Message by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka on International Women’s Day, 8 March 2016

This year’s celebration of International Women’s Day is the first within the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are confidently asserted in that Agenda as intrinsic to progress.

The new Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals include a specific goal to achieve gender equality, which aims to end discrimination and violence against women and girls and ensure equal participation and opportunities in all spheres of life. Important provisions for women’s empowerment are also included in most of the other goals.

In conjunction with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, more than 90 governments have answered UN Women’s call for action to “Step It Up for Gender Equality”. Heads of State and Government have pledged concrete and measurable actions to crack some of the fundamental barriers to the achievement of gender equality in their countries.

Unanimously at the 59th Commission on the Status of Women in 2015, governments reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action. Businesses large and small are committing to, and implementing, shifts in culture and practice that foster greater equality and opportunity. Women individually, and civil society together, have called for lasting and transformative change by 2030.

With these unprecedented expressions of political will, the countdown to substantive gender equality by 2030 must begin, accompanied and underpinned by monitoring of accountability and evaluation of progress.

We draw strength from this solidarity as we face world events such as severe population displacement, extreme violence against women and girls, and extensive instability and crises in many regions.

Women and girls are critical to finding sustainable solutions to the challenges of poverty, inequality and the recovery of the communities hardest hit by conflicts, disasters and displacements. They are at the frontline of the outbreaks of threatening new epidemics, such as Zika virus disease or the impact of climate change, and at the same time are the bulwark to protect their families, work for peace, and ensure sustainable economic growth and social change.

On International Women’s Day, we reiterate the greater participation of women as one of the necessary conditions for an inclusive Agenda 2030. Their leadership is insufficiently recognized but must emerge with greater participation in decision-making bodies. Each one of us is needed—in our countries, communities, organizations, governments and in the United Nations—to ensure decisive, visible and measurable actions are taken under the banner: Planet 50-50: Step It Up for Gender Equality.
We build on the commitments that have already been made by all governments. We also build on the legacy of determined and vocal participation by the small group of founding women from all parts of the world, who were in San Francisco in 1945 when the UN Charter was adopted. They laid the foundation for all that has followed in the struggle for the fulfilment of women’s rights.

The participation of women at all levels and the strengthening of the women’s movement has never been so critical, working together with boys and men, to empower nations, build stronger economies and healthier societies. It is the key to making Agenda 2030 transformational and inclusive.

Happy International Women’s Day.

IWD commemorations in Botswana:
A birthstone for UN Women’s office in Gaborone

**gender equality.** The theme focused on new commitments under UN Women’s Step It Up initiative, and other existing commitments on gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s human rights.

Former education minister, Dr Gaositwe Chiepe, said women had proven that if they were given an opportunity to participate in the development of the country and decision making, they could become good leaders. However, she decried low participation of women in politics and said this was because women lacked faith in themselves. Dr Chiepe further called upon the society to give children equal opportunities at home and added that women must not try not to imitate men. “Women, have faith in yourself, you have what it takes to make it,” she added.

Head of the European Union Delegation in Botswana and Southern African Development Community (SADC), Mr Alexander Baum, said they had been supporting gender parity in Botswana. He highlighted that the International Women’s Day is at times also seen from an economic angle. “Societies that achieve higher gender parity tend to be economically more successful and commercial enterprises that achieve higher gender parity particularly in their management tend to be more successful in the market place,” Mr. Baum added.

Notwithstanding, Botswana continues to face challenges, particularly violence against women which has been a thorn in the flesh for this country. A 2012 study revealed that 67% of women have suffered some form of violence in their lifetime. The Minister also acknowledged that women have not fared well in accessing power and key decision making positions in the political sphere. 18.2% of parliamentary seats were held by women in 2002, which declined to below 10% in 2014. With regard to the private sector, the figure decreased from 27% to 21% during the same period.

While the legal and policy frameworks for moving towards gender equality are in place, there is still much more that needs to be done in safeguarding the safety, health and economic empowerment of women and girls in Botswana.

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**Gaborone, Botswana:** UN Women, invited by the Government of Botswana established a small office in Botswana in mid February 2016. The UN Women office will contribute to the development objectives of Botswana’s blue print, the Vision 2036 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2017 – 2021.

UN Women Botswana coordinated several activities to commemorate the IWD.

On 7 March 2016, an internal event called for all UN staff to sign up to the One Billion Rising campaign, the largest global mass action campaign calls for an end to gender-based violence. [www.facebook.com/botswanarises](http://www.facebook.com/botswanarises).

On March 2016, Botswana joined the world in celebrating IWD with a national forum held in Tlokweng outside Gaborone hosted by the Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Honorable Edwin Batshu under the global theme Pledge for Parity. “Gender equality is an indispensable part of development, hence the country channeling significant resources for women empowerment” said Hon. Edwin Batshu as Tlokweng residents, students, UN representatives, and the diplomatic corps gathered to celebrate International Women’s Day.

The 2016 International Women’s Day was commemorated under the theme of *Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it up for
The United Nations Resident Coordinator Anders Pedersen spoke on behalf of the United Nations system in Botswana that time had come for bold changes. He said that ‘as we craft Botswana’s new Vision 2036 we need to reflect on the commitments we have signed up to in the Sustainable Development Goals’. Duty bearers were yet to be accountable for the impactful implementation of policies and programmes which will enable the country to take stock and check progress as we go forward.

The event was well attended by invited guests, authorities and traditional leaders from surrounding villages, women entrepreneurs and the general public.

**UN Women in Ethiopia Commemorates International Women’s Day with Women Innovators and Entrepreneurs**

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:* The 8th Innovation for Development Breakfast Meeting in Ethiopia took place at the Capital hotel in Addis Ababa on 8 March 2016 to commemorate International Women’s Day, 2016. The meeting, organized by the Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) through the support of UN Women and UNDP, brought together women innovators and entrepreneurs as well as representatives of the relevant governmental sectors; including the Federal Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency (FeMSEDA), development partners, private sectors, donors such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The event included panel discussions by women innovators, scholars and gender equality practitioners, experience sharing of successful women innovative entrepreneurs as well as exhibition of some of the women’s products.

This provided a forum to discuss the challenges and opportunities of women entrepreneurs and to witness tangible successes of actions linking entrepreneurship with innovation.
As one of the panelists, the National Programme Coordinator, UN Women Ethiopia Country Office, Ms. Yelfigne Abegaz highlighted on the specific activities of UN Women Ethiopia’s office to support and promote women’s empowerment and gender equality especially to enhance women’s economic empowerment and advised the women to empower each other through mentorship.

“When one of you lit a candle in a room and others start lighting more candles from it, the first one doesn’t decrease its brightness and the room gets even more brighter from the additional candles.”

One of the beneficiaries of UN Women Ethiopia Country Office, WAS Soap Manufacturing PLC displayed and sold its products at the event. WAS Soap Manufacturing PLC’s General Manager, Mrs. Almenesh Kerga, the day was a special one used to promote the products to a new market segment and to make her believe that there are indeed more markets for her products. Mrs. Almenesh, who has also been supported by UN Women ECO on basic business management skills, in her message said that, “women need to look for more opportunities while they use what they have at hand to accomplish their dreams. If they have the real interest, it doesn’t require much to make it happen,” Mrs. Alemnesh started the business from scratch five years ago and now supplies her products to local markets with a vision to expand.

On behalf of UN Women Ethiopia’s Coffice, Ms. Funmi Balogun, Deputy Country Representative in her remarks said that although March 8 is set aside to celebrate women and their achievements, the women innovators and entrepreneurs are achievers with a difference, “As women we have been valued as just mothers and wives. We are constantly told what we cannot do. We are not often told what we can do. And when we see women like you who have gone beyond societal expectations, to become successful entrepreneurs and innovators, it calls for celebration, the very essence of International Women’s Day. It is an affirmation of women’s capability and it is another opportunity to showcase and to tell ourselves that there is nothing we cannot do.”


The KNAP is anchored on the constitutional values of gender equality, inclusion and participation and recognizes the importance of women’s contributions to conflict prevention and resolution, peace keeping and peace building in Kenya.

The Government of Kenya has adopted Husisha Wana-wake Dumisha Amani (Involve women to sustain peace) as the theme for this year’s national International Women’s Day celebrations. The theme draws on the United Nations global theme “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it up for Gender Equality” and the African Union’s theme “Year of Human Rights with Special Focus on Rights of Women”.

The celebrations began by a match from Uhuru Park flagged off by Kenya’s National Assembly speaker Hon. Justin Muturi. In his remarks, he emphasized the important role that women play in society and stated that we cannot function optimally as a society if women are excluded hence the need to empower them. Hon. Muturi also signed up for the HeForShe Campaign - a global solidarity movement initiated by UN Women to uphold Gender Empowerment.

During the HeForShe sign up at Uhuru Park- Freedom corner, he pledged to honor the seven principles and to mobilize fellow male members of parliament to support the campaign initiated by UN Women.

Hon. Muturi further pointed out that he was ready to support gender equality to have more women elected in parliament and to enhance participation and electability of women into political leadership.
After the march, the First Lady of the Republic of Kenya H.E. Margaret Kenyatta addressed those gathered for the IWD celebrations at the Kenyatta International Convention Center (KICC). In her remarks, the First Lady emphasized the need to involve women in conflict resolution and peace negotiations because women and children are most affected by insecurity. “Women, girls and children are vulnerable. When a woman suffers, her family, community and society at large suffer. Excluding women in the different spheres of life is saying no to progress.” She added.

Speaking at the same event, the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, Hon. Sicily Kariuki, noted that great strides on promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment through the interventions guided by the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Vision 2030, Sustainable Development Goals and the Second Medium Term Plan as well as other national policies and laws. She emphasized that Kenya is currently witnessing more women in parliament than ever before, that women are more in control of their resources and greatly in charge of decisions that affect their lives, their families and community. She also noted that the government has set aside and disbursed millions of shillings for the Uwezo Fund, Youth Enterprise Development Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund, in addition to women having access to government procurement opportunities through the 30% public procurement.

The Director General of the United Nations Office in Nairobi Amb. Sahle-Work Zewde remarked that “all around the world, International Women’s Day represents an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women while calling for greater equality. It is a time of reflection on progress made, and a time to recommit ourselves to the struggle for gender equality.” Making reference to the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 16 on Peace and Justice, she reiterated the interlinkages and the indivisibility of the 17 goals including gender, peace and security. The Director General also commended the First Lady for the Beyond Zero Campaign which strives to end newborn and maternal deaths. One way to close gender gaps Amb. Zewde underlined, is also through support to campaigns such as the HeForShe campaign which H.E President Uhuru Kenyatta launched in 2014 and became a champion asking all Kenyan men and boys to stand up in support of gender equality.

The speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya Hon. Justin Muturi signed on as a HeForShe champion on 8 March 2016 committing the Parliament to the HeForShe campaign. Following his historic signature 140 Parliamentarians signed up as HeForShe Champions affirming their commitment to the seven principles of the campaign. Photo credit: UN Women/Kennedy Okoth
Mozambique Celebrates International Women’s Day

Mozambique: UN Women in Mozambique, in partnership with the Government of Japan and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MGCAS) hosted various events in commemoration of IWD 2016, particularly:

1. Fair to End Violence against Women and Girls

On March 8, UnWomen with key partners held a fair to end violence against women and girls in Zimpeto Market, where key government and medical services were brought directly to the women that work at the market. Women were able to register babies, sort out their legal documents, and receive legal advice (from UN Women partner IPAJ- Institute for Legal Assistance and Representation), undergo medical tests including the HIV test. 3,000 women received counselling services. At the UN Women information stand, information about rights and other institutional and program information was made available.

Attended by the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, the Japanese Ambassador and UN Women Mozambique Representative, the official ceremony highlighted the important role of Mozambican women in the development of

UN Women Representative, Florence Raes, shows UN Women advocacy materials on GEWE to Mozambican Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. 
Photo credit: UN Women Mozambique

2. Debate on Masculinity, Violence against Women and Girls and the Feminization of HIV and AIDS

On March 10, UN Women, in partnership with the Government of Japan and Eduardo Mondlane University, hosted a Debate on Masculinities, Violence against Women and the Feminization of HIV. During the debate, the panelists discussed the various stereotypes that affect the relationship between men and women and questions such as: What is masculinity and how are men seen in society? Toxic masculinity and its multiple roots featured in the debate. Also explored was the role of norms based on tradition and initiation rites. New(er) concepts were also discussed including the ‘social circumcision’ of men, wherein restrictive ideas about men are perpetuated e.g. “real men don’t dialogue or cry” and the fact that there are different upbringing approaches for girls and boys. Girls, it was noted, are often taught domestic work from infancy whilst men are given the option of dreaming about being doctors, engineers etc.

More broadly, the ‘demeaning of women’ was seen to put a higher burden on women to seek protection despite the fact that it is easier and cheaper to find condoms for men than female condoms. This, in turn, places the power over condom use in the hands of men.
On March 12, a Concert to End Violence against women and Girls and the feminization of HIV and AIDS was hosted by the IWD 2016 partners in Barrio Ferroviario and was attended by more than 3000 people.

The line-up included various artists supporting the dissemination of women's empowerment messages, students participating in the UNiTE campaign from Kongolote and Samson Mutemba Secondary Schools (who performed a theatric piece on domestic abuse of women and read out their action agendas) and a cultural group of Horizonte Azul Association (UN Women Mozambique partner), performing a traditional dance and made a statement against gender-based violence.

Presented by Gabriel Junior from the TVM Show Mozambique in Concert, the event was sponsored by the Government of Japan, a UN Women partner on strengthening and speeding up national efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and girls and the feminization of HIV and AIDS. In attendance were the Representative of UN Women Mozambique as well as representatives from the Government of Japan and the municipal government.
The International Women’s Day was colorfully celebrated for the 40th time in Bahir Dar, Amhara Regional State, under the theme “By ensuring good governance, let us guarantee women’s equal participation and contribution”. The IWD 2016 was celebrated in the presence of the State Minister of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), the Head of Amhara Bureau of Women and Children Affairs (BOWCA) and the Deputy Speaker of Amhara Council and Chair of Women and Children Standing Committee of the House of People’s Representative (HPR) with the support of UN Women. Ms. Fantay Tibebu, Head of Amhara BOWCA made the opening remarks and highlighted that women’s role in ensuring good governance is significant. She further noted the need to strengthen women structures in order to ensure effective women’s participation and contributions. Ms. Bizunesh Merseret, MoWCA State Minister, opened the event by highlighting the changes that have been made in ensuring gender equality in the economic, social and political spheres in the country.

In addition to that, she also remarked that Ethiopia has passed relevant policy and legal frameworks and is currently implementing various programmes to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment. Ms. Bizunesh noted that the government of Ethiopia has put specific measurable targets on women’s participation. She further underscored that women are particularly affected by corruption and bad governance and noted the need to work on safeguarding good governance. She closed her remarks by calling on all women to play a role in meeting the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTPII) targets. The four heads of the different bureaus then lit two candles to mark the commemoration of the 21st and 40th celebrations of the International Women’s Day in Amhara region and Ethiopia respectively. The event also included two presentations on child marriage mapping and governance, the main theme of the event. The first presentation on good governance provided a background on March 8th and linked the global theme of the International Women’s Day with the national theme by highlighting the need for women to drive the good governance agenda in the country. The presentation underlined some of the main governance problems as Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), women’s loss of title deeds, lack of equal division of common property during divorce and law enforcement problems among others. The paper indicated the need to raise awareness and ensure women’s access to information as key strategies in order to fight poor governance problems.

It was also mentioned that women’s active involvement in the Ethiopian Women Development Army, (WDA) is also important where currently close to 5,000,000 women are members. A study on child marriage mapping was also shared. The analysis on the Demographic Health Survey and Census of Ethiopia from 2011 were presented and provided data on the prevalence of child marriage in the various regions and hot spots weredas within Amhara region. General reflections on the presentations were made by the panelists, who identified the need to invest on women’s education in order to ensure good governance and to fight Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs). The importance of ensuring experience sharing workshops among regions/weredas where there is zero tolerance on HTPs was also agreed.
The event also gave attention to the introduction of innovative women friendly technologies, which were presented by Captain Yishak Kalu. Ms. Yishak Kalu introduced several innovations which have had positive results and impact on women’s lives such as a material that can be used to burn charcoal quickly, a convenient bag to carry and hold water for long distances and a stove with a specific type of wood that can cook food quickly. He also emphasized on the need to promote women friendly technologies that ensure women’s productivity and encourage new employment/business opportunities.

Zimbabwe steps out to step up for gender equality

Zimbabwe: UN Women in partnership with the Danish, Swedish and Australian Embassies, as well as the European Union held a successful 5 km walk on 8 March to commemorate International Women’s Day.

The event, which was very well attended, included high level participants such as Ambassadors from Sweden, Australia, Denmark, Botswana, Kenya, Canada and Britain. The Resident Coordinator and Country Representatives of ILO and UNDP as well as the Deputy Representative of UNICEF also joined the event in solidarity with UN Women.

The walk included speeches from both the Australian and Swedish Embassies, a dancing warmup, the 5 km run and concluded with a post-run breakfast.

The speeches centred around promotion of the SDGs and recognition that Zimbabwean women make up more than 50% of the population. Therefore, despite having made some strides, there is still more to be done to enable women and girls access education and health, and end violence against women and harmful social practices such as child marriage. See more at [http://ow.ly/10b8-BA](http://ow.ly/10b8-BA)
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: The 13th Women First 5 Km Run of Ethiopia was officially launched on the 3 February 2016 at the Golden Tulip Hotel, Addis Ababa, by Plan International Ethiopia and the Great Ethiopian Run under the theme “Investing in Girls is investing in the Future”. The event started with a press conference given by the main organizers of the Run, the renowned athlete Mr. Haile Gebresalassie, founder of the Great Ethiopian Run, and Mr. Manoj Kumar, Plan International Ethiopia Director, with the presence of Ms. Letty Chiwara, UN Representative, Gelila Gebre-Michael, Multichoice Ethiopia, Enat Bank spokesperson and other private sector entities representatives as well as renowned artists and community female leaders.

Ms. Letty Chiwara, United Nations Representative to the event, spoke on behalf Ms. Ahuna Eziakonwa-Onochie, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Ethiopia. Ms. Chiwara reinforced the importance of men and women working together towards gender equality and encouraged the male among the audience to sign up for the HeForShe campaign which has recently being launched in the country. “Gender equality is not a women’s issue only but rather a partnership between man and women. We call every man and woman to unite to create the future we want!”, she stated. Ms. Chiwara closed her speech by adding, “Let’s sprint for gender equality as we launch this run!”, which was taken with joy by the audience and generated a big applause.

The Women First Run 2016 is expected to have more than 10,000 participants from all regions of the country. This race is becoming one of the biggest women-only events in East Africa where girls and women from all walks of life come together to celebrate the day and run for their rights. The 2016 edition of the Women First Run will count with the special participation of the female Heads of United Nations Agencies in Ethiopia in addition to the female Ambassadors category.

The year 2016 marks the 40th anniversary of the International Women’s Day under the theme, “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality” which asks governments to make national commitments to close the gender equality gap. Therefore, UN Women Ethiopia calls for the implementation of the Agenda 2030, which recognizes women’s empowerment as a precondition to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), towards ensuring that the commitments made translate into reality for women and girls on the ground.
UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women needs worldwide.

UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa covers 15 countries in the region:

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Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
Ethiopia
Kenya
Malawi
Mozambique
Rwanda
South Africa Multi-Country Office (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland)

Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Tanzania
Uganda
Zimbabwe