Women can play an important role in this, but also the academic institutions in different Member States need to invest in increasing gender expertise.

Mr. President

Moving on to the results UN-Women achieved in the field. We commend UN-Women for having provided increasing program support in all priority areas to an increasing number of countries. We positively note that UN-Women is on track or surpassed the majority of the performance indicators or made significant progress in most and increased the number of indicators reported on. We also strongly appreciate that UN-Women’s organizational development allows a greater delegation of authority to the field, which facilitates program implementation. We appreciate that the data companion to the report was enriched in several ways, such as with useful output level data. However, given that the performance indicators in the reports are not numbered, it is not very easy to establish the relation with the development results framework. As far as we can discern, there is still some information missing on some indicators and we hope that future reports will remedy these weaknesses or provide explanations when data on some indicators are not available in a particular year.

We appreciate that the report is very rich in providing qualitative information and examples in addition to the quantitative results, as well as information on the number of countries supported and the allocation of financial resources in the different impact areas. We also welcome the presentation of results from the two Trust Funds. We appreciate the engagement in joint programming and joint programs, where opportune and promising in terms of greater efficiency and effectiveness, and reiterate that besides the delivery as one, we are particularly interested in UN-Women also increasing joint
development programming outside of the UN, such as with the World Bank or regional development banks.

Finally, Switzerland appreciates the significant progress in the management for development results as well as the organizational effectiveness and institution-building and the transparency about the remaining weaknesses. We also thank UN-Women for providing all the information on income and expenditure. However, we have to admit that for non-specialists, it is not always evident to understand the relation between the different tables and some information seems repetitive or not entirely clear. It may be easier to provide an annex with more detail for the specialists and less tables, but more explanation in the text.

Mr. President

In conclusion, Switzerland congratulates UN-Women for the impressive results achieved in so many regards. Yet, we are all aware, given the many challenges and with the rotation or recruitment of so many staff members, the consolidation of the institutional and organizational development and the expansion of the operational work on the ground will have to continue for quite a while to reach optimal organizational and operational efficiency and effectiveness. Switzerland is ready to continue to support UN-Women on this path in view of the reduction of gender equalities and the elimination of gender stereotypes for the benefit of disadvantaged women and girls, as well as men and boys and societies as a whole.

Thank you