

## Women

In 2015, United Nations efforts to advance the status of women worldwide continued to be guided by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth (1995) World Conference on Women, and the outcome of the General Assembly's twenty-third (2000) special session (Beijing+5), which reviewed progress in their implementation.

During the year, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) advocated for gender equality and women's empowerment at all stages leading to the adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, resulting in a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (SDG 5) as well as gender-sensitive targets in 11 other goals. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the launch of the 2030 Agenda, UN-Women organized in September the first-ever meeting of Heads of State and Government on gender equality: the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. A record 167 national reviews were conducted on the occasion of the 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-ninth session, held four ministerial round tables and nine panel discussions, with the aim of giving a strong impetus to the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action. The Commission adopted a political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference, in which Ministers and representatives of Governments pledged to take further concrete action to ensure the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Commission recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, which the Council adopted in June.

The General Assembly adopted resolutions on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference and the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of Beijing+5; women in development; improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas; violence against women migrant workers; sexual violence and armed conflict; and the girl child. In September, the Secretary-General submitted a report on his find-

ings and recommendations from a global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325(2000).

Recognizing that women and girls played a critical role in science and technology communities and that their participation should be strengthened, in December, the General Assembly proclaimed 11 February of each year the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

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### Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference and Beijing+5

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During 2015, the Commission on the Status of Women [YUN 1946–47, p. 529], the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly considered follow-up to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, particularly the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [YUN 1995, p. 1170] and the political declaration and further actions and initiatives to implement both instruments adopted at the twenty-third (2000) special session of the Assembly (Beijing+5) by resolution S/23-2 [YUN 2000, p. 1084]. The Declaration had reaffirmed the commitment of Governments to the goals and objectives of the Fourth World Conference and to the implementation of 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the Platform for Action: women and poverty; education and training of women; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights of women; women and the media; women and the environment; and the girl child. The issue of mainstreaming a gender perspective into UN policies and programmes continued to be addressed.

**Report of Secretary-General.** In response to General Assembly resolution 69/151 [YUN 2014, p. 1264], the Secretary-General, in a July report [A/70/180], reviewed the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly. The report focused on the extent to which gender perspectives were reflected in selected UN intergovernmental processes and provided a quantitative and qualitative assessment of progress achieved and remaining gaps. It demonstrated the expansion of the

work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in support of normative intergovernmental processes.

The analysis concluded that while intergovernmental bodies continued to reflect gender perspectives in their work, progress remained uneven among different bodies. References to gender issues in resolutions often remained brief and were seldom reflected in certain areas of work, namely in resolutions dealing with disarmament and related international security questions, political issues and decolonization, administrative and budgetary matters, and international legal matters.

The Secretary-General recommended, among other measures, that the General Assembly reiterate its call upon all intergovernmental bodies of the UN system to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration and within their mandates.

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 80], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) Committee [A/70/482], adopted **resolution 70/133 (Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly)** without vote [agenda item 29 (b)].

### Critical areas of concern

#### Women and poverty

##### *Women in development*

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/227 [YUN 2013, p. 1092], the Secretary-General submitted an August report [A/70/256] on women in development, which focused on the issues of formulating a gender-responsive macroeconomic framework, ensuring decent work for women, fostering women's entrepreneurship, providing social protection to women and supporting the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work by women. The report reviewed measures taken by Governments and support provided by the UN system to address those issues.

The Secretary-General noted that the slow global economic recovery resulted in jobless growth, which had to be addressed by refocusing macroeconomic objectives on job creation and gender equality. Policy measures, such as skill development, active labour market policies and the adequate provision of social protection, were needed to remove barriers to women's entry into the labour market. Designing policies that promoted gender equality required examining paid and unpaid work, including prioritizing public expenditures that lessened the burden of unpaid care

work, investing in infrastructure and services, and redistributing care work.

The Secretary-General encouraged Member States to incorporate gender in macroeconomic analysis and the design of policy responses, and to expand the goals of macroeconomic policy to promote sustainable development, gender equality and human rights. Furthermore, he encouraged the UN system and other international organizations to incorporate gender perspectives into macroeconomic policy analysis; develop and implement policies and programmes to promote women's access to decent employment opportunities; and to develop and implement policies and programmes to support women's entrepreneurship.

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 22 December [meeting 81], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Second (Economic and Financial) Committee [A/70/476/Add.2], adopted **resolution 70/219 (Women in development)** without vote [agenda item 24 (b)].

##### *Women in science*

In December [A/70/PV.81], during its consideration of the report [A/70/474/Add.2] of the Second Committee on the item of "Science and technology for development", the General Assembly took action on a draft resolution entitled "International Day of Women and Girls in Science", and proclaimed 11 February of each year the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to bring the resolution to the attention of all Member States, the UN system and civil society organizations for appropriate observance.

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 22 December [meeting 81], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Second Committee [A/70/474/Add.2], adopted **resolution 70/212 (International Day of Women and Girls in Science)** without vote [agenda item 22 (b)].

##### *Women in rural areas*

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/139 [YUN 2013, p. 1097], the Secretary-General submitted a July report [A/70/204] on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, which reviewed efforts by Member States, UN entities and other actors to empower rural women.

The report noted that rural women and girls continued to face persistent structural constraints that prevented them from fully participating in socioeconomic and political life and contributing to the improvement of their circumstances. They often had limited access to land and other productive resources, and faced more difficulties than men in gaining access to public services, social protection, decent employ-

ment opportunities and local and national markets and institutions. Furthermore, rural women and girls were the most affected by malnutrition and hunger. Regarding progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), rural women scored lowest compared with women in urban areas, and with rural and urban men.

Although Member States and UN entities had taken measures to improve the situation of rural women, the majority still lived in difficult conditions. More robust gender-responsive approaches and greater investment in rural development and rural women were needed in the post-2015 framework. The Secretary-General encouraged Member States to take action on existing commitments to rural development and rural women's empowerment and human rights; integrate gender perspectives into national rural and agricultural development plans and programmes; and ensure rural women's full and equal rights to land and inheritance. He encouraged the UN system and other international organizations to support Member States to design and implement effective, sustainable and gender-responsive rural and agricultural development policies and programmes; recognize, reduce and redistribute women's and girls' unpaid care work in rural areas; and develop and implement policies and programmes to promote women's access to decent work opportunities.

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 80], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/70/482], adopted **resolution 70/132 (Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas)** without vote [agenda item 29 (a)].

### Violence against women

**Report of Special Rapporteur.** On 29 July, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/147 [YUN 2014, p. 1278], the Secretary-General transmitted to the Assembly the report [A/70/209] of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. The Special Rapporteur reviewed the legally binding provisions, implementing mechanisms and relevant jurisprudence regarding violence against women in the African, European and inter-American human rights systems. She highlighted that a legally binding framework on violence against women and girls within the UN system was essential for the regional systems to reinforce universal human rights standards.

By **decision 70/531** of 17 December, the General Assembly took note of the report.

**Trust Fund activities.** In response to General Assembly resolution 50/166 [YUN 1995, p. 1188], the Secretary-General transmitted to the Human Rights

Council and the Commission on the Status of Women a December report [A/HRC/32/3-E/CN.6/2016/8] of UN-Women on the 2015 activities of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. As at December 2015, the Trust Fund supported 111 initiatives involving civil society organizations, governments and United Nations country teams in 76 countries and territories, with grants totalling \$57 million. In 2015, the Trust Fund almost doubled its grant-giving portfolio, to \$14 million.

In 2015, the Trust Fund received 1,715 applications, from 119 countries and territories. The total funding requested was more than \$662 million. The Fund awarded \$12.86 million in new grants to 33 initiatives in 29 countries and territories. In terms of grant value, 28 per cent of the funds allocated went to programmes in Africa; 22 per cent to Asia and the Pacific; 20 per cent to Europe and Central Asia; 12 per cent to Latin America and the Caribbean; 10 per cent to the Arab States and North Africa; and 8 per cent to cross-regional programmes. Grants amounting to some 8 per cent of the total (\$1.1 million) were awarded in the form of small grants, predominantly to smaller women's organizations.

### Violence against women migrant workers

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/137 [YUN 2013, p. 1102], the Secretary-General submitted a July report [A/70/205] on measures taken by 21 Member States and three UN entities, over the two-year period from July 2013 to June 2015, to address violence against migrant workers in the household, the workplace and the public sphere. Member States highlighted a range of measures taken to combat violence and discrimination against women migrant workers, including efforts to adhere to the provisions of international instruments, enhance national legislation, improve policies, collect data, undertake research, put in place preventive and protection measures to assist victims of violence, and establish bilateral and multilateral cooperation. States also provided information on safe migration initiatives and anti-trafficking policies and programmes. The Secretary-General noted that since the 2013 report [YUN 2013, p. 1101], the number of States parties to relevant international instruments had increased, including to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Initiatives of UN entities and the International Organization for Migration in support of national efforts included supporting the increased availability of data on migrant women and children through the establishment of observatories and data-collection processes; collaborating with national authorities to ensure laws and policies addressed protection, assistance and prevention of violence against women migrant workers and trafficked women migrants; and supporting advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts.

The report concluded that States had taken national, regional and global action to tackle violence and discrimination against women migrant workers and responded to the increasingly complex and mixed migration flows. Key gaps, however, persisted in the development of targeted measures to tackle discrimination and violence against them; the availability of systematic collection and dissemination of disaggregated data, including sex-disaggregated data, on violence against migrant workers; research and analysis to inform and evaluate policies and programmes; the provision of information on access to justice to women migrant workers, including on existing challenges and efforts to improve such access; and more systematic reporting on the results and impact of laws and policies.

The Secretary-General recommended, among other measures, that States continue to ratify and implement relevant international instruments, with a special focus on the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and the associated Recommendation (No. 201); ensure that national laws protected women migrant workers, including domestic workers; and seek to address the pull factors for women's irregular migration, including the need to resolve care deficits in labour importing countries. He also called on the UN system and related entities to continue their efforts to strengthen partnerships with all stakeholders that supported women migrant workers.

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 80], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/70/482], adopted **resolution 70/130 (Violence against women migrant workers)** without vote [agenda item 29 (a)].

#### *Crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women*

On 21 July, by **resolution 2015/21** (see p. 000), the Economic and Social Council recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the resolution on taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls.

On 17 December, the General Assembly, in **resolution 70/176** (see p. 000), urged Member States to take measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish acts of violence against women and girls, in particular, gender-related killing, in accordance with national laws, and to act at all levels to end impunity for those responsible for committing the crimes.

#### **Women and armed conflict**

##### *Women, peace and security*

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2122(2013) [YUN 2013, p. 1109], in which the Council

invited the Secretary-General to commission a global study on the implementation of resolution 1325(2000) [YUN 2000, p. 1113], the Secretary-General submitted a September report [S/2015/716] on women and peace and security. The report contained findings and recommendations from the global study, which were informed by regional consultations, country visits, direct inputs from actors, research and data analysis. It also included an update on annual progress towards the implementation of resolution 1325(2000). The report focused on nine broad areas: women's leadership for peace; inclusive and peaceful societies in the aftermath of conflict; protection and promotion of the rights and leadership of women and girls in humanitarian settings; access to justice for women; conflict prevention; peace in an increasingly militarized world; countering violent extremism; the role of key actors in addressing obstacles to implementation; and the role of the Security Council.

The Secretary-General noted that the similarities between findings of the global study and other key UN reports and consultations were striking, as the peace and security context was characterized by violations of human rights and humanitarian law, complex drivers of conflict, involvement of a growing number of non-State armed actors, new technologies and transnational connections were changing the nature of warfare. The challenges underlined the need for a stronger focus on prevention, more holistic and consistent approaches and mechanisms that placed human rights at the core of security, protection, political, humanitarian, peacebuilding and socioeconomic development work. Participants in regional and country consultations on the global study called for an end to increased militarization and for added investment in political solutions to conflict. The strongest message to emerge from the study was the impact of women's participation on all areas of peace and security, whereby new evidence demonstrated that the inclusion of women led to more sustainable peace and enhanced prevention efforts. The Secretary-General observed that the evidence proved that women's meaningful participation increased the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, the credibility and quality of peacekeeping, the pace of economic recovery in post-conflict settings and the sustainability of peace agreements.

The Secretary-General set out five key areas for action by all stakeholders: bringing women's participation and leadership to the core of peace and security efforts, including adopting targeted measures to remove obstacles and incentivize the meaningful participation and decision-making of women in peace and security; protecting the human rights of women and girls during and after conflict, especially in the context of new and emerging threats; ensuring gender-responsive planning and accountability for results; strengthening gender architecture and



technical expertise; and financing the women and peace and security agenda, including adopting specific targets and monitoring progress.

**Security Council consideration.** On 13 October [S/PV.7533], the Council considered the Secretary-General's report (see above) and a concept note submitted by Spain [S/2015/749] on the "High-level review of Security Council resolution 1325(2000): from rhetoric to effective results". Addressing the Council, the Secretary-General noted that one common theme emerged among the three major reviews of UN peace operations, the peacebuilding architecture, and women and peace and security: reforms had to include gender equality and women's leadership as central components and must be grounded in human rights. The UN-Women Executive Director highlighted the key finding of the global study, noting that the meaningful inclusion of women might be the greatest and most underutilized tool for successfully building peace. In presenting the Secretary-General's report, she described several markers of progress, as well as areas of concern and stagnation, including political will, financing, accountability, attitudinal and institutional barriers. She further noted that the global study's findings showed the benefit of investing in preventive action and early warning rather than retaliatory action. She stressed incentivizing Member States to transform their security forces by increasing the number of women in leadership positions; taking strong action against violators; building the status of human rights defenders; and investing to prevent conflict.

#### SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION

On 13 October [meeting 7533], the Security Council unanimously adopted **resolution 2242(2015)**. The draft [S/2015/774] was submitted by 72 Member States.

**Communication.** In a letter [S/2015/832] dated 30 October, the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations submitted to the Security Council a document containing the commitments made by Member States, an observer State and regional organizations during the open debate of the high-level review by the Security Council of the implementation of resolution 1325(2000).

#### *Sexual violence and armed conflict*

In response to Security Council resolution 2106(2013) [YUN 2013, p. 1112], the Secretary-General submitted a March report [S/2015/203] on conflict-related sexual violence, covering the period from January to December 2014. Based on cases documented by UN peacekeeping and political missions and country teams, the report highlighted actions taken and challenges faced by States in 19 conflict and post-conflict situations to protect civilians from sexual violence. The increased presence of Women's

Protection Advisers in the field made a tangible contribution to improving the quality of information and analysis received. The report also provided an update on the efforts of the UN system, including through the work of the inter-agency network United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and on the technical assistance provided by the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and made recommendations on how to enhance efforts to combat that crime.

The report identified emerging concerns regarding sexual violence as it related to international peace and security, including the underreporting of sexual violence during and in the wake of conflict; sexual violence against adolescent girls, including incidents of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage; displaced civilians fleeing their homes and sexual violence perpetrated by State actors or armed groups associated with the State. Across the contexts examined in the report, conflict-related sexual violence took place against a backdrop of structural gender-based discrimination, including in formal and informal systems of law, and the exclusion of women from political life. Efforts to prevent conflict, foster equality and build gender-responsive institutions were central to eradicating the scourge of sexual violence.

The report further discussed the trend of sexual violence employed as a tactic of terror by radical groups. The patterns highlighted in the report demonstrated that sexual violence was linked with the strategic objectives, ideology and funding of extremist groups. The Secretary-General stated that countering extremism and the flow of funds and fighters to extremist groups had to include efforts to empower women and address the spectrum of crimes of sexual violence propagated by extremist groups. Deeper engagement by and consultation with the community was required, including with traditional and religious leaders.

The Secretary-General underscored the need to promote gender equality and women's empowerment to address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, transform harmful social norms and counter the rise of extremism. He urged the Council to recognize that sexual violence could also constitute a tactic of terror and accordingly, align efforts to prevent and address sexual violence with efforts to prevent violent extremism; fully integrate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence into the work of the relevant Council sanctions committees; continue to employ means to influence parties to conflict to comply with international law; give due consideration to the risk factors and warning signs of sexual violence in its monitoring of the security situation in conflict-affected countries; and use its field visits to focus attention on conflict-related sexual violence concerns. He encouraged Member States, donors and regional organizations to, among others, support the delivery of multisectoral assistance for survivors of sexual violence; support the

United Nations to engage in dialogue with State and non-State parties to elicit and comply with commitments to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence; and continue to emphasize the central role of civil society. He further urged Member States to draw upon the expertise of the Team of Experts (see above) and to support the efforts of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and its Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 19 June [meeting 96], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 69/293** [draft: A/69/L.75 & Add.1] (**International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict**) without vote [agenda item 32].

#### Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

##### *Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the UN system*

In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/2 [YUN 2014, p. 1290], the Secretary-General, in an April report [E/2015/58], reviewed progress in implementing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, including of entity-specific remedial action plans, lessons learned and next steps, and in mainstreaming gender equality in common programming processes of the United Nations at the country level through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and other planning frameworks. It also included recommendations for further progress for consideration by the Council.

Reporting by 62 entities, including the Secretariat and its offices and departments, of the United Nations system showed that the Action Plan catalysed progress in gender mainstreaming and the overall proportion of ratings in the meets and exceeds requirements categories increased from 31 per cent in 2012 to 51 per cent in 2014. During the same period, the indicators of gender-responsive auditing, knowledge generation and communication and strategic planning increased by 32 percentage points or more. Of all reporting entities, 59 per cent had met or exceeded the requirements for the gender policy indicator in 2014, an increase from 48 per cent in 2013. Specialized entities continued to outperform other entity types, whereby they had all met or exceeded requirements on six performance indicators in 2014. Of the funds and programmes, 61 per cent met or exceeded requirements categories during the same year. The Action Plan reporting showed steady improvement, with approximately 66 per cent of remedial action plans qualifying as satisfactory or better in 2014, compared with 62 per cent in 2013.

In the area of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, a confluence of intergovernmental pro-

cesses provided opportunities to accelerate implementation and to ensure that gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment were featured prominently in the new development agenda. The Action Plan facilitated more effective engagement with and across entities and revitalized a system-wide network that promoted leadership, coherence and dynamic action. At the country level, UN country teams made progress in mainstreaming gender in common programming processes. Despite progress achieved, more needed to be done to address gaps and challenges, such as resource mobilization, and activity monitoring and data collection methods.

The Secretary-General recommended that the Economic and Social Council call upon the UN system to redouble efforts to implement the Action Plan to ensure full compliance by all UN entities; intensify investments to address critical areas of the Action Plan; and continue to align gender equality programming with national priorities across sectors.

#### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ACTION

On 10 June [meeting 36], the Economic and Social Council adopted **resolution 2015/12** [draft: E/2015/L.11] (**Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system**) without vote [agenda item 12 (d)].

#### Human rights of women

##### *Palestinian women*

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/1 [YUN 2014, p. 562], a report of the Secretary-General [E/CN.6/2015/5] reviewed the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women from October 2013 to September 2014 (see p. 000).

On 10 June, the Council took action on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women in **resolution 2015/13** (see p. 000).

##### *Trafficking in women and girls*

**Report of Special Rapporteur.** Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 26/8 [YUN 2014, p. 874], the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, submitted a March report [A/HRC/29/38 & Add.1–2] to the Council, which contained a thematic analysis of her vision of her mandate. The report examined main trends and challenges of trafficking in persons, namely the link between trafficking in persons and economic trends; trafficking and mixed migration flows; trafficking and conflicts; the protection of children on the move; a gendered perspective of trafficking; and trafficking and social inclusion. It also described the approach and methodology in which she intended to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. It included the conduct of country visits and the production of country

reports, the development of thematic expertise and checklists to shape international standards, the promotion of clarity around trafficking and detailing the substantive content of key trafficking issues.

Pursuant to the same Human Rights Council resolution 26/8, the Secretary-General transmitted to the General Assembly the report [A/70/260] of the Special Rapporteur, which contained an account of her activities since her appointment and with a thematic focus of due diligence and trafficking in persons. The report identified core components of due diligence in six areas: the prevention of trafficking in persons; the obligations to identify, assist and support victims; criminalization, investigation, prosecution and punishment; remedies; inter-State cooperation and institutions; and due diligence of non-State actors, such as business enterprises.

### The girl child

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/146 [YUN 2013, p. 1120], an August report of the Secretary-General [A/70/267] reviewed international obligations and global commitments with respect to the girl child. It addressed progress and challenges in the areas of poverty; equity; education; health; nutrition; HIV and AIDS; protection from violence, abuse and exploitation; child participation; and human rights education. The report emphasized policies and achievements on water, sanitation and hygiene as they related to the girl child.

The report indicated that girls suffered disproportionate harm from poor quality water supply and sanitation facilities. Improving both access and quality was a precondition for expanding girls' right to education, health, security of person, dignity and rest and leisure, in particular for girls living in poverty. Still the precise situation faced by girls was unclear, given that inequalities regarding water, sanitation and hygiene were not commonly assessed on gender but rather on the basis of urban/rural and wealth differentials. Unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices continued to be the leading causes of diarrhoea, pneumonia and undernutrition. Notwithstanding the progress made in hygiene education in some countries, attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices concerning menstruation remained a challenge for adolescent girls. Filling the pronounced data gaps in gender-based inequalities in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector was considered the first step in responding to the needs of women and girls.

Among the achievements in promoting the rights of girls was the adoption by numerous States of laws, policies, action plans and strategies to address violence against girls, including human trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation, female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. The World Health Organization, with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, had mapped laws on child marriage in 37 Asia-Pacific

countries. A major campaign had been launched to promote ratification of the 2014 ILO Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 and the Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation (No. 203), which gave renewed impetus to protection of children subjected to forced labour.

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative [YUN 2000, p. 1081], in partnership with the Global Partnership for Education, the United Nations Children's Fund and national governments, was developing gender-responsive education sector plans through nationally-led workshops in Eritrea, Guinea and Malawi. Other programmes included the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Together for Girls Initiative, the All In initiative, and the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographics Project.

Recommendations for future action made by the Secretary-General to promote the rights of the girl child included: strengthening infrastructure and services to address girls' needs, access and rights; enforcing laws and implementing policies to remove obstacles faced by girls and monitor accountability; addressing gender inequality in education as a matter of urgency; strengthening data collection, indicators and use of evidence; and empowering girls to participate meaningfully in shaping interventions designed to benefit them. In order to enhance and expand those efforts, decisive governmental action and broad support from development agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society was required and active engagement by girls, boys, women and men was equally essential.

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 80], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/70/485], adopted **resolution 70/138 (The girl child)** without vote [agenda item 68 (a)].

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## UN Machinery

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### Convention on elimination of discrimination against women

As at 31 December, 189 States were parties to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 34/180 [YUN 1979, p. 895]. South Sudan acceded on 30 April. In addition, 70 parties had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention, in respect of the meeting time of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was

adopted by State parties in 1995 [YUN 1995, p. 1178]. In 2015, Sri Lanka accepted the amendment, which would enter into force when accepted by a two-thirds majority.

As at 31 December, the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which was adopted by the Assembly in resolution 54/4 [YUN 1999, p. 1100] and entered into force in 2000 [YUN 2000, p. 1123], had 106 State parties. South Sudan ratified the Optional Protocol on 30 April.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/138 [YUN 2013, p. 1127], the Secretary-General submitted a July report [A/70/124] on the status of the Convention, covering the period from 2 July 2013 to 1 July 2015.

By **decision 70/531** of 17 December, the General Assembly took note of the report.

## CEDAW

In 2015, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), established in 1982 [YUN 1982, p. 1149] to monitor compliance with the 1979 Convention, held three regular sessions [A/70/38 & A/71/38].

**Sixtieth session.** At its sixtieth session (Geneva, 16 February–6 March) [A/70/38], CEDAW adopted concluding observations on the reports of Azerbaijan, Denmark, Ecuador, Eritrea, Gabon, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives and Tuvalu. CEDAW also considered a report of the International Labour Organization (ILO) [CEDAW/C/60/2] and a report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [CEDAW/C/60/3]. The Committee elected its chair [A/70/38 (dec.60/I)] and its remaining officers [dec.60/II]; elected the members of the Working Group on Communications [dec.60/III] and of the Working Group on Inquiries [dec.60/IV]; decided to send an open letter to the lead author for the global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325(2000) on women, peace and security [dec.60/V]; decided to adopt the guidance note on the constructive dialogue with the human rights treaty bodies [dec.60/VI]; decided to adopt a framework for concluding observations [dec.60/VII]; decided to mandate its Chair and Bureau to deal with cases of ill-treatment, intimidation, harassment or other reprisals against individuals as a consequence of their communicating or seeking to communicate with the Committee [dec.60/VIII]; decided that certain periodic reports of State parties would be considered under the simplified reporting procedure [dec.60/IX]; and decided to hold a half-day general discussion on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change during its sixty-third session [dec.60/X].

The Committee also confirmed the members of the pre-sessional working group for the sixty-second

session [dec.60/XI]; decided to update its General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women and to establish an open-ended working group for that purpose [dec.60/XII]; expanded the working group on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations [dec.60/XIII], working methods [dec.60/XIV], rural women [dec.60/XV], gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change [dec.60/XVI], and the right to education [dec.60/XVII]; expanded the CEDAW/UN-Women and CEDAW/Inter-Parliamentary Union working groups [dec.60/XVIII & dec.60/XIX]; confirmed the co-focal points on sexual and reproductive health and rights [dec.60/XX]; confirmed the gender and HIV/AIDS focal point [dec.60/XXI]; transformed its CEDAW/Human Rights Committee working group into a working group on cooperation with other treaty bodies [dec.60/XXII]; and transformed its focal points for cooperation with the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations into a working group on cooperation with regional human rights mechanisms [dec.60/XXIII].

On 21 July, by **decision 2015/241**, the Economic and Social Council took note of the Secretariat note [E/2015/67] transmitting the results of the fifty-seventh [YUN 2014, p. 1298], fifty-eighth [ibid., p. 1299] and fifty-ninth [ibid.] sessions of the Committee.

On 17 December, by **decision 70/531**, the General Assembly took note of the report of CEDAW on its sixtieth session.

**Sixty-first session.** At its sixty-first session (Geneva, 6–24 July) [A/71/38], CEDAW considered and prepared conclusions observations on the reports of Bolivia, Croatia, Gambia, Namibia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Spain and Viet Nam. The Committee also considered a note by the secretariat on ways and means of expediting the Committee's work [CEDAW/C/61/2], a report of ILO [CEDAW/C/61/3] and a report of UNESCO [CEDAW/C/61/4]. The Committee adopted general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, by consensus [A/71/38 (dec.61/I)]. It took note of the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals and the elements for the elaboration of and consultations on general comments or recommendations, both of which were endorsed by the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies at their twenty-seventh meeting (see p. 000) [dec.61/II & dec.61/III]. The Committee decided that the growing number of individual communications registered for examination under article 2 of the Optional Protocol and the backlog of cases ready for adoption were a cause of concern and decided to invite the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently explore ways and means to address the situation [dec.61/IV]. CEDAW also decided to request its secretariat to send reminders to all State parties whose reports were more than five years overdue [dec.61/V]; to



send a final reminder to Antigua and Barbuda to submit its combined fourth to seventh periodic reports by 31 January 2016 [dec.61/VI]; to mandate its working group on the Convention and UN-Women to explore ways and means to further develop and monitor indicators for target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals in collaboration with UN-Women, and to rename the working group as the “working group on the Convention, UN-Women and the Sustainable Development Goals” [dec.61/VII]; and to merge its focal point on gender and HIV/AIDS and its focal point on sexual and reproductive rights into one, and to confirm its co-focal points [dec.61/VIII].

**Sixty-second session.** At its sixty-second session (Geneva, 26 October–20 November) [A/71/38], CEDAW considered the reports of and adopted concluding observations on the reports of Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Timor-Leste, the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan. It also considered a report of UNESCO [CEDAW/C/62/2] and adopted a statement on the refugee crises and the protection of women and girls [A/71/38 (dec.62/I)]. It decided to replace the standard paragraph on the MDGs and the post-2015 development framework in its concluding observations with a new standard paragraph on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [dec.62/II], and to amend decisions 50/II [dec.62/III] and 52/VIII [dec.62/VI]. The Committee also decided that the length of concluding observations should not exceed 6,000 words [dec.62/IV] and the length of written information from State parties on follow-up to concluding observations must not exceed 4,000 words [dec.62/V]. It further decided to request the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva to prepare summary records with restricted distribution for the Committee’s closed plenary meetings, where activities under article 8 of the Optional Protocol were being considered [dec.62/VII].

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 80], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/70/482], adopted **resolution 70/131 (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)** without vote [agenda item 29 (a)].

#### Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-ninth session (New York, 9–20 March) [E/2015/27], recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (see p. 000); a draft resolution on the Commission’s future organization and methods of work (see p. 000); and a draft decision on the report of the Commission on its fifty-ninth session and provisional agenda and documenta-

tion for its sixtieth (2016) session. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolutions 2009/15 [YUN 2009, p. 1155] and 2013/18 [YUN 2013, p. 1129], the Commission undertook a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [YUN 1995, p. 1170] and the outcomes of Beijing+5 [YUN 2000, p. 1084], including challenges that affected the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission also examined opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective.

The Commission adopted a political declaration [E/2015/27 (res. 59/1)] on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women [YUN 1995, p. 1168]. Ministers and representatives of Governments reaffirmed the Platform for Action, welcomed progress made and expressed concern that progress had been slow and uneven, noting that no country had fully achieved equality and empowerment for women and girls 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women. They pledged to take further concrete action to ensure the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third (2000) special session of the General Assembly. The Commission held four ministerial round tables and nine interactive panels on cross-cutting topics. The Chairs’ summaries of the round tables and panel discussions constituted an input to the annual theme of the Economic and Social Council for 2015 and were also considered by the Commission.

The Commission also brought to the Council’s attention a decision [dec.59/101] by which it took note of the report of the Executive Director of UN-Women on normative aspects of the work of the Entity [E/CN.6/2015/2]; the report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly [E/CN.6/2015/3]; a note by the Secretariat on the discussion guide for the ministerial round tables to be held under the overall theme “Priorities for future action to realize gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls” [E/CN.6/2015/4]; a note by the Secretary-General transmitting to the Commission and to the Human Rights Council the report of UN-Women on the activities of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women [E/CN.6/2015/6-A/HRC/29/3]; a report of CEDAW on its fifty-fifth, fifty-sixth and fifty-seventh sessions [A/69/38]; a note by the Secretariat transmitting the results of the fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth sessions of CEDAW [E/CN.6/2015/9]; a 2014 letter from the President of the Economic

and Social Council to the Chair of the Commission [E/CN.6/2015/7] [YUN 2014, p. 1300]; and a note by the Secretariat on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council [E/CN.6/2015/8].

By **decision 2015/218** of 10 June, the Economic and Social Council took note of the Commission's report on its fifty-ninth session and approved the provisional agenda and documentation for its sixtieth (2016) session.

**Communication.** In an 8 December letter [E/CN.6/2016/11] to the Commission Chair, the Economic and Social Council President outlined resolutions and decisions adopted at the 2015 session of the Council that had relevance to functional commissions, calling for action by relevant UN bodies.

**Other reports.** Documents issued in 2015, to be addressed during the Commission's 2016 session, included reports of the Secretary-General on women's empowerment and the links to sustainable development [E/CN.6/2016/3]; review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh (2014) session of the Commission [E/CN.6/2016/4]; women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS [E/CN.6/2016/9]; and proposals for priority themes for the Commission's future sessions [E/CN.6/2016/10]. There were also notes by the Secretariat on the results of the sixty-first and sixty-second sessions of CEDAW [E/CN.6/2016/13]; and by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of UN-Women on the activities of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women in 2015 [E/CN.6/2016/8]; as well as a report of the UN-Women Executive Director on normative aspects of the work of the Entity [E/CN.6/2016/2].

### Future organization and working methods

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-ninth session (New York, 9–20 March) [E/2015/27] (see p. 000), recommended to the Economic and Social Council for approval a draft resolution on the future organization and methods of the Commission's work.

#### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ACTION

On 8 June [meeting 32], the Economic and Social Council adopted **resolution 2015/6** [draft: E/2015/27] (**Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women**) without vote [agenda item 19 (a)].

### Communications on the status of women

At a closed meeting on 18 March [E/2015/27], the Commission considered the report of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women [E/CN.6/2015/R.2] and a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the list of confidential communications and replies by Governments concerning the status of

women [E/CN.6/2015/R.1 & Add.1]. The Working Group considered 71 confidential communications received by UN-Women addressed to 48 States, and noted that there were 22 replies from 16 Governments. No confidential communication had been received from other UN bodies or specialized agencies.

The communications most frequently concerned sexual violence against women and girls and other forms of violence; serious and systemic violations of their human rights and the rights of women human rights defenders; abuse of power by law enforcement; inadequate conditions for women in detention and penitentiary system; violations of the right to health; discrimination; ineffective implementation and/or enforcement of laws aimed at promoting and protecting women's human rights; legislation and/or stereotypical practices that discriminated against women in various areas; and failure by States to combat stereotypes concerning women.

During its consideration of communications, the Working Group expressed concern about violence against women and girls, including torture, targeted killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as harassment and detention of women human rights defenders; child and forced marriage, and their adverse effects on the rights of women and girls; violations of the right of women to health; the persistence of gender stereotypes; the continued existence of legislation and/or practices that discriminated against women; discrimination and violence against vulnerable groups of women and girls; the persisting climate of impunity and abuse of power; and the failure by States to exercise due diligence to prevent all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

The Working Group appreciated the cooperation extended by the Governments in submitting replies to communications received, and called upon others to do so in the future. The Working Group was encouraged that some Governments had carried out investigations into allegations, explained their positions or taken measures, including improving enforcement of existing legislation, introducing programmes and services to better protect and assist women, prosecuting and punishing perpetrators of violence, and making efforts to guarantee the human rights of women.

### UN-Women

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), established by General Assembly resolution 64/289 [YUN 2010, p. 1396], became fully operational in 2011 [YUN 2011, p. 1093]. That resolution consolidated and transferred to the Entity the mandates and functions of four former entities—the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement

of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women—engaged in the field of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 2015, its work continued to be guided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [YUN 1979, p. 889], the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [YUN 1995, p. 1170], Security Council resolution 1325(2000) [YUN 2000, p. 1113] on women and peace and security, and the United Nations Millennium Declaration [YUN 2000, p. 49] and the Millennium Development Goals.

To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women [YUN 1995, p. 1169], UN-Women and the Government of China co-organized the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (New York, 27 September), held in conjunction with the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (see p. 000). The meeting brought together more than 70 world leaders to commit to eliminating gaps in gender equality. It aimed to build support and renew political commitment for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and galvanize implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5—Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls—and the gender-specific targets across the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## Executive Board

**First regular session.** At its first regular session (New York, 9 February) [UNW/2015/3], the Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for its first regular session of 2015 and approved the report on its second regular session of 2014 [YUN 2014, p. 1302]. The Executive Board also approved the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2015 (see below) and adopted the draft annual workplan for the year. The Executive Board adopted a decision on the report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of the Entity (see p. 000). The session included briefings on the work of UN-Women with men and boys and the HeForShe campaign; the operational response of UN-Women to the Ebola crisis in West Africa; financing the strategic plan, 2014–2017; and audit.

**Annual session.** At the annual session (New York, 30 June–2 July) [UNW/2015/7], the Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session; approved the report on its first regular session (see above); and approved the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session (see below). The Board adopted three decisions: on the progress report of the

Executive Director of UN-Women on the strategic plan, 2014–2017 (see p. 000); on the report of the Entity's evaluation function, 2014 (see p. 000); and on the report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2014 (see p. 000). The session included a special briefing on the operational response of UN-Women at the country level. The Board also considered a report on the field visit of the Bureau of the Board to Viet Nam in December 2014.

**Second regular session.** At its second regular session (New York, 15–16 September) [UNW/2015/12], the Executive Board adopted the provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session; approved the report on its annual session (see above); approved the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session of 2016; and discussed the draft annual workplan for 2016. The Board adopted two decisions: on the structured dialogue on financing (see p. 000); and on the integrated budget for the biennium 2016–2017, as contained in the compilation of decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2015 (see p. 000). During the session, the following evaluations were presented: the meta-analysis of evaluations managed by the Entity in 2014, the evaluation of the Entity's normative support work and its linkages to operational activities, and the review of corporate gender equality evaluations in the UN system. The session included briefings on the UN-Women youth strategy and the operational response of UN-Women at the country level.

All six decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its 2015 sessions were subsequently compiled in a September document [UNW/2015/11].

**Election of new members.** In a 28 January note [E/2015/9/Add.7] to the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General noted the 17 members of the Executive Board from Member States to be elected by the Council for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2016 in accordance with resolution 2010/35 [YUN 2010, p. 1180].

On 10 April, by **decision 2015/201 C**, the Economic and Social Council elected the 17 Member States: Antigua and Barbuda, Comoros, Croatia, Gabon, Germany, Guyana, Iran, Liberia, Luxembourg, Namibia, Pakistan, Panama, Russian Federation, Samoa, Tunisia, Turkmenistan and United Arab Emirates.

The Council also elected Canada, Denmark, and Spain for a term beginning on 1 January 2016 to replace Portugal, Israel and Italy, respectively, who were resigning from their seats effective 31 December 2015, in accordance with Council resolution 2010/35 of 25 October 2010. The Council further elected Netherlands, Norway and Sweden for a term beginning on 1 January 2016 to replace United States, Denmark and Spain, respectively, who were resigning from

their seats effective 31 December 2015, in accordance with paragraph 61 (a) of General Assembly resolution 64/289 of 2 July 2010.

## Functional areas

### *Operational activities*

UN-Women **strategic plan 2014–2017**. In May, the Executive Director submitted to the Executive Board the first report [UNW/2015/6] on progress made in the implementation of the 2014–2017 strategic plan [YUN 2013, p. 1133], including operational activities in 2014. The report contained information on how UN-Women had responded to the recommendations of Assembly resolution 67/226 [YUN 2012, p. 859] on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system.

Regarding its normative role, UN-Women's expertise, knowledge base and alliances and partnerships facilitated progress of the expansion of the global normative framework of the UN system. The Entity's advocacy efforts and normative support contributed to: the only comprehensive intergovernmental consideration of the situation of women and girls by the Commission on the Status of Women regarding each of the MDGs (see p. 000); the successful negotiations on gender equality at the sixty-ninth (2014) session of the General Assembly, which resulted in a further strengthened framework as regards ending violence against women and girls, eliminating female genital mutilation, and addressing trafficking in women and girls; and the preparation for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The Entity also advocated to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women remained central to the post-2015 development agenda by supporting the inclusion of a stand-alone goal and gender-sensitive targets. In 2014 and early 2015, the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of its adoption were key priorities. UN-Women worked towards renewing the political impetus around gender equality and women's empowerment, strengthening the advocacy and evidence base, enhancing social and resource mobilization and building social and political movements, and revitalizing public engagement. In that regard 167 Member States submitted national reports on progress made.

In 2014, UN-Women delivered programme support in 86 countries, with its country programmes incorporating a total of 513 country programme outcomes, supported by 1,072 planned outputs and 3,596 activities. UN-Women worked on the reform and adoption of gender-responsive constitutions, legal frameworks and policies in 46 countries. In 42 countries, the Entity advocated for gender-

responsive measures to promote women's leadership and participation in politics. UN-Women also worked with policymakers, economic institutions and women in 76 countries to bridge the gap between rising economic and social inequalities. The Entity provided support to 80 countries in their efforts to end violence against women, as well as worked on women's leadership in peace, security and humanitarian response in 66 countries. UN-Women worked in support of 73 countries to strengthen gender equality priorities in their development plans and budgets.

During the year, UN-Women engaged inter-agency networks to promote coherence and contributed to the work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its three pillars. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the High-level Committee on Programmes were also mobilized for the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 2014, 62 entities and departments of the UN system reported progress in 14 of the 15 indicators of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and 51 per cent of indicators of the Action Plan were rated as meeting or exceeding requirements, an increase from 31 per cent in 2012. UN-Women offices supported more than 100 initiatives promoting South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.

The Entity also began implementing steps to strengthen results-based management. UN-Women core and non-core resources reached their highest level since the Entity's establishment. The year 2014 marked the first year since the establishment of UN-Women that budget targets had been met, with final revenue from voluntary contributions at \$163.7 million in regular resources and \$159.2 million in other resources, resulting in \$12.9 million in additional resources being received than budgeted.

On 2 July [UNW/2015/7 (dec. 2015/2)], the Executive Board took note of the report on the progress made on UN-Women's strategic plan and requested the Entity to continue to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

### *Evaluation*

**Report on evaluation function, 2014.** In compliance with the UN-Women evaluation policy and the 2014–2017 strategic plan, the UN-Women Evaluation Office submitted its annual report [UNW/2015/5] on the performance of its evaluation function; the contribution of UN-Women to the UN system-wide coordination of gender-responsive evaluation and national evaluation capacity development; and the 2015 programme of work for the independent Evaluation Office.

In 2014, the independent Evaluation Office prepared a comprehensive evaluation strategic plan



to operationalize UN-Women's evaluation policy [YUN 2012, p. 1122]. A global evaluation oversight system was established by the independent Evaluation Office to provide transparent information on the performance of the evaluation function. It contained eight key performance indicators: financial resources, human resources, coverage and types of evaluations, implementation rate of planned evaluations, quality of evaluation reports, submission rate of completed evaluation reports to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system, management response submission to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system, and implementation status of management response. The report revealed that of the eight indicators, four were achieved or on track, while the other four needed further improvement. Those key performance indicators continued to be presented to senior management at headquarters and field offices, highlighting areas of strengths and issues that required immediate management attention. In addition, the independent Evaluation Office presented to the Executive Board two corporate evaluations: one on peace and security and the other on the joint evaluation of joint gender programmes.

In 2014, UN-Women intensified its support on system-wide coordination on gender responsive evaluation in five areas: the United Nations Evaluation Group and regional UN evaluation groups; the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; independent system-wide evaluation; supporting joint evaluations and United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations; and the gender equality evaluation portal. UN-Women also supported national and regional gender-responsive evaluation capacities, including by declaring 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation.

On 2 July [UNW/2015/7 (dec. 2015/3)], the Executive Board took note of the report on the evaluation function for 2014 and the programme of work for 2015 of the independent Evaluation Office, and requested the Entity to continue to strengthen its evaluation capacity.

**Report of Global Evaluation Advisory Committee.** In February [UNW/2015/CRP.1], the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee presented its own overall assessment and recommendations to the UN-Women Executive Board. The Committee concluded that UN-Women had a strong central evaluation function and emphasized the vital role evaluation played in bringing evidence and knowledge to the normative, operational and coordination work of UN-Women.

On 9 February [UNW/2015/3 (dec. 2015/1)], the Executive Board took note of the report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of UN-Women,

and of the recommendation to incorporate a separate budget line for evaluation activities to be considered by the Executive Board in the integrated budget for 2016–2017. It requested the Entity to continue to strengthen its evaluation capacity, and to carry out an internal review of the current evaluation policy and to report thereon within the framework of the annual report on the evaluation function, with the review to be considered by the Executive Board at its annual session for 2016.

## **Administrative and budgetary matters**

### *Board of Auditors report*

In its financial report and audited financial statements [A/70/5/Add.12] on UN-Women for the year ended 31 December 2014, the Board of Auditors reported a total revenue of \$332.9 million and total expenses of \$270.5 million, resulting in a surplus of \$62.4 million.

The Board noted that UN-Women had shown progress on financial reporting since it adopted the International Public Sector Accounting Standards in 2012; it observed, however, that the Entity remained underfunded compared with the agreed resource targets and start-up capital suggested by the Secretary-General.

As at 31 December 2014, UN-Women had total assets of \$427.3 million and total liabilities of \$81.7 million. Of the total revenue of \$332.9 million, voluntary contributions amounted to \$322.8 million, equivalent to 97 per cent of total revenue. UN-Women recorded a 17.2 per cent increase in voluntary contributions compared with the previous year.

The Board recommended that UN-Women identify new and strengthen current sources of non-core resources and modalities; expand and deepen contributions from non-traditional donors, individual donors and UN-Women national committees; enhance its accountability and monitoring of advances to implementing partners at the project level; and enhance its efforts in liquidating the outstanding advances with such partners.

### *Internal audit and investigation activities*

In April, the UN-Women Audit Unit, established in January 2012, of the Office of Audit and Investigations of the United Nations Development Programme, submitted a report [UNW/2015/4] on the Entity's internal audit and investigation function for the year ended 31 December 2014. The report included information on the number, nature and outcomes of investigation cases conducted during the year. The report of the Audit Advisory Committee of UN-Women and the management response thereto were contained in the addendum [UNW/2015/4/Add.1] to the report.

On 2 July [UNW/2015/7 (dec. 2015/4)], the Executive Board took note of the two reports.

#### *Biennial budget 2016–2017*

In a July report [UNW/2015/9], the Executive Board of UN-Women proposed an integrated budget with projected voluntary contributions of \$880 million for 2016–2017 and requested an appropriation of \$196.4 million (gross). The two-year integrated budget was aligned with the four-year strategic plan and complemented funding from assessed contributions within the regular budget.

**ACABQ report.** Also in July [UNW/2015/8], the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) recommended approval of the integrated budget estimates for UN-Women for the 2016–2017 biennium and that the Executive Board approve an appropriation in the amount of \$189 million (gross), including \$27 million for cost recovery for other resources.

On 16 September [UNW/2015/11 (dec. 2015/6)], the Executive Board took note of the details included in the integrated budget estimates, the related report of ACABQ and the related response [UNW/2015/CRP.15] of UN-Women to the report of the Committee. It approved gross resources in the amount of \$196.4

million for the institutional budget to support organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

#### *Structured dialogue on financing*

In July, UN-Women submitted a strategic brief on resource mobilization [UNW/2015/10] pursuant to decision 2014/6 [YUN 2014, p. 1302] of the Executive Board as part of its structured dialogue on the financing of the strategic plan, 2014–2017. It highlighted the resources necessary to fully implement the strategic plan and to achieve transformational results for women and girls worldwide. It also outlined some of the risks of not achieving an adequate level of funding and the steps that it had taken to progressively reach that level by mobilizing both regular and other resources.

On 16 September [UNW/2015/11 (dec. 2015/5)], the Executive Board took note of the strategic brief, and requested UN-Women to engage in informal dialogue with Member States to ensure ongoing discussion, exchange of information and analysis of funding issues and options; submit an analysis of the predictability, flexibility and alignment of resources provided for the implementation of the approved strategic plan; and continue to respond to the evolving development opportunities to expand its partnerships.