



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

14 September 2021

Excellency,

I have the honour to share the summary of the third, and final meeting of the Gender Advisory Group held on 23 June 2021, and the final summary on the function of the Gender Advisory Group during the seventy-fifth session.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Volkan Bozkir'.

Volkan BOZKIR

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



## **Summary of the third meeting of the President of the General Assembly Advisory Group on Gender Equality**

**Conference Room 8, United Nations Headquarters**

**23 June 2021, 2:00 – 3:30**

### **In Attendance:**

**OPGA: H.E. Volkan Bozkir, President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Farrukh Khan, Chef de Cabinet of the President of the General Assembly**

**Gender Advisory Group: H.E. Alie Kabba, President, UN Women Executive Board, Ms. Nahla Valji, Senior Adviser of the Secretary General on Gender, Ms. Paddy Torsney, Permanent Observer of the Interparliamentary Union, Ms. Sanda Ojiambo, Executive director of the Global compact, Ms. Dubravka Simonovic, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Ms. Soon-Young Yoon, NGO CSW Principal Investigator**

### **UN Interlocutors:**

**Mr. Christian Salazar Volkmann, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. Khardiata Lo Ep Ndiaye, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), Ms. Mia Seppo, Resident coordinator, Bangladesh and Ms. Zahira Virani, Resident coordinator, Mozambique.**

The third, and final meeting of the Gender Advisory Group was a culmination of the previous discussions which concluded that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be done without an effective policy and implementation framework at the national level and that political will of governments and the effective coordination of the UN system were key elements to promoting gender equality.

Against this backdrop, the meeting centered on determining the nexus between effective coordination and successful outcomes. More specifically, the question as to whether a repositioned UN Development architecture led by an empowered more accountable Resident Coordinators has accelerated the efforts towards gender equality and a sharper focus on their empowerment?

In this light, three Resident Coordinators and one Regional Director representing three regions, Africa, Asia and Latin America, were invited to participate and brief on the United Nations'

support to countries in their gender equality efforts, particularly in addressing violence against women and increasing women's empowerment and political participation.

**Mr. Christian Salazar Volkmann**, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) briefed on the UN engagement in the Latin American region highlighting success factors which have contributed to favorable outcomes on the implementation of their gender equality initiatives, complemented by governments' leadership and political will: the empowered role of the Regional Coordinator office to bring the country team as a whole around the issues; the much stronger function of the Resident Coordinator's implementation of gender policies; good collaboration between the UN Women Representative and the Resident Coordinator resulting in stronger outtakes; the contributory role of joint programming on gender equality - the gender life of the global funds, the joint funds – the SDG funds, the peacebuilding funds and the gender spotlight funds which are at the country level and the engagement of the Regional commission (ECLAC) in accelerating the implementation of gender policies and programmes.

**Ms. Khardiata Lo Ep Ndiaye**, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) briefed on the UN's efforts in the transitional period in Sudan, highlighting the strong political will of the Transitional Government to support the Mission and Country Team operating as a fully integrated system model with a unified structure and adequate capacity in a country-wide scope to support the democratic transition, specifically, women's participation in this transition. The UN advocated and secured support for women's participation as observers in the peace talks, and this is the very first time in Sudan's history.

She stressed that Women's contribution to Sudan's transition was crucial to ensuring long term peace, stability, and development.

**Ms. Zahira Virani**, Resident Coordinator in Angola, in her passionate account of the UN country team's undertaking, highlighted the marked progress and positive improvement with the rise of women's involvement in public and political life, to include, parliament, ministers in the executive branch, management and leadership positions in the civil service and the diplomatic service and workforce. Women's political engagement and peacebuilding participation remained a priority for the UN system in Angola, capitalizing on Angola's ambition to promote UNSC resolution 1325 regionally and continentally to demonstrate peace and stability, and the UN, especially through the RC's office, continues to support it.

As a leader in women's political participation, diplomacy and in the executive government, the office of the Resident Coordinator also saw it as a great opportunity for the UN country team to support Angola to promote the agenda for women, peace, and security across the African continent.

**Ms. Mia Seppo**, Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, highlighted the focus on the issue of unpaid care burden for women and the development of the care economy. The Bangladeshi aid 5-year plan following much dialogue, now includes nine gender-focused indicators with one being on unpaid care-work for the first time, accompanied by a lot of civil society engagement in tackling unpaid care-work.

The UN system's work on migration issues was also highlighted, with reference to the UN Network on migration for its specific engagement on women migrants and some programme activities including cash-for-work schemes.

With a significant part of Bangladeshi economy being characterized by labour migration there was an added challenge of the reintegration of women migrants returning to the country, a phenomenon associated with stigma which is being tackled.

These briefings highlighted that the United Nations cooperation framework not only supported country programmes but also responded to the exacerbating challenges of economic and social magnitude posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many country teams have conducted gender sensitive impact analysis, gender mapping exercises that have shaped many countries national policies around gender equality initiatives and led to most of the UN's social economic response plans with specific activities, particularly on gender-based violence, women political participation and empowerment, women employment, care economy, access to credit and financing. One of the key benchmarks of the UN cooperation framework in countries was identifying social behavior and structure which maintained gender inequality and to make the required change.

The Spotlight initiative has had a strong accelerated impact on addressing gender-based violence in countries where it was being implemented. The Spotlight initiative was considered an investment in terms of gender-based violence prevention. In countries where the Spotlight initiative is not being implemented, strong support to gender policies and joint programming have impacted areas of prevention, access to justice, shelter, reporting hotlines. The 16 Days of Activism campaign has also proven an effective mechanism to accelerate advocacy on ending violence against women in many countries. Civil society's partnership has been critical in implementation.

The UN's efforts at increasing women's political and decision-making was being bolstered through conducting mapping exercises in collaboration with civil society organizations to identify potential female aspirants for training and capacity development. Women in political parties were also being targeted for capacity and professional development.

The briefers also highlighted the challenges of implementation which persisted despite the existence of good laws and policies. Key concerns highlighted by all the briefers were the growing regression of the gender equality initiatives and progress in the field, and the need for a joint initiative of the PGA and the UN system to address the issue. Other recommendations advanced by the UN officials was the need for a global position on funding for gender equality, strengthening political will and an intergenerational effort on addressing sexual and gender-based violence. The importance of an advocacy partnership of the UN and civil society on SGBV was also put forward.

Members of the Gender Advisory Group in their response commended the Resident Coordinators for their elucidate presentations. They expressed their appreciation to the PGA for creating the group which they regarded as one of his seminal achievements. The PGA was lauded on the leadership of the Gender Advisory Group, and it was a wonderful experience to be with the PGA as he elevated so sincerely gender equality and women's empowerment to the General Assembly's agenda.

The PGA commended the Resident Coordinators and the Regional Director for the significant discussions, and for their efforts in leading the UN's initiatives in the field on women's empowerment. He pointed out the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women. He highlighted the need to address systemic challenges in improving gender equality. He particularly welcomed and encouraged the recommendation from the Resident Coordinator for Sudan, on the importance of enhanced gender equality initiatives, including women in the peace talks can positively impact Sudan's transition.

The PGA took the opportunity to extend his sincere gratitude to the Gender Advisory Group for their support and guidance to his work on gender equality and encouraged them to render the same indelible expertise and support to the incoming PGA, in his interest to continue the legacy of the Advisory Group.



## Summary of the Function of the President of the General Assembly Advisory Group on Gender Equality 75<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly

**The Gender Advisory Group** was established in October 2020 at the inception of my incumbency to guide and advice on the PGA's work to mainstream gender equality throughout the General Assembly. The mix of expertise, including government, the UN system, private sector, UN Treaty Body, and the parliamentary sector, brought an infusion of ideas, and a partnership conducive for accelerating and advancing the gender equality agenda.

The Advisory Group comprised of six individuals with an understanding and deep expertise on the United Nations mandate on gender equality and women's empowerment; they included:

1. President of the Bureau of the UN Women Executive Board, H.E. Jukka Salovaara, PR of Finland (November. 2020 – February 2020)  
  
H.E. Alie Kabba, PR of Sierra Leone (February 2021 - present)
2. CEO & Executive Director UN Global Compact - Ms. Sanda Ojiambo
3. Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences - Dr. Dubravka Simonovic
4. Senior Gender Adviser of the of the Secretary-General - Ms. Nahla Valji
5. NGO CSW, Principal Investigator - Dr. Soon Young-Yoon
6. Permanent Observer of the Inter-parliamentary Union – IPU - Hon. Patricia A. Torsney

The group gave advice and guidance on current trends and issues as related to gender equality and women's empowerment. The Gender Advisory Group had three meetings during the session. The themes of the meetings were informed by the challenges plaguing the gender equality agenda, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions focused on addressing violence against women, leadership and decision-making, political representation, economic opportunities, health, education, and digital technology.

Concrete recommendations were made by the Advisory Group in support of the PGA's gender equality agenda. The Gender Advisory Group members relayed the work across thematic meetings and events. They provided gender-focused inputs to the series of high-level meetings and events held during the 75<sup>th</sup> session.

The Gender Advisory group brought together voices from diverse constituents and advocated for gender equality and women's empowerment for a revitalized United Nations. The Gender Advisory Group was a helpful sounding board for the PGA and his team.

In their assessment of the group's function during the 75<sup>th</sup> session the Gender Advisory Group members provided the following recommendations for the group going forward:

- Maintain the structure and function—the size with range of expertise (and access to other experts) a very good mix.
- Add a youth adviser, possibly from the Generation Equality Forum.
- Maintain and appoint a gender lead in the PGA's office.
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- Maintain meetings with the PGA, but also integrate two formal sessions at the beginning and midway through where the external and internal issues of the UN, the key issues can be looked at - how best the group can be leveraged.
- Valuable to engage with or leverage other groups – the group of friends on ending violence against women, group of friends of gender parity, the female PRs group etc.
- Engage beyond the Group's membership such as with the Resident Coordinators and Country Team Representatives. Suggest that the same could be done early in the session to assist in context setting, as well as later, as was done this session.
- Continue engagement with the CSW; the PGA's relationship and stronger presence at the CSW, can help lend support to addressing the current push back in some countries against gender equality.
- Connect the Gender Equality Forum with the Work of the OPGA.

Against my conviction of the value-added contribution of the Gender Advisory Group in complementing the work of the PGA on gender equality, I make the recommendation to maintain the Gender Advisory Group.

