Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)

27-29 May 2016, Antalya, Turkey

Round-table 3: Human and social development and good governance at all levels

Remarks by Ms. Lakshmi Puri, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women

Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Friends,

I would to thank the Government of Turkey, as the host country, as well as the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for organizing this High-Level Roundtable on "Human and Social Development, and Good Governance at All Levels."

This Roundtable is a unique opportunity to commit to accelerating action towards strengthening the global partnership for development for LDCs using the exponential human, social, economic and political capital and transformative potential of gender equality and women's empowerment in all priority areas of the IPoA in order to ensure its timely, effective and full implementation.

In this line of thought, I have been invited to reflect on progress made on what was committed on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in IPoA in terms of actions by LDCs and their development partners and the UN system and on what can be done to ensure the gender-responsive implementation of the IPoA in the second half of the Decade, in alignment with the ambition of what UN Women calls the 'Gender Equality Compact' of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third Financing for Development Conference, the Political Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women - Beijing+20, CSW60 Agreed Conclusions, the Paris Climate Change Agreement as well as the UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015) on Women, Peace and Security.

The IPoA recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women is central to achieving the overarching objective of eradicating poverty and realizing the internationally agreed development goals, then the MDGs, and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As CSW60
acknowledged, there is a mutually reinforcing link between gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls - especially women's economic empowerment and poverty eradication. Conversely there is a link between gender inequality, discrimination and violence and increased poverty and relapse into it. CSW stressed the need to ensure an adequate standard of living throughout their lifecycle.

Further, Agenda 2030 recognizes that without gender equality and the empowerment of women and the human rights of half of humanity realized, sustainable development will be unattainable. Member States including LDCs and their development partners therefore vowed to systematically integrate gender equality into all aspects of the implementation of 2030 Agenda and at CSW60, they committed to gender-responsive implementation of all the SDGs, data and statistics, indicators, follow up and review and to build accountability. Inclusion of women's civil society organizations including youth-led organizations is called for, which are seen as important allies, beneficiaries and enablers of such gender-responsive implementation of the SDGs. Commitment is made to strengthen and support the capacity, authority and resources of gender equality and the empowerment of women institutions and mechanisms.

The Gender Equality Compact also importantly committed to significantly increased investment to close the gender gap, to gender-responsive budgeting and increased, prioritized domestic and ODA mobilization and allocation of resources, targeted, mainstreamed and transformative actions and investments for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and SDGs for women and girls. All these commitments must be kept and implemented.

Indeed gender equality and the empowerment of women is not only a priority area for action of human and social development in the IPOA but also inextricably linked in a vital enabler - beneficiary relationship with other priority areas, especially productive capacity, agriculture, food security and rural development, trade, commodities, multiple crises and other emerging challenges like climate change and disaster risk reduction, economic shocks, and mobilizing financial resources for development.

Updating that, SDG 5 on achieving (not just promoting) gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and gender sensitive targets in 11 other SDGs including SDG 1 on poverty eradication, SDGs on education, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, economic growth, etc. further commits LDCs and their partners to prioritize the Gender Equality Compact and its implementation in delivering on both the IPoA and 2030 Agenda for LDCs and their people.

SDG 5 zooms in on unequal power relations between women and men and addresses the structural barriers that hold back progress for women and girls, for societies and economies and which are especially relevant to LDCs. The transformative and comprehensive SDG 5 includes targets on ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; ending harmful practices such as early, child and forced marriages, female genital mutilation and trafficking; recognizing unpaid care and domestic work, redistributing and reducing it through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies; women's full and equal participation and leadership in political, economic and public life; and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for women and girls.

The Beijing + 20 review as well as the Midterm Review of IPoA have indicated that progress has been made in some aspects of gender equality and the empowerment of women in LDCs such as primary and secondary education of girls, reduction in maternal mortality, reduction of women's poverty, their enhanced access to productive resources, increased participation of women in formal
employment, entrepreneurship, parliaments (20 percent average) and governance, in some cases. However the progress has been slow, uneven and easily reversed especially due to conflict like in Afghanistan, and humanitarian crisis like those of Ebola in West Africa or the earthquake in Nepal.

Women in LDCs continue to be amongst the poorest and constitute the majority of the poor and suffer from what CSW60 expressed concern about - the continued feminization of poverty. Violence against women is high - nearly 40 percent as compared to global average of 30 percent. The Midterm Review is the opportunity to forge the full implementation of existing commitments towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women, with a greater focus on prevention by addressing its root causes.

The situation of women in LDCs shows a huge imbalance between productive effort by them and economic compensation and empowerment. They bear the highest unpaid care burden due to gendered roles and inadequate infrastructure and services such as water, sanitation and energy, walking miles to fetch water or fuel, foregoing education and income opportunities. The income per capita of women in LDCs is extremely low in spite of the fact that they have, on average, some of the highest labour participation rates in the world (65.7 per cent).

Women in LDCs therefore lack and need a pathway to decent jobs, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, entrepreneurship, access to and ownership and control over productive and natural resources, financial inclusion, literacy, credit and services, land and other forms of property, inheritance, economic and social infrastructure and services and appropriate new technology as committed to in IPoA and the SDGs, to realize their economic empowerment.

They need education, skills development and capacity building support and an enabling environment to exercise their human rights including their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. They need special measures so that they can achieve parity in representation in parliaments, the executive, judiciary, law enforcement and public services. They need changes in social norms to unshackle their energies and talents.

At the national level for LDCs, this means ensuring that gender equality is top priority in decision-making about all key national strategies, laws, policies, measures including special measures and budgets to implement the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda, and that women are at the table to effectively influence decisions. Putting gender equality and the empowerment of women at the heart of an integrated 'all-of-government' and an all of society, inclusive, comprehensive and innovative approach is called for. The Vice President of Ghana referred to a certain retreat of the state that has been happening. LDCs cannot afford that and I want to affirm the importance of the role and responsibility of the State as duty bearer in the realization of the gender equality project.

Tracking progress will require investments to fill data gaps so that we know where countries stand with regards to women's experience of poverty, hunger and land tenure security. We need to secure and track investments by LDC governments and their development partners, by a socially responsible and accountable private sector and by innovative financing mechanisms and how those benefit women.

The UN system is also called upon to contribute and UN Women stands ready to coordinate the support of the UN system to the LDCs to implement the Gender Equality Compact and realize the IPoA objectives and ensure that women including young women and girls are game-changers in building more
resilient, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous countries, economies and societies. I urge you to please read our booklet on our work in and with LDCs. We are ready to step it up!

Women's full and equal participation and leadership in decision-making processes at all levels is an issue of human rights and democratic legitimacy as well as good governance, rule of law and just and peaceful societies. The gender-responsive implementation of the IPoA and other global commitments depends on the holistic approach to non-discriminatory policy and legal frameworks, transformative financing, and contributions and accountability of all stakeholders.

International trade, investment, aid and technology policies need to take meaningful affirmative actions to address the special situations of LDCs but also within that to support the realization of the Gender Equality Compact.

Twinning of the IPoA with and giving priority to the Gender Equality Compact of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other commitments and means of implementation is the best way to achieve its full, accelerated and effective implementation and realization of its objectives. It is true that the pledge in the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind and reaching the farthest first, applies most of all to the LDCs and their people. Equally, the actions and investments of LDC governments, their development partners and the UN system in this second phase of the IPoA implementation and onto the 2030 deadline for sustainable development for all, will and must ensure that leaving no one behind is most of all about the women and girls in LDCs. This is not only because they are the most left behind but also because they have the greatest potential to leapfrog the development of LDCs and lead them to graduation!

I thank you.