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Review theme: Evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions of CSW 52 on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women"

Panel 3: National experiences in implementing the agreed conclusions of CSW 52

Statement

by

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Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take great pleasure and honor in participating in this panel. On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I wish to express my warm greetings to all of you who are here today.

Allow me to take this opportunity to make an overall assessment of our national experiences in implementing the agreed conclusions of CSW 2008. I wish also to comment on aid effectiveness as an approach to help us move ahead and achieve the joint objectives, notably the MDGs.

Introduction

Ever since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals by the international community, it was a recurrent pattern in major UN conferences and policy documents to stress the necessity of increased financing for Gender Equality and a greater role for Women's national machineries.

For Cambodia, it has been an imperative to deploy government's efforts in bringing peace and political stability over the last decades, strengthening the foundations for inclusiveness and respect for rights of women in our society, and improving their economic opportunities. After the harsh impacts of the civil war, it was only logical that a supportive environment has been created where national women's machineries have been established and have been given the chance and the resources to advocate and bring gender equality issues to the heart of the agenda of major development strategies.

In my presentation today, I will address three points:

- 1- How national machineries and the institutional framework in Cambodia are involved in mainstreaming gender in major development processes including in planning and budgeting,
- 2- The progress, challenges and the way ahead,
- 3- Current state and challenges of international aid mechanisms to adequately reflect in programmes and resource allocation gender equality concerns.

1- Involvement of national machineries and institutional framework for gender equality

In Cambodia, men and women are equal before the law. Under this constitutional guarantee, both men and women shall receive equal treatment in all aspects of society, and discrimination based on gender is legally prohibited. Cambodia has signed a number of conventions and declarations such as the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2010, Cambodia became the 100th State Party to the CEDAW Optional Protocol,

allowing individuals or groups of individuals to submit individual complaints to the Committee. The parliament has also passed a number of laws to specifically protect women, e.g. the domestic violence law and the human trafficking law.

Years of advocacy work by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and its partners among the line ministries and cross-ministerial entities have resulted in positioning gender equality and the empowerment of women as core of Cambodian development goals. Currently, the Rectangular Strategy, Phase II recognizes that **“women are the backbone of the economy and society”**. The National Strategic Development Plan which is the roadmap to implement the Rectangular Strategy of Cambodia also recognizes this and gender considerations are mainstreamed throughout the Plan, securing resources for the realization of gender equality activities. This concerns priorities on girls' education, women's participation in politics and public decision-making, women's economic empowerment, and their legal protection. Gender considerations have also been taken seriously in the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs), which focus on reducing gender inequality in all development sectors and increasing opportunities for women to fully participate and benefit from development. In addition to the CMDG 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment, it was possible to formulate gender related targets set under almost all CMDGs.

The political commitment at highest levels is a salient feature of gender equality processes in Cambodia and which facilitates both: Operational implementation and necessary resources in the daily practice.

Allow me to give an example:

In Cambodia, in the context of a public administration reform, the Prime Minister has launched a major drive in 2008 to address the gender in-balance in the public administration. This top-level drive was closely followed and has resulted in a national target of 38% women in the civil service by 2015 and at least 30% of decision-making positions to be held by women, in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. A supporting quota system for the recruitment of civil servants is in place, where 20% to 50 % of all new recruits should be women. Thanks to extensive promotion by national gender responsive machineries across ministries and the aforementioned affirmative action, the number of female civil servants increased to 34% currently, and at sub-national levels more women were appointed as deputy governors or heads of government departments. In response to the economic crisis, the Government has limited new recruitment, which impacts on the quota system. However, there is a policy that if a public administration post is vacant, the post must be filled by a qualified woman or be suppressed.

Alongside the political commitment, structures and mechanisms equipped with respective human resources and budgets have also been set up to deliver on the promise of gender equality.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the Cambodia National Council for Women are the main drivers for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and monitoring the implementation across the line ministries. The Cambodian National Council for Women was set up to monitor CEDAW implementation and advocate for its enforcement.

Established as a full ministry in 1997, the Ministry of Women's Affairs plays a critical role in advocating for gender equality and in building capacity of sector ministries and institutions to integrate gender in their respective sectors. It acts as a catalyst and advocate to mainstream gender priorities in planning and operational processes and move public institutions, development partners, civil society and the private sector to integrate gender equality into their policies and programmes.

The current five-year Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, **the Neary Rattanak III**, addresses five strategic areas which impact on the status and quality of life of women including their chances out of poverty. The NRIII includes: 1) economic empowerment of women; 2) education of women and girls, attitudes and behaviour change; 3) legal protection of women and girls; 4) health and nutrition of women and girls and HIV and AIDS; 5) women in public decision-making and politics. Additionally, it puts strong emphasis on mainstreaming gender in national policies, reform programmes, priority sectors, and on the implementation of CEDAW.

As said, by the nature of MoWA's mandate, we helped to set up more specific coordination and sectoral gender mainstreaming structures to ensure that gender concerns are put as priorities of programmes at an early stage of planning and are taken into account in the budgeting cycles. One such mechanism is a Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G), chaired by my Ministry and co-facilitated by UNDP and JICA and which includes the Government, donors and civil society representatives. The TWG-G provides a mechanism for bringing together line ministries, NGOs and donor agencies to address gender concerns, share plans, spot needs for action and focus own programmes.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs was able to support all ministries in establishing Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAG) to provide a mechanism to establish sector-specific gender mainstreaming strategies and plans, ensure their monitoring. Thanks to this institutional framework, we are aiming at a wider integration of gender-responsive measures into sector programmes and policies as a routine practice. Currently, 26 Ministries and the Council of Ministers have their own active GMAGs.

Furthermore, 22 out of the 26 Ministries have specific Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) that are driven by their GMAGs across their programmes and policies. Needless to say, that these action plans call for appropriate funds, technical assistance, monitoring and human resources. As of 2011, 36% of the established GMAGs have received national budgets to implement gender activities in their ministries. One of our national targets endorsed in UNDAF is to reach by 2015 a proportion of 60% of the GMAGs supported by national budgets.

The Ministry of Finance and Economy was among the first ministries to establish a GMAG, prepare a GMAP and secure a budget for its implementation. This ministry is in the front line in the Public Financial Management Reform engaged in Cambodia and which is to move governmental sectors from line budgets towards programme based budgets and managing for results. The Government sees the public financial management and its improvement as crucial to the general administrative reform programme on which Cambodia has embarked. The PFM reform agenda emphasizes the strengthening of the government's ability to lead this evolving reform process with coordinated support by

development partners. In this respect, the partnership principle for Cambodia's PFM-RP was signed by the RGC and key donors. UNDP, as one of signatories, is in good partnership with the government and partners to build on joint commitment and support to these principles toward achieving intended PFM-RF platform 3 "improved linkage of the priorities and service targets to budget planning and implementation".

The PFM-RP Stage 2 was launched in 2008. It is one of the key elements of the «Rectangular Strategy» with its long term vision to build an International standard of public financial management system by 2015.

As part of gender mainstreaming efforts, considerable progress has been made in the past few years into the PFM-RP through the joint collaboration between MoWA, MEF and key development partners.

In the Consolidated Action Plan 2 (CAP2) of the PFM-RP, gender consideration was clearly integrated into the Objective 32.1, "Develop policy on integration of the budget. Continue to improve integration of recurrent and capital budgets through such ongoing initiatives such as Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), Budget Strategic Plan (BSP), and Programme Budgeting (PB). Integrate poverty reduction and gender implication statement into the BSP and PB." However, a comprehensive framework for analysing sector programmes in this respect and monitoring how far they are actually taking into account the gender dimensions in their policies and operations is still missing.

Currently, the Ministry of Women's Affairs with support by UNDP is engaging with the ministry of Economy and Finance in a gender responsive budgeting (GRB) process. This includes engendering the guidelines on government's budget strategic and annual plans and gender capacity development of the working groups established to move the Public Financial Management Reform ahead. This year, appropriate tools and expertise will be developed for GRB with technical assistance by UNDP and a pilot ministry (of Labour and Vocational Training) will start a gender responsive budgeting exercise with support from the Ministry of Finance and Economy and my Ministry.

A systematic gender mainstreaming is taking place not only at the central level but at the sub-national as well. One of the major on-going reforms in Cambodia is about Decentralization and Deconcentration. The Strategic Framework for Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D) of 2005 emphasizes that new systems and procedures of the D&D reform must ensure the participation of women and that equal and full participation of women and men in all aspects of sub-national democratic development at the Capital/Provincial/Municipal/District and Commune levels is a prerequisite condition for poverty reduction and achieving the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals. Specific technical assistance is being provided to support the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development in Cambodia to address challenges of Decentralization and Deconcentration reform and improve sub-national governance for poverty reduction, and doing so operate a thorough gender mainstreaming.

Within this context a number of initiatives are underway which include supporting the Commune Committee for Women and Children in Provinces to improve the condition of women and men, girls and boys in pre-school education, sanitation/hygiene, health, in particular maternal health, promotion of women's entrepreneurship, elimination of violence against women and prevention of HIV.

2- Progress and challenges, and the way ahead

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cambodia has been recognized for its achievement in putting a strong base for gender mainstreaming. As you noted, we were able to:

- Provide top-level political leadership to prioritize and advance gender equality,
- anchor gender equality in the governmental agenda at the macro level and create mechanisms for implementation across all levels,
- Innovate in choosing high impact strategies through our work to make major reforms of Cambodia gender responsive through concrete actions: This is the case with the Public Administration Reform, the Public Financial Management Reform and the Decentralization and Deconcentration Reform. Also, we innovated regarding the machineries and institutional framework. Here allow me to underline that Cambodia's choice to move away from the traditional Gender Focal Points system to the GMAGs is unique and is recognized since 2010 as a good practice by UNDG (United Nations Development Group).
- Finally, we were able to achieve clear results. At the same time, we are conscious that a lot more is still to be done.

In education, gender disparity has been eliminated in the primary and lower secondary education. Remarkably, with the focus on training and deploying female teachers, the female ratio at the primary level reached 46% in 2009/2010. However, fewer girls than boys continue on to the higher education. While more girls than boys completed primary school (87.97 percent vs. 84.67 percent), less than half of girls finished grade nine compared to 52.89 percent of boys (1). 2009 Cambodia Socio Economic Survey show that 40% of working age women have received little or no education (compared to 17.4% men).

In the health sector, recent statistics show that maternal mortality rate has decreased from 437 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1997 to 206 in 2011. We are proud of this significant advancement while knowing that every maternal death is an unnecessary death and need to be entirely eradicated. Furthermore, Cambodia received in 2010 the MDGs Award for its national leadership, commitment and progress towards achievement of Goal 6 - Combating HIV, malaria and other diseases. The HIV prevalence declined from an estimated 2 percent among adults in 1998 to 0.8 percent in 2010.

Representation of women has considerably increased with 22% of representatives in the National Assembly being women and 14.6 % of women serving elected commune councillors. However women in top decision-making positions are still few. While there is notable progress at sub national level (24 provincial deputy governors), at national level women represent only 7.7% of ministers and 34% of civil servants. We know that we need to work on deep-rooted gender norms which still prevent women from participating fully in decision making.

Cambodian women are the most economically active in Asia. But we know, women are mostly engaged in the informal sector, making up 82 percent of this group. Our aim is to increase their proportion in the

¹ <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/Includes/Contents/EMISStatistic0708/Kingdom%20of%20Cambodia.pdf>

formal sector where they make currently less than a third. The success of the Cambodian garment sector provided an opportunity for young rural women to enter the wage economy, with 90 percent of employees being women.

In addition to the law on domestic violence, a National Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women was approved last year. However, knowing that women continue to be subject to violence, with 22.5% of married women having experienced violence within their home, and few of them seeking assistance, we are strengthening the preventive efforts and exploring the establishment of integrated services through one-stop service centres for victims of violence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite good progress there are still a number of challenges as I have just outlined. The CMDG 3 and some gender goals within other CMDGs such as numbers of girls in higher education, improving rates of literacy, female share of wage employment are considered under the category "need attention". There is a need to have a more coherent and comprehensive approach to gender equality that can effectively prioritize, plan and allocate more resources to address these challenges. This brings me to the last point of my statement.

3- Aid-effectiveness and aid coordination mechanisms in support of our agenda.

Effective partnering and shared goals are central to realising the objectives of development effectiveness and move the gender equality agenda in Cambodia. In this context, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2011-2015) has identified gender equality as one of the five UNDAF outcomes. Along the lines agreed in Paris, Accra and now Busan, Cambodia is keen on enhancing partnership and dialogue mechanisms towards more aid effectiveness. We recognize that Programme-based Approaches (PBAs) are a promising method for enabling sector or thematic programmes to become better organized by aligning actors and processes around common goals and priorities and to ensure government leadership and donor harmonization. With five UN agencies working with MoWA, (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF and ILO) and with UNDP as a co-facilitator of the TWG-G, the UN, in particular, is a unique partner for Cambodia's efforts to coordinate, manage and act for results and mutual accountability. We embarked on a PBA exercise as of this year thanks to joint partnerships and funds by UNDP and Swedish SIDA. We hope that other UN and bilateral organizations will join at a later stage. Through such an approach, we aim to strengthen our coordination and monitoring capacities and lead our development partners, line ministries and civil society organizations to more efficient partnership arrangements.

Cambodia's international development partners have provided a significant share of the resources required for the rectangular strategy's implementation including for advancing gender equality. However, out of more than one billion USD disbursed by development partners in 2010, merely 7 (seven) millions USD were allocated for gender equality (2). Even if surely gender concerns are being

² [Cf. Cambodia Development Effectiveness Report 2011](#)

addressed as a cross-cutting dimension in other sectors such as health and education, the lack of a joint M & E framework that would allow for systematic measurement of jointly formulated milestones makes it difficult to assess gender responsiveness of major programmes supported by development partners. Obviously, there is still a need to deliver on promises of CSW 2008, increase financing for gender equality goals and support more Cambodia's MDGs' agenda in a harmonized manner. Here, let me emphasize that advancement towards achieving MDG targets on gender equality in Cambodia requires:

- More involvement from our financial institutions and in particular from the MEF. Despite the principles enshrined in our policies to bring gender equality to the forefront of operations, there is still a lack of understanding and adequate tools to truly and systematically mainstream gender equality measures;
- An increase in funding for gender equality and a coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanism able to link activities by development partners among each other and to the programmes of the RGC and align them to the national development goals on gender equality and women's empowerment.

I thank you for your attention.