

**Statement by H.E. Amb. Michael Linhart,
Director-General for Development Cooperation
Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs
Opening of the Vienna Policy Dialogue on 13 December 2012**

Check against delivery

**Mr. Under Secretary-General,
Mr. Vice-President of ECOSOC,
Distinguished participants of the Vienna Policy Dialogue,**

Allow me - first of all - to warmly welcome you to the Vienna Policy Dialogue on behalf of the Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs of Austria, which co-hosts this event with UNDESA und UN-WOMEN.

At a time when we are about to take stock of the status of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and when we discuss how to proceed with the post-2015 agenda, this expert meeting on “Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women: role of development cooperation” will highlight the importance of women’s roles as drivers of development.

The international community has reaffirmed the goal of gender equality and the promotion of women's rights by various instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security amongst others.

However, despite substantial progress, women and girls still constitute the large majority of the world's poorest subsisting on less than one Dollar a day. Women are under-represented in governments and decision-making bodies, have fewer opportunities within the labour and financial markets, and are paid significantly less than their male counterparts.

Six out of ten of the world's poorest people are women who must, as the primary family caretakers and producers of food, shoulder the burden of tilling

land, grinding grain, carrying water and cooking. Yet some 75 percent of the world's women cannot get bank loans because they have unpaid or insecure jobs and are not entitled to property ownership.

Equality between men and women is therefore more than a matter of human rights and social justice – it is a precondition for economic growth and development. For, under-investing in women puts a brake on poverty reduction and limits economic and social development. Gender equality is a longer-term driver of competitiveness and equity that is even more important in an era of increasingly globalized economies. No country can afford to fall behind because it is failing to enable women and men to participate equally in the economy and society.

The Austrian Development Cooperation has therefore decided to make gender equality one of its top cross-cutting issues that is applied throughout its programming and project activities. In practice, this means implementing measures that give girls and women better education and fair access to resources such as land, income or capital, alleviate their excessive workload, prevent violence against and combat trafficking of women and girls, raising women's participation in political decision-making, from the local to the national levels, etc.

A so-called gender assessment is carried out for all proposed projects to ascertain whether they contribute to gender equality. Binding recommendations can be included in the project agreement, where necessary.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Austria has been elected member of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations for the years 2013 and 2014. In light of the importance of the gender for development and the longstanding commitment of the Austrian Development Cooperation, we will make sure that this issue figures prominently on the ECOSOC agenda. We will also use our membership to

ascertain that gender equality and the empowerment of women form an integral part of the debate on the post-2015 framework.

Now that the post-2015 deliberations are starting, we have an opportunity to look back, assess what has worked well and what has fallen short, and put forward a visionary new agenda, based on equality, human rights and sustainability, as pointed out by the UN Task Team in its report “Realizing the Future We Want for All”. Empowering women means to make full use of their potential, including in economic terms, and thus to contribute to the alleviation of poverty worldwide. Therefore, the advancement of women and women’s rights must figure prominently in the post-2015 development framework.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude my remarks by underlining once more that we are very pleased to have the opportunity to co-host this important event. I am confident that the results of the Vienna Policy Dialogue will form an important input into the deliberations of the next Development Cooperation Forum in 2014 and ultimately the post-2015 agenda.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.