

Accompanying Note - 'Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to deliver on Gender Equality'

Our Common Agenda ambitiously commits to placing women and girls at the centre of renewed, inclusive multilateralism. To inform the UN 2.0, and to ensure that the Organization is 'fit for purpose' to lead and support these efforts, the Secretary-General committed to undertake "a review of the United Nations system's capacity – staffing, resources and architecture – to deliver on gender equality as a core priority across all entities."

This independent review was commissioned to an external team, comprised of institutional reform and gender equality experts. Over the course of 9 months this team undertook extensive consultations with over 300+ individuals and reviewed some 200+ reports and evaluations. The result is a comprehensive report which for the first time assesses the efforts of the UN system as a whole to deliver for all, including in particular women and girls. The report was submitted to the Secretary-General for consideration on next steps and is attached for you here for your attention.

The report highlights five key challenges to the realization of transformative change in the United Nations:

- a) A lack of shared understanding and prioritization of gender equality, coupled with a focus on inclusion alone to the detriment of transformation of systems and structures to break cycles of inequality;
- b) Mainstreaming has proven to be an ineffective approach;
- c) Leadership and accountability on gender equality is uneven and inconsistent;
- d) Organizational culture and practices continue to be patriarchal in nature; and
- e) Power dynamics with, and between, Member States on this politicized issue.

It concludes on the need for a 'substantial reconsideration of strategies, resources, structures, and accountability'. To deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, the report calls for a reorientation of the Organization, including:

- a) Building a shared understanding and prioritization on gender equality, in particular in relation to each entity and staff members specific sector;
- b) Every entity planning and paying for collective action that furthers equality through its core work, including putting in place measures to incentivize and cost-share coordination on gender equality as a tool to strengthen the work of the system as a whole;
- c) Ensuring that responsibility, leadership, trust, and accountability to deliver on gender equality sits with every staff member and every leader, informed and backed by gender expertise;
- d) Ensuring that the UN System leadership on gender equality issues is experienced by government, partners and stakeholders as being uniform and consistent, regardless of the entry point, individual, or entity they engage;
- e) The UN System engaging with humility with all members of societies, in order to co-create a life of dignity for all, in particular for the half of the population too often left behind.

As requested, the focus has been on steps that are within the Secretary-General and entities' purview and would not require an intergovernmental process.

These are the recommendations of an independent assessment. This review will now be taken forward within the Organization. Specifically, the Secretary-General has requested a task team from the system, led by a high-level external facilitator, to socialize the recommendations and develop proposals on how to take them forward into Our Common Agenda's UN 2.0. The facilitator will report to the Deputy Secretary-General and three Under Secretaries-General, including UN Women and UNFPA Executive Directors, Under Secretary-General for the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and the Under Secretary-General of Policy in the Executive Office for the Secretary-General. The plan will be informed by discussions of the UNSDG Principals and will inform the Our Common Agenda UN 2.0 policy brief for Member States.

Once the full package has been to Member States, the Secretary-General will further consult the UN System on next steps based on the various inputs from the task team, Member States, and stakeholders.