



**President of the
General Assembly**
79th Session



INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S ADVISORY BOARD ON GENDER EQUALITY

3 March 2025

INFORMAL SUMMARY

On 3 March 2025, H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang, the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, convened the first meeting of the Advisory Board on Gender Equality on the theme “Accelerating the achievement of women’s economic rights and empowerment: recommendations and promising practices to address the barriers”.

Introduction by the President of the General Assembly

The President of the General Assembly reiterated the importance of gender equality in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the commitments in the Pact for the Future. He noted that empowering women economically had the added benefit of contributing to the enjoyment of their other rights, stressing this was an area where more collaboration was needed.

The President of the General Assembly stressed the need to enhance multilateral cooperation, increase resources and scale up best practices to advance women’s economic empowerment. At the same time, he emphasized the need to address other barriers such as the gender gap in employment, unpaid care and domestic work, insecure and low wage jobs. He highlighted this year’s anniversaries of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the UN Security Council resolution 1325, as milestones to be leveraged to advocate for their full implementation. In his remarks, the President of the General Assembly noted that governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and others were key in this agenda.

Beyond addressing gender equality as a standalone issue, the President of the General Assembly shared that as part of his International Gender Champion role, he was committed to integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of the General Assembly’s work and across his other priorities.

Key takeaways from the interactive discussion

1. Enhancing women's empowerment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

The members of the Board reiterated the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in ending poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They discussed how closing the gender gaps in employment and entrepreneurship could increase Gross Domestic Product per capita by 20%. Evidence confirms that to achieve development it is necessary to unleash women's economic potential. Mobilizing adequate resources for gender equality including women's economic empowerment is key to advancing the agenda. Approaches such as gender responsive budgeting were shared as some that have been successfully used.

2. Increasing women's representation in leadership and decision-making

The members of the Board emphasized the importance of removing structural barriers that limit women's participation in leadership and decision-making processes. They noted that more women in leadership and decision making, can contribute to a stronger policy focus on women's rights issues in the workplace and economy. More women in leadership can also improve decisions by company boards, corporate governance and brand reputation. Initiatives such as the Women's Empowerment Principles and training to develop entrepreneurial mindsets among women entrepreneurs were some of the examples shared.

3. Addressing unpaid care and domestic work

Members underscored unpaid care and domestic work as one of the key barriers to women's entry into the workforce and their ability to earn higher incomes. They discussed innovative practices like shared leave for mothers and fathers and providing subsidized childcare as ways to address the issue.

4. Addressing social norms and discrimination

Some social norms, cultural practices and customs, may limit women and girls' access to land, capital, education, training and services. Members discussed best practices to counter this. For example, changing social norms and mindsets through educational curricula and counseling to counter traditional narratives about what jobs women and men can do. On engaging men, in addition to raising their awareness and support for women and girls' rights, making them more aware of the benefits to themselves could help shift their mindsets.

5. Countering the backlash against gender equality

Members decried the rollback of women's rights due to the growing gender backlash, under resourcing of gender equality work, conflict and other factors. The use of data as evidence to counter this narrative against gender equality and women and girls' rights was a key approach emphasized. Framing gender equality as a human rights issue was another strategic approach proposed, to counter the backlash.

6. Technology and the advancement of women's economic empowerment

Members stressed the need to harness new technologies including artificial intelligence for the equal benefit of women and girls. They noted that without safeguards like international and domestic laws and policies, technology could worsen existing gender inequalities including fueling technology facilitated violence against women and girls. Ensuring that women and girls can shape how these technologies are designed and deployed; extending training opportunities to women in science, engineering, mathematics and technology and promoting stronger international cooperation to address online safety were some of the solutions discussed.

7. Recommendations:

- Members reiterated the need to involve civil society organizations. They noted their critical role in not only shaping the agenda on women's economic empowerment but also partnering with governments and other actors to implement programmes in communities.
- Members highlighted key processes and upcoming moments which could be used for advocacy to call for collective action and reforms to address the barriers to women's economic empowerment.

Some of these include: the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Fourth Financing for Development Conference in June, the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in July, the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in September, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security in October, and the second World Social Summit for Development in November.

- The six initiatives of the Beijing+30 Action Agenda were shared as entry points to drive change including on women's economic empowerment. Particularly by addressing the digital revolution, poverty, violence against women and girls, women's full and equal decision-making power, peace and security and climate justice with young women and girls' leadership at the centre.
- Members were briefed on the latest developments on the reopening of the UN Child Care Centre one of the legacy initiatives from the previous Board. Committing to the Centre's reopening would provide crucial support for working families, in diplomatic missions and at the UN.

Conclusion

The President of the General Assembly thanked Members of the Board for their active engagement and sharing their insights during the meeting. He expressed his commitment to draw on the insights shared, to nuance his advocacy on women's economic empowerment at key upcoming moments and drive more action and achieve concrete change for all women and girls. The date and venue of the next Advisory Board meeting will be announced in due course.

Annex: List of Participants

1. H.E. Mrs. Marie-Thérèse Abena Ondoa, Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family of Cameroon
2. H.E. Mr. Erik Laursen, Deputy Permanent Representative of Denmark on behalf of H.E. Ms. Christina Markus Lassen, Permanent Representative of Denmark
3. H.E. Mrs. Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador
4. Ms. Kristel Lõuk Deputy Permanent Representative on behalf of H.E. Mr. Rein Tammsaar, Permanent Representative of Estonia
5. H.E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar
6. H.E. Mr. Ernest Rwamucyo, Permanent Representative of Rwanda
7. H.E. Mr. Jonibek Ismoil Hikmat, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan
8. Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director, UN Women
9. Ms. Tonilyn Lim, Programme Head, UN Global Compact on behalf of Ms. Sanda Ojiambo, Executive director, UN Global Compact
10. Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in New York
11. Ms. Hana Brix, Global Director for Gender, World Bank
12. Professor Rangita de Silva de Alwis, University of Pennsylvania Law School and Member of the Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
13. Ms. Analisa Leonor Balares, CEO, Womensphere Global Institute and Humansphere Foundation
14. Ms. Pamela Morgan, Co-chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women
15. Ms. Rina Amiri, Senior Diplomat and Independent Policy Advisor.