



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

25 June 2020

Subject: Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women

Excellency,

Sequel to my letter dated 5 June 2020, it is my pleasure to organize an interactive multi-stakeholder hearing in advance of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women on 21 July 2020 in accordance with the General Assembly resolution 73/340 entitled, “Scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women”. Please find enclosed the concept note for the interactive multi-stakeholder hearing scheduled for 21 July 2020, to be held via a virtual platform.

Further enquiries should be directed to the designated focal points, Ms. Béatrice Maillé, Senior Legal Adviser, Office of the President of the General Assembly (beatrice.maille@un.org), and Ms. Orla Murphy, Adviser, Office of the President of the General Assembly (orla.murphy@un.org).

I avail of this opportunity to express my solidarity with Member States who are fighting COVID-19 and extend my sincere condolences for their loss.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tijjani Muhammad-Bande'.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



MULTI-STAKEHOLDER HEARING

Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

21 July 2020

I. Background

In accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 73/340, a high-level meeting (HLM) of the General Assembly will be held in New York, on 23 September 2020, with the overall theme: “Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”.

As part of the preparations for the HLM, the President of the General Assembly, with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), was requested to organize and preside over an interactive multi-stakeholder hearing, to ensure the active participation of -stakeholders in the process.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which had been scheduled for 9 – 20 March 2020, was held in a scaled down and shortened format with the participation of New York-based delegations only.

As the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates pre-existing inequalities, it is more important than ever to accelerate action for the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. We must galvanize multilateral action for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after its adoption, and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Due to the expected continued limitations on holding large in-person meetings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic until the end of July 2020, the President of the General Assembly will convene a virtual multi-stakeholder hearing, on 21 July 2020.

II. Introduction

Twenty-five years after its adoption, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Its 2020 progress review for the first time takes place in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda, including SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, highlighted the centrality of gender equality to progress across all the Goals and targets.

The Decade of Action and Delivery to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, launched by world leaders in 2019, mobilizes stakeholders to tackle both emerging and existing gaps in the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Important gains have been achieved since 1995: for example, more girls are in school than ever before and more countries have reached gender parity in educational enrolment; the global maternal mortality ratio has decreased significantly, and the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel increased over the past decade.

However, in recent years progress has been uneven and even stalled in some areas. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to halt or reverse the gains of decades of collective effort on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, women and girls are disproportionately affected. We must acknowledge and support the critical role that women play in building resilience and recovery efforts in both the rapid response and the long-term.

The gender gap in labour force participation has stagnated over the past 20 years, and the majority of employed women work in the informal economy. Women and girls are disproportionately responsible for unpaid care and domestic work, and women are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. Women still hold only a quarter of seats in single or lower houses of parliament around the world, and reports of attacks on women in political and public life are increasing. Violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres remains pervasive. Despite shrinking civic space, stakeholders all over the world have been inspired by women's movements and energized by youth activists, and are mobilizing to accelerate progress and achieve systemic change.

III. Objective

The objective of the multi-stakeholder hearing is to take stock of the outcomes and recommendations of the 25-year review processes, including the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The multi-stakeholder hearing will provide an opportunity to exchange experiences, lessons learned and good practices among different stakeholders, through inter-active dialogues, to advance the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

IV. Participants

The multi-stakeholder hearing will bring together representatives States Members of the UN of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies that have observer status with the General Assembly, intergovernmental organizations and entities that have observer status with the Assembly. In addition, parliamentarians, representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, invited civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, where they exist, academic institutions and the private sector are also encouraged to participate. It will ensure the full and meaningful participation and voices of women and girls and youth.

V. Format

The multi-stakeholder hearing will be held on a virtual platform, facilitated by the United Nations Conference Services, and live streamed on UN Web TV and social media channels. Information on accessing the virtual platform will be shared with registrants in due course.

The hearing will adhere to the following format:

- Opening statement by the President of the General Assembly
- Moderated dialogue among gender equality leaders
- Three thematic panel discussions
- Closing statement by the President of the General Assembly

The moderated dialogue will set the stage for the subsequent panel discussions and will bring together a small number of gender equality leaders, including from Government and civil society. This will focus on the challenges and opportunities for accelerating action for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Each of the panel discussions will feature between six and eight panellists, including representatives of women's organizations with diverse backgrounds and reflecting geographical balance. A moderator will pose questions to panellists on the theme under consideration which will serve to guide their interventions. In response, panellists will draw upon their experiences in advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Each panel discussion will feature a moderated 'questions and answers' segment. Before concluding, the moderator will highlight key messages emanating from the discussion in a wrap-up.

VI. Themes

These discussions will take place in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, under the theme of "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism". Conversations will also address a gender-responsive path to response and recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of the Decade of Action and Delivery to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

The themes and sub-themes of the interactive panel discussions will be:

1. Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment: drivers for sustainable development

Anchored by Sustainable Development Goal 5, this theme will address the following issues:

- securing the transition from education and training to decent work and economic security and autonomy for women and addressing women's unemployment and over-representation in the informal sector;
- harnessing the potential of science, technology, innovation and digitalization for a gender-equal society;
- financing for gender equality;
- addressing the climate crisis from a gender perspective.

2. Women's and girls' voices, participation and leadership

Under this theme, the following issues will be addressed:

- women and girls as changemakers and role models;
- the role of leadership in realizing women's and girls' rights;
- women's and youth activism and mobilization for gender equality;
- sharing insights and lessons between generations for accelerated progress.

3. Achieving gender equality is everyone's responsibility

Under this theme, the following issues will be addressed:

- multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender equality and women's and girls' rights;
- the role of men and boys in realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

VIII. Outcome

The President of the General Assembly will prepare and circulate a summary of the interactive multi-stakeholder hearing prior to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly.