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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern, and further actions and initiatives

Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report examines the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls and concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a global overview of achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls and sets out recommendations for accelerating progress on the Goals, and for giving priority to gender equality and women's rights and empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals.

2. The report draws on the findings of the expert group meeting on "Structural and policy constraints in achieving the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls" organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and held from 21 to 24 October 2013 in Mexico City. The report draws on recent research and analysis and on information and data from United Nations entities and other sources as indicated.

II. Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals

3. The Millennium Declaration followed the outcomes of the summits and world conferences of the 1990s that advanced gender equality and women's rights. In the Declaration, Member States affirmed six fundamental principles essential to international relations, including freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. Governments confirmed their resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The importance of ensuring equal human rights for women and men, combating all forms of violence against women and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women were also set out in the Declaration.

4. Inspired by the 2000 Millennium Declaration, the eight Millennium Development Goals were introduced one year later. The Goals are to: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1); achieve universal primary education (Goal 2); promote gender equality and empower women (Goal 3); reduce child mortality (Goal 4); improve maternal health (Goal 5); combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (Goal 6); ensure environmental sustainability (Goal 7); and develop a global partnership for development (Goal 8). The current monitoring framework has 21 targets and 60 indicators.

III. Progress on the Millennium Development Goals from a gender perspective and remaining challenges

5. This section provides an assessment of the progress towards the Goals for women and girls based on the most recent available data. The assessment is not intended to be an exhaustive review of all targets and indicators, but is limited to areas where reliable gender-related data are available.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day¹

6. Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of people living under \$1.25 a day — the international benchmark for measuring extreme poverty — fell from 47 to 22 per cent, meeting Goal 1, target 1.A. Although every developing region has seen reductions in poverty rates, these changes have mostly been led by East Asia (China), where rates of extreme poverty fell from 60 per cent in 1990 to 12 per cent in 2010. South Asia has also seen rapid reductions in extreme poverty from 51 per cent to 30 per cent. Progress has been slower in sub-Saharan Africa, where the reduction in extreme poverty (from 56 to 48 per cent) was not enough to offset rapid population growth, resulting in an increase in the number of people in extreme poverty of 124 million. Changes have also been significant in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa, but these regions started both with lower poverty rates and lower numbers of people in extreme poverty.

7. While there is cause for satisfaction in meeting the poverty target, these results should be interpreted carefully. Income-based poverty measures, particularly those using the \$1.25-a-day poverty line, are limited. Income-based measures do not take into account important dimensions of well-being such as being educated, well-nourished and healthy. Despite substantial improvements in recent years, the purchasing power parity measure, which is used to calculate poverty, has also been criticized for underestimating poverty in developing countries, particularly in a context of recent food price increases. Further, the \$1.25-a-day poverty threshold is a measure of absolute deprivation rather than the fulfilment of the right to an adequate standard of living and other economic and social rights. Multidimensional measures of poverty have evolved to capture the multifaceted nature of poverty and well-being.

8. The Millennium Development Goals poverty measure presents numerous challenges to monitoring the achievement of gender equality. Income poverty measures are generally based on household survey data where aggregate household-based income or consumption data are used to calculate per capita income. Such measures are often calculated assuming that household resources are distributed equitably among household members. These measures do not indicate anything about the gender dimensions of poverty, including the unequal sharing of household resources between women/girls and men/boys. Nor do they capture inequalities in time use, which result in longer working hours for women, or women's lack of voice or control in respect of household income.

9. Current poverty measures also do not adequately depict women's vulnerability to poverty. Because of several factors, including discriminatory social norms that restrict their right to paid work, their caring responsibilities, and gender-based disparities in labour markets, women either have lower incomes or are more likely than men to be without an income of their own. These factors contribute significantly to their increased risk of poverty, relative to men, particularly if they are living in households without other adult earners. Where women live with other

¹ Data from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.I.9).

adult earners, usually partners, the combined household income may be sufficient to pull the household above the poverty line. However, the need to pool household resources to escape poverty also makes women financially dependent on their partners and other family members.² This dependency increases their vulnerability to poverty in case of household dissolution, reduces their voice and bargaining power within the household, and can increase their risk of violence.³ Reduced opportunities to participate in the labour market can also mean that women have weaker access to social protection programmes such as pensions compared with men, which increases their risk of poverty in old age. Conflict can also increase women's vulnerability to poverty, particularly as recovery processes often fail to address women's immediate security and livelihood needs.

10. Accelerating progress on Goal 1 for women and girls will require policies that ensure women's social and economic rights, including rights related to employment and decent work, social protection over the life cycle and an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate food, water and housing.

Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people⁴

11. Between 2000 and 2012, women's employment rates⁵ declined from 48.6 per cent to 47.9 per cent compared with 73.8 and 72.7 per cent for men. Despite these changes, in 2012, the employment rates for women were still 24.8 percentage points lower than for men. The Middle East, North Africa and South Asia stand out as regions where women are particularly disadvantaged, with gender gaps of 52.3, 48.2 and 48.0 percentage points respectively.

12. The global financial crisis has contributed significantly to this decline and has had a significant impact on women. Whereas before the crisis (2000-2007) employment rates for women grew modestly by 0.4 percentage points, between 2007 and 2012, they declined by 1.1 percentage points, compared with 0.9 percentage points for men. The changes were not uniform across world regions. Between 2000 and 2012, Latin America and the Caribbean saw significant female employment growth of 6.5 percentage points (42.9 per cent growth in absolute terms), leading to significantly reduced gender gaps. In contrast, in South and East Asia, employment rates for women declined by 2.9 and 3.0 percentage points between 2000 and 2012, respectively, further exacerbating the gender gaps in these regions.

13. Although some indicators for target 1.B are sex-disaggregated, they are not sufficient. Occupational segregation means that women are overrepresented in vulnerable forms of employment and low-paid jobs; they have less access to social protection; and, globally, women are paid on average less than men for work of equal value. The share of women in vulnerable employment⁶ (as a percentage of all

² United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), *Combating Poverty and Inequality: Structural Change, Social Policy and Politics* (Geneva, 2010).

³ J. Rodriguez-Menes and A. Safranoff, "Violence against women in intimate relations: A contrast of five theories", *European Journal of Criminology*, vol. 9, No. 6 (November 2012), pp. 584-602.

⁴ Data from International Labour Organization (ILO), *Global Employment Trends 2013: Recovering from a second jobs dip*. All 2012 figures are preliminary estimates.

⁵ Measured as employment to population ratios.

⁶ Defined as own account and contributing family workers.

female employment) declined from 55.8 per cent in 2000 to 50.4 in 2012, compared with 51.3 and 48.4 per cent for men. Women's employment opportunities are reduced by the disproportionate amount of unpaid care work that they perform. Because this work is not properly recognized as contributing to social and economic development, it is seldom measured or monitored. Accelerating progress on Goal 1 for women and girls will require policies that ensure women's right to work and rights at work as well as policies that recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.

Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger⁷

14. Between 1990-1992 and 2011-2013, the proportion of undernourished people declined from 18.9 per cent to 12 per cent, with an estimated 842 million undernourished people in 2011-2013. The largest declines were in Asia, where an 11 percentage point decrease resulted in nearly 200 million fewer undernourished people. Despite a reduction of 8 percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa, the number of undernourished actually increased by 50 million people. If current trends continue, undernourishment in developing regions will be 13 per cent in 2015, one percentage point above the Millennium Development Goals target. However, this target represents a pared-down version of the 1996 World Food Summit target which was to halve the number (rather than the proportion) of undernourished people. This more ambitious target, which requires developing countries to reduce the number of undernourished people to 498 million by 2015, is likely to be missed by a substantial amount.

15. Target 1.C is also monitored using an indicator related to the prevalence of undernourishment among children under five years of age. Data on the prevalence of undernourishment indicates that in 2012, an estimated 162 million children under five years of age, 80 per cent of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, suffered from moderate or severe stunting, with no difference between boys and girls.

16. The Millennium Development Goals have not captured the gender dimensions of hunger and malnutrition. Anaemia, caused by poor nutrition and deficiencies in iron and other micronutrients, affects 41.8 per cent of all pregnant women in the world. Spikes in food prices and shortages have adverse impacts on the livelihoods and well-being of both urban and rural women, often compounded by intra-household gender inequalities in food and nutrition distribution. Women's access to and control over assets and productive resources are fundamental for achieving food security and sustainable livelihoods. Accelerating progress on target 1.C for women and girls will require policies and indicators to address the interconnections among gender, nutrition and food security.

⁷ Data from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2013: The Multiple Dimensions of Food Security* (Rome, 2013); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed: Progress Report 2013* (New York, 2013).

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling¹

17. There has been significant progress in girls' enrolment in primary education. Developing countries as a whole achieved gender parity in primary education in 2011, from a base of 0.86 in 1990. In South Asia, for example, the gender parity index for gross enrolment increased from 0.74 in 1990 to 0.98 in 2011. In Western Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, progress has been less remarkable but all three regions are close to parity at 0.93, 0.93 and 0.94 respectively.⁸

18. Poverty is the most important factor preventing both girls and boys from attending primary school, but gender and location also play a role: whereas for the poorest quintile, 31 per cent of girls and 28 per cent of boys of primary school age are out of school, for the richest quintile, the corresponding values are 9 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. The gaps are even greater when it comes to secondary school attendance.

19. While this progress on primary education should be celebrated, the heavy focus on attendance in Goal 2 has come at the cost of educational quality and learning outcomes. Data on primary school retention, for example, show that about one quarter of boys and girls who are enrolled do not finish primary school. Further, Goal 2 has not focused on increasing secondary education, which has been shown to contribute more strongly than primary school attendance to the achievement of gender equality and women's rights and several positive social and economic outcomes.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015⁹

(Indicators are ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament)

20. In general, in developing regions, gender parity at all levels of education is close to being reached. Between 1990 and 2011, the gender parity index¹⁰ for gross secondary enrolment increased from 0.76 to 0.96 and from 0.68 to 0.98 for tertiary education. However, a closer analysis of the data reveals some wide disparities across regions and countries. In secondary education, in 2011, regional figures range from a low gender parity index of 0.83 in sub-Saharan Africa to a high of 1.07 in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the tertiary level, the disparities are even greater, with a low of 0.61 in sub-Saharan Africa and a high of 1.27 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Again, the focus on enrolment has come at the cost of educational quality and learning outcomes, which remain a significant concern, along with girls' safety and security in the school environment.

⁸ The accepted range for gender parity is a value between 0.97 and 1.03.

⁹ Data from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.I.9) and calculations by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) based on data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

¹⁰ A value of the gender parity index that is greater than 1 denotes an advantage in favour of girls.

21. Between 1990 and 2011, the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment in developing regions increased by only 5 percentage points, to 40 per cent. The greatest constraints to women's non-agricultural wage employment are found in North Africa and Western and South Asia, where on average less than one in five non-agricultural wage jobs were performed by women in 2011. Even when women are in wage employment, they tend to work on terms that are unequal to those for men, including being overrepresented in low-paid jobs. This indicator should be interpreted with caution, given that agriculture continues to represent a significant share of women's employment in many regions. Policy attention is equally needed to improve the quality of these jobs.

22. Globally, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making. As at October 2013, women represented 21.8 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses and 19.4 per cent of Senate or upper houses, up from 12 per cent and 10.1 per cent in January 1997, respectively. Gender gaps also persist in areas of decision-making not monitored by the Millennium Development Goals. As at January 2012, only 17 per cent of government ministers were women¹¹ and only 8 women served as Head of State; 13 served as Head of Government as at June 2013.¹²

23. While the three indicators under Goal 3 reflect important dimensions of gender inequality, the narrow focus of Goal 3 fails to address such critical issues as violence against women, inequalities in the division of unpaid care work, women's limited access to assets, violations of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights, and their unequal participation in private and public decision-making beyond national parliaments. For countries where data are available, women spend on average roughly twice as much or more time than men on unpaid domestic and care work.¹³ Based on available data, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.¹⁴

24. Unless all dimensions of gender inequality are addressed, the overall Millennium Development Goal of gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be achieved.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Target 4.A: Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate¹⁵

25. Global progress in reducing child mortality has been significant since 1990. According to the latest estimates, the under-five mortality rate declined from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 48 in 2012. There has been progress in all regions but it has been uneven. By 2012, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia

¹¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Politics: 2012*.

¹² Calculated by UN-Women based on updates from the United Nations.

¹³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* (New York, 2010).

¹⁴ World Health Organization (WHO), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* (Geneva, 2013).

¹⁵ Data from UNICEF, *Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed: Progress Report 2013* (New York, 2013); UNICEF, *Boys and Girls in the Life Cycle* (New York, 2011).

accounted for 82 per cent of the total number of under-five deaths globally, up from 67 per cent in 1990. However, based on current trends, the target to reduce under-five mortality by two thirds by 2015 will be missed.

26. Girls have a physiological advantage over boys in terms of child survival owing to various factors, including a lesser vulnerability to perinatal causes, which increase as an overall share of child deaths as living conditions improve. In the majority of countries where data are available, girls enjoy a relative advantage over boys. However, there are important exceptions. South and East Asia and the Pacific have higher female under-five mortality rates, reflecting discriminatory practices related to son preference.

27. The important interconnections between child mortality and gender equality must be addressed to accelerate progress on this Goal. The discriminatory treatment of girls, including infanticide, inadequate nutrition and neglect, must be addressed. Further, factors such as women's access to health-care services, mothers' education, marriage at a later age, mothers' nutrition and access to sanitation and housing are critical for child health.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio¹⁶

Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health

28. Globally, there were an estimated 287,000 maternal deaths in 2010, a decline of 47 per cent from the level in 1990 but well below the target to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015. Based on current trends, this is one of the targets that is likely to be met last. High levels of maternal mortality persist in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which together accounted for 85 per cent of the total number in 2010. However, as maternal mortality ratios are often based on model estimates, they should be interpreted carefully.

29. Maternal deaths, which are largely preventable, are linked to the low status of women and inadequate health-care services in developing countries, including the lack of emergency obstetric care services as well as low skilled attendance at delivery. Globally, in 2011, out of the 135 million live births, 46 million were delivered without the care of a trained health-care professional. This situation is particularly acute in rural areas and among poor populations. In South Asia for example, urban women in the highest wealth quintile (urban rich) are six times as likely to have access to skilled attendance as rural women in the poorest quintile (rural poor).

30. Unsafe abortions also constitute a leading cause of maternal deaths. Globally, in 2008, an estimated 21.6 million unsafe abortions took place, mostly in developing countries, resulting in 47,000 deaths or about 13 per cent of all maternal deaths in

¹⁶ Data from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.I.9); WHO, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund and World Bank, *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2010: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and The World Bank Estimates* (2012); United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Contraceptive Use 2012*, POP/DB/CP/Rev2012 (New York, 2012); UN-Women calculations using data from demographic and health surveys and multiple indicators cluster surveys conducted between 2001 and 2011.

2008. Research from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that it is likely that the numbers of unsafe abortions will continue to increase unless women's access to safe abortion and contraception — and support to empower women (including their freedom to decide whether and when to have a child) — are put in place and further strengthened.¹⁷

31. In addition to these factors, childbearing at a young age, most often stemming from early marriage, constitutes a significant risk for women and their children. In developing countries, in 2010, the adolescent birth rate was 52 out of every 1,000 girls, down from 64 in 1990. Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have the highest rates, at 118 and 80 respectively. The fastest progress was observed in South Asia, where rates declined from 88 in 1990 to 46 in 2010.

32. Globally, in 2013, only 63.7 per cent of women age 15 to 49 who are married or in a union use contraception, an increase of 8.9 percentage points since 1990. Change has been remarkable in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where contraceptive prevalence rates have increased by 18.9 and 15.2 percentage points respectively. However, for these two regions, rates remain relatively low in 2013, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where less than 1 in 3 women aged 15 to 49 use any method of contraception.

33. Between 1990 and 2011, the unmet need for family planning¹⁸ declined overall; however, there are more than 140 million women (married or in union) who would like to delay or avoid pregnancy but are not using contraception. Poverty and location remain key determinants of unmet need, with significant differences between poor rural women and rich urban women. In Latin America and the Caribbean for example, the percentage of poor rural women whose family planning needs are not met is more than twice as high as the rate for rich urban women.

34. A key factor limiting progress on Goal 5 is the lack of attention to the drivers of maternal mortality and poor maternal health. As a consequence, accelerating progress on Goal 5 requires a broader approach that focuses on sexual and reproductive health and rights and women's and girls' right to health. This approach should address the risk factors contributing to maternal mortality, including the inadequate provision of care or lack of sexual and reproductive health-care services; inaccessibility of care owing to other reasons, such as social barriers including women's limited autonomy and freedom of movement, distance and cost; early marriage; and women's constrained reproductive and sexual choices, such as if and when and how many children to have. Conflict also undermines maternal health. The average maternal mortality ratio is 50 per cent greater in conflict-affected contexts, compared with the global average.

¹⁷ WHO, *Unsafe Abortion: global and regional estimates of the incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality in 2008* (Geneva, 2011).

¹⁸ Defined as the percentage of married or in-union women aged 15 to 49 who want to stop or delay childbearing but are not using a method of contraception.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS¹⁹

Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it

35. The number of women living with HIV has been increasing globally since 2001, including in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South and South-East Asia, East Asia and Latin America. Approximately 80 per cent of women living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa, with approximately 9 per cent in South and South-East Asia, 3 per cent in Latin America, and 3 per cent in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. At the end of 2012, women accounted for 52 per cent of all people living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries and up to 57 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. Women also constitute a greater proportion of people living with HIV in the Caribbean and Oceania.

36. Women from specific population groups are disproportionately affected by HIV. Among female sex workers, HIV prevalence in settings with medium to high HIV prevalence is estimated at nearly 30 per cent. A global review of available data found that transgender women are 49 times more likely to be living with HIV than women overall. In sub-Saharan Africa, HIV prevalence among young women is double or greater than among men in the same age group.

37. Structural gender inequalities undermine effective HIV responses. Violence against women and girls is recognized as a driver of HIV yet, at the same time, being diagnosed with HIV has also been found to increase women's vulnerability to violence. Gendered power dynamics in relationships related to age make adolescent girls particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Prevailing concepts of masculinity encourage men's sexual risk-taking and discourage men from seeking health-care and HIV services.²⁰ Women also carry a disproportionate caregiving burden, which undermines their educational and economic opportunities.

38. Accelerating progress on Goal 6 for women and girls will require policies that address the structural drivers of HIV and women's ill health as well as women's and girls' right to health, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation²¹

¹⁹ Data from Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *Global Report: UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic 2013*.

²⁰ Gary Barker and C. Ricardo, "Young men and the construction of masculinity in sub-Saharan Africa: implications for HIV/AIDS, conflict, and violence", Social Development Paper No. 26 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2005), cited in UNAIDS input submission.

²¹ Data from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.I.9); *The Millennium Development Goals Report: Gender Chart 2012* (UN-Women, 2012).

Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

39. The integration of a gender perspective into sustainability policies is not well-monitored. Women and girls are key agents in achieving environmental sustainability. However, the persistence of gender inequalities, the burden of unpaid work, and the dependence of many women in developing countries on natural resources for their livelihoods means that women are often disproportionately affected by climate change and natural disasters. Accelerating progress on target 7.A will require the full and equal participation of women and the systematic gender mainstreaming across environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction policies.

40. The proportion of people with sustainable access to safe drinking water increased from 76 per cent in 1990 to 89 per cent in 2011, giving access to more than 2.1 billion people and meeting the Millennium Development Goal target. There are significant variations across regions, with the lowest proportions observed in Oceania (from 50 per cent in 1990 to 56 per cent in 2011) and sub-Saharan Africa (from 49 to 63 per cent). In the Caucasus and Central Asia, access actually declined from 89 to 86 per cent during this period.

41. Where water sources are not accessible, women and girls bear the burden of collection. A study of 25 sub-Saharan African countries, where a little over half the households live within 15 minutes of the nearest safe water source, indicates that in 71 per cent of the households that did not have water on their premises, women and girls bore the burden of collecting water. However, the indicators for this target are not sex-disaggregated, rendering invisible the specific needs and experiences of women and girls with respect to access to water.

42. Progress in access to basic sanitation has been slow. Between 1990 and 2011, access to sanitation increased from 49 per cent to 64 per cent, well below the 75 per cent target by 2015. In order to meet this target, coverage needs to be extended to an additional 1 billion people (or more than half the number of people who have gained access since 1990). Based on current trends, this target will be missed.

43. Access to sanitation is important for women's and girls' safety, dignity and health. Women and girls need more privacy and time than men when they use toilets, may have small children in their care, need safety to access outside toilets, and may need multiple daily visits during menstruation. The missing gender dimension of this target risks neglecting the specific needs of women and girls in sanitation policies.

44. There are several limitations for the indicators of target 7.C. Despite the water target being met, 768 million people (83 per cent of whom live in rural areas) drew water from unimproved sources in 2011. The lack of focus on equity, distance, quality and affordability considerations for water and sanitation has also undermined progress on this target. Statistics also fail to capture the quantities available for use. The World Health Organization/United Nations Children's Fund Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation proposes better measures, including water quality and affordability, as well as the availability of hand-washing and menstrual hygiene facilities, among others.²²

²² WHO and UNICEF, *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water: 2013 Update* (Geneva, WHO, 2013).

45. Between 2000 and 2010, over 200 million slum dwellers gained access to improved water sources, sanitation facilities, durable housing or sufficient living space, thereby meeting and exceeding the 100 million Millennium Development Goal target. The proportion of slum dwellers in developing regions decreased from 39 per cent in 2000 to 33 per cent in 2012. East Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia achieved the largest decreases in percentage terms. However, the high proportion of slum dwellers in sub-Saharan Africa dropped only slightly, from 65 per cent in 2000 to 62 per cent in 2012. Although the Millennium Development Goal target has been reached, the number of slum dwellers, in absolute terms, continues to grow, owing to the fast pace of urbanization.

46. The Millennium Development Goal target on slum dwellers does not provide information disaggregated by sex. However, women and girl slum dwellers often experience disadvantages owing to the greater concentration of poverty in slum settlements aggravated by overcrowding, insecurity, lack of access to security of tenure, water and sanitation, transport, and sexual and reproductive health-care services. Ensuring that the target on improving the lives of slum dwellers is achieved for women and girls will require specific efforts to realize the rights of women and girls in slums.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Target 8.B: Address the special needs of least developed countries²³

Target 8.F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

47. The lack of gender-related data on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal targets on trade and debt relief limits the analysis for Goal 8. This is cause for concern, as there are significant gender dimensions to these issues. For example, recent years have seen large numbers of women in developing countries employed in assembly manufacturing in Export Processing Zones, areas in which labour and environmental standards may not apply in full or remain unenforced, leaving women vulnerable to poor working conditions.²⁴ Trade agreements, including those governing intellectual property rights, directly impact the cost and availability of pharmaceutical products and, therefore, women's right to health.²⁵

48. Official development assistance (ODA) from developed countries has fallen in two consecutive years since 2010. In 2012, net ODA from developed countries stood at \$125.6 billion, representing 0.29 per cent of donors' combined gross national income. This is a 4 per cent drop in real terms from 2011, which was 2 per cent below the 2010 level.

²³ Data from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.I.9); Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Investing in Women and Girls to Achieve the MDGs and Accelerate Development Beyond 2015: Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Rights* (Paris, 2014, forthcoming).

²⁴ Matthew Amengual and William Milberg, "Economic development and working conditions in export processing zones: A survey of trends", Working paper No. 3 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2008).

²⁵ Radhika Balakrishnan, "Macro Policy and the MDGs", paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on structural and policy constraints in achieving the MDGs for women and girls, Mexico City, 21-24 October 2013.

49. Declining aid is affecting the countries that are most in need; in 2012, bilateral net ODA to least developed countries fell by 13 per cent in real terms, to about \$26 billion. Yet, there are significant challenges for achieving the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls in least developed countries. Despite gender equality being recognized as a priority in the Istanbul Programme of Action, on average, the least developed countries have yet to achieve gender parity in primary education.²⁶

50. The gender equality policy marker of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee was developed to measure the amount of aid focused on gender equality and women's empowerment by identifying activities that have gender equality as a principal or significant objective. Screened 2011 Development Assistance Committee member bilateral sector-allocable aid in support of gender equality (principal and significant) reached a total of around \$22 billion (2011 prices). Between 2002 and 2011, the share of bilateral sector-allocable aid in support of gender equality remained relatively stable, starting at 27 per cent in 2002 and rising to 35 per cent in 2011. However, in 2011, only 5 per cent of total bilateral sector-allocable aid went to programmes making gender equality its principal objective.

51. By the end of 2013, an estimated 39 per cent of the world's population will be using the Internet. However, a gender gap in Internet use is evident. Globally, 37 per cent of all women are online, compared with 41 per cent of all men. The gender gap is more pronounced in developing countries, where 29 per cent of women use the Internet, compared with 33 per cent of men. Women are on average 21 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone. Accelerating progress on Goal 8 for women and girls will require policies to close the gender gap in access to information and communication technologies.

IV. Millennium Development Goals, gender equality and women's rights: emerging lessons for accelerating progress and the post-2015 agenda

52. **Gender equality as a global priority.** As a set of time-bound targets, the Millennium Development Goals have drawn significant attention to global development issues. The prominence of gender equality and women's empowerment as an explicit goal, Goal 3, is a signal that gender equality is a global priority and has opened up a space for dialogue and action among Member States, civil society and international organizations. However, the focus of the Goals was on progress in developing countries, thereby neglecting the universal context to gender equality and the reality that no country has achieved substantive equality for women and girls.

53. **A comprehensive approach to gender equality.** While the Goals capture some important aspects of gender equality, the targets are narrow and misaligned from the full spectrum of women's and girls' rights as set out in such key global

²⁶ Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, *State of the Least Developed Countries 2013: Follow up of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries* (New York, 2013).

norms and agreements as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action. Important dimensions of gender inequality were omitted in the Goals, such as unpaid care work, violence against women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's access to assets, the gender wage gap and women's equal participation at all levels of decision-making. Further, the focus of the Goals on numerical equality fails to distinguish between equality that is achieved by "equalizing down" through the deterioration in the conditions of men and boys and substantive equality that is achieved through positive changes for women and girls.

54. The Goals also neglect the interdependence between women's and girls' enjoyment of rights. The realization of one right, such as the right to participation, can facilitate the realization of others, such as the right to bodily integrity or the right to a decent standard of living. Conversely, the denial of rights in one area, such as the right to decent work, can impact the enjoyment of other rights, such as the right to health. Accelerating progress on the Goals will require a comprehensive strategy that incorporates existing global norms and agreements on gender equality.

55. **Structural drivers of gender inequality.** Discriminatory structures that underpin and perpetuate gender inequality at all levels, including laws, social norms, practices and stereotypes are not addressed in the Goals and impede progress. Social norms and practices such as early and forced marriage or the unequal distribution of unpaid work have significant impacts on the achievement of Millennium Development Goal targets on girls' education, employment and reproductive health. Women's exclusion from decision-making and women's unequal access to productive resources limit progress on Millennium Development Goal targets related to poverty, nutrition, environmental sustainability and women's employment. Tackling the structural drivers of gender inequality must be a key priority in efforts to accelerate progress on the Goals for women and girls.

56. **Multiple inequalities.** By focusing on global and national averages, the Millennium Development Goal targets have masked gaps in achievement for marginalized groups of women and girls who experience multiple inequalities based on age, income, location, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and other factors. Rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men for every Millennium Development Goal indicator for which data are available. Compounding inequalities must be addressed for the Goals to be achieved for the most marginalized groups of women and girls.

57. **Synergies between gender equality and all Goals.** The Goals cannot be achieved without effectively harnessing the synergies between gender equality and all other Goals. While gender equality is fundamental for achieving several Goals, such as child and maternal health, progress on Goals such as improving access to high-quality water and sanitation in a gender-responsive manner contributes to achieving gender equality. Accelerating progress on the Goals will require renewed and systematic efforts to harness the synergies between gender equality and all Goals through comprehensive gender mainstreaming.

58. **The broader context for gender equality.** Progress on the Goals for women and girls has been slowed down owing to the broader context, including the macroeconomic environment, the persistence of conflict and insecurity, and challenges of environmental sustainability. The succession of global crises has

thrown into sharp relief current economic models that have deepened inequalities and increased the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. Countries experiencing conflict and fragility face the most significant challenges in achieving the Goals for women and girls owing to negative impacts on women and girls' access to health-care and welfare services, economic opportunities and political participation, and high levels of violence. Women are disproportionately affected by climate change owing to the dependence of many women in developing countries on natural resources for their livelihoods. Achieving substantive equality for women and girls will require an enabling environment, particularly macroeconomic policies and global governance arrangements that facilitate the realization of women's rights.

59. Connection among Goals, targets and policies. A key challenge for achieving the Goals is the heavy focus on targets and the lack of focus on policies and conditions needed to achieve the Goals. For example, austerity measures in many countries are disconnected from the objectives of the Goals and cuts in public spending are impacting the quality and universal accessibility of services and social protection that are necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goal targets. The privatization of essential services in many countries may also come at the expense of universal access to quality essential services, impeding progress towards several Millennium Development Goal targets. Accelerating progress on the Goals will require greater coherence between the Goals and the policies needed to achieve them.

60. Resources for gender equality. There continues to be a significant underinvestment in gender equality. In 2006, the estimated gap in financing for gender equality issues was projected to rise to as high as \$83 billion by 2015.²⁷ Analysis of public expenditure on sectors relevant for achieving the Goals shows that despite an initial period of increasing spending in 2008-2009, this trend has now reversed with spending either stagnating or falling in many developing countries.²⁸ There are a range of options for mobilizing resources domestically, through progressive income taxes, corporate and wealth taxes, and efforts to broaden the tax base and improve tax compliance. Overseas development assistance and global taxes, such as the proposed financial transaction tax, can provide additional sources of revenue and ease financial constraints for lower-income countries.²⁹

61. While the share of ODA focused on gender equality has remained relatively stable, there remains a considerable underinvestment in combating gender inequality, particularly when aid spending is broken down by sectors.³⁰ Gender equality-focused aid is concentrated in the social sectors of education and health, with alarmingly low levels of aid targeted towards economic sectors. Only 2 per cent of aid to the economic and productive sectors (for example, banking, business, agriculture and transport) targeted gender equality as its principal objective. While overall Development Assistance Committee member aid to population policies and programmes and reproductive health reached \$8 billion in 2011, donor funding to

²⁷ Caren Grown and others, "The Financial Requirements of Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", Working paper No. 467 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2006).

²⁸ Development Finance International and Oxfam International, *Putting Progress at Risk: MDG Spending in Developing Countries* (London, 2013).

²⁹ UNRISD, 2010.

³⁰ OECD, 2014, forthcoming.

family planning remained low at \$650 million. This low level of investment in family planning is a concern, given the poor progress on Goal 5. Accelerating progress on the Goals for women and girls will require an increased commitment to financing for gender equality, with focus on both social and economic sectors.

62. **Investment in gender statistics.** Key to monitoring progress on the Goals for women and girls is the investment in gender statistics. The scarcity of data in several areas, such as women's experiences of poverty, unpaid care work, violence against women, women's participation in decision-making and women's access to assets, limits the assessment of progress. Member States must make greater efforts to prioritize the collection of data for reporting on the minimum set of gender indicators and indicators on violence against women adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission (see [E/CN.3/2013/10](#) and [E/2013/24-E/CN.3/2013/33](#)).

63. **Women's and girls' participation and collective action.** Women's participation at all levels is critical for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and shaping the post-2015 development agenda. In addition to the fulfilment of human rights, their participation in decision-making enables women to influence public policies and spending priorities towards ensuring adequate provision of services, guaranteeing their sexual and reproductive rights, and ensuring gender-responsive management of resources. Women's organizations play an important role in advancing gender equality and women's rights and holding decision-makers to account. The involvement of men and boys is critical for the promotion of gender equality.

64. **Accountability mechanisms.** The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has also been hampered by the absence of strong accountability mechanisms. The implementation of the Goals is a joint undertaking among all development actors; however, there is an absence of clearly designated responsibilities. Achieving the Goals will require all development actors, including Member States and non-State actors such as the private sector, and international trade, investment and finance institutions, to be accountable to human rights standards, both within their borders and extraterritorially.³¹

V. Conclusions and recommendations

65. **While there has been success for women and girls in the case of some Millennium Development Goal targets such as primary education, overall progress on gender equality and women's rights across all the Goals remains slow and uneven. Efforts to accelerate progress for women and girls will require a comprehensive approach to gender equality that realizes the full spectrum of women's and girls' rights. The Goals cannot be achieved without harnessing the synergies between gender equality and all Goals through systematic gender mainstreaming. The 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will provide an opportunity to align the acceleration of the Goals through action on the full range of existing global norms and agreements on gender equality, thereby responding to gender inequality in all parts of the world. Achieving gender equality requires the**

³¹ Maastricht Centre for Human Rights, *Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations of States in the area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (2011).

involvement of women and men and girls and boys and is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

66. Lessons from the Millennium Development Goals should inform the post-2015 development framework and sustainable development goals. Gender equality and women's rights must remain an explicit global priority. The framework must address the structural drivers of gender inequality and harness the synergies between gender equality and all development goals. Multiple inequalities based on gender, age, income, location, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and other factors should be addressed. The new framework should be grounded in international human rights obligations and in accordance with existing policy frameworks, with strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms for all development actors.

67. In accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls and laying the ground for the post-2015 development agenda, the Commission on the Status of Women may wish to urge Governments and other stakeholders to take action as follows:

1. **Enabling environment for gender equality and women's and girls' rights**
 - (a) Continue to strengthen global policy frameworks to promote gender equality and address the structural drivers of gender inequality;
 - (b) Mainstream a gender perspective in discussions on a post-2015 development framework and sustainable development goals and call for gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment to be reflected as a stand-alone goal to be integrated through targets and indicators into all goals of any new development framework;
 - (c) Reform global governance institutions and processes to ensure the coherence of trade, financial and investment agreements with human rights standards and principles and the promotion of gender equality;
 - (d) Ensure that macroeconomic policies are geared towards creating decent employment, mobilizing resources to finance social protection, infrastructure and essential services and reducing inequalities based on dimensions such as gender, age, income, geographical location and other context-specific characteristics;
 - (e) Ensure that global and national policy responses to financial, food and environmental crises and shocks are consistent with human rights standards and principles and promote gender equality;
2. **Investment in gender equality**
 - (f) Increase financial resources to promote gender equality through domestic resource mobilization and increased official development assistance, allocating resources to both economic and social sectors through gender-responsive budgeting;
 - (g) Monitor the impact of all economic decision-making on gender equality, including public sector expenditures, private sector partnerships and investments, and official development assistance, and take corrective action to prevent discriminatory impacts and actively contribute to gender equality;

(h) Provide resources for grass-roots, national and global women's organizations to advance women's rights agendas;

3. Comprehensive approach to gender equality

(i) Accelerate compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls;

(j) Accelerate action to meet the Goals that are least likely to be met, particularly for groups experiencing multiple inequalities, through: a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights; ensuring women's access to decent work and social protection; and ensuring universal access to services and infrastructure, such as health care, education, water and sanitation;

(k) Accelerate progress on all the Goals through targeted measures to address areas omitted from the Millennium Development Goal framework but critical for the achievement of substantive equality for women and girls, including violence against women and girls, gender wage and asset gaps, women's burden of unpaid care work, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and participation in private and public decision-making at all levels;

(l) Adopt specific and targeted measures to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls who experience multiple inequalities on the basis of age, income, location, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and other factors;

(m) Ensure systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective across all global and national frameworks and policies relevant for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals to accelerate progress on all Goals;

(n) Systematically report on the achievement of all the Goals for women and girls at the global, regional, national and subnational levels, using sex-disaggregated data and specific gender indicators;

4. Investment in gender statistics

(o) Take urgent action to ensure systematic and coordinated collection of gender statistics at the national level through financial and technical support for the compilation of the minimum set of gender indicators and the core set of indicators on violence against women through appropriate surveys;

(p) Put in place adequate international standards and methodologies for measuring women's poverty through intra-household and multidimensional measures;

5. Participation and accountability

(q) Ensure the full and effective participation of women and girls in monitoring the Millennium Development Goals and ensure access to information on public policies and budgets to implement the Goals;

(r) Ensure the participation of women's organizations in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies to implement the Goals and in the

formulation of the sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda;

(s) Ensure accountability to human rights standards for non-State actors that have an influence on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.
