



## **Remarks**

**By:**

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**Women's Conference on International Women's  
Day**

**Windhoek, Namibia**

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Honourable Laura McLeod-Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region

Senior Government Officials

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN system in Namibia is honored to join the Government and other stakeholders today to commemorate International Women's Day.

International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change, and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.

This year's theme is "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step Up for Gender Equality".

The United Nations observance will reflect on how to accelerate the 2030 Agenda, and build momentum for the effective implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals.

Equally it will focus on new commitments under UN Women's Step it Up Initiative that asks Governments to make commitments in law, policy, investment and planning to close the gender gap.

This year's commemoration, also asks each and every one of us to make a pledge to help accelerate gender parity.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In Namibia, unfortunately, 33% of all married women aged 15-49 have experienced physical, sexual, and/ or emotional violence from their spouse and have also suffered one or more physical injuries. A total of 28 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men aged 15-49 justified beating as an acceptable way for a husband to discipline his wife (NDHS: 2013).

Although there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done, Namibia has made progress in gender equality and in eradicating GBV.

Government with the support of its partners has taken serious action in the fight against GBV which include:

- High level political commitment for the promotion of gender equality with women occupying two of the top four positions in government.
- Responsive policies and legal frameworks for addressing Gender Based Violence, and promotion of gender equality. Such as the Gender Responsive Budgeting.
- Gender parity has been achieved in education. More than 90 per cent of boys and girls enrolled and staying in school till grade 5, of which half are girls.
- Integration of GBV modules into training curriculums for police officers and media practitioners.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

While we can be proud of these achievements, we cannot become complacent.

Violence against women and children remains one of the most widespread human rights violations globally. It is a threat to democracy, peace and security; lays a heavy burden on national economies worldwide and is a real impediment to winning the war against poverty.

We must therefore ensure that frameworks and laws are effective and can protect women and girls from gender based violence and provide opportunities for them to flourish.

In closing, I wish to pledge the UNs unwavering support for and ask for your commitment to mainstreaming gender into all programming and support efforts towards gender disaggregated data to improve analysis.

Together let's take action to protect the rights of women and girls including the right to sexual and reproductive health.

Let's not fail them!

## **THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

### **“FROM THE GLASS CEILING TO A CARPET OF SHARDS”**

As a boy growing up in post-war Korea, I remember asking about a tradition I observed: women going into labour would leave their shoes at the threshold and then look back in fear. “They are wondering if they will ever step into those shoes again,” my mother explained.

More than a half-century later, the memory continues to haunt me. In poor parts of the world today, women still risk death in the process of giving life. Maternal mortality is one of many preventable perils. All too often, female babies are subjected to genital mutilation. Girls are attacked on their way to school. Women's bodies are used as battlefields in wars. Widows are shunned and impoverished.

We can only address these problems by empowering women as agents of change.

For more than nine years, I have put this philosophy into practice at the United Nations. We have shattered so many glass ceilings we created a carpet of shards. Now we are sweeping away the assumptions and bias of the past so women can advance across new frontiers.

I appointed the first-ever female Force Commander of United Nations troops, and pushed women's representation at the upper levels of our Organization to historic highs. Women are now leaders at the heart of peace and security – a realm that was once the exclusive province of men. When I arrived at the United Nations, there were no women leading our peace missions in the field. Now, nearly a quarter of all UN missions are headed by women – far from enough but still a vast improvement.

I have signed nearly 150 letters of appointment to women in positions as Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General. Some came from top government offices with international renown, others have moved on to leadership positions in their home countries. All helped me prove how often a woman is the best person for a job.

To ensure that this very real progress is lasting, we have built a new framework that holds the entire UN system accountable. Where once gender equality was seen as a laudable idea, now it is a firm policy. Before, gender sensitivity training was optional; now it is mandatory for ever-greater numbers of UN staff. In the past, only a handful of UN budgets tracked resources for gender equality and women's empowerment; now this is standard for nearly one in three, and counting.

Confucius taught that to put the world in order, we must begin in our own circles. Armed with proof of the value of women leaders at the United Nations, I have spoken out for women's empowerment everywhere. In speeches at parliaments, universities and street rallies, in private talks with world leaders, in meetings with corporate executives and in tough conversations with powerful men ruling

rigidly patriarchal societies, I have insisted on women's equality and urged measures to achieve it.

When I took office, there were nine parliaments in the world with no women. We helped to drive that number down to four. I launched the UNITE to End Violence against Women campaign in 2008; today, scores of leaders and ministers, hundreds of parliamentarians and millions of individuals have added their names to the action call.

I was the first man to sign our HeForShe campaign, and more than a million others have joined since. I stood with activists calling for the abandonment of female genital mutilation and celebrated when the General Assembly adopted its first-ever resolution supporting that goal. I am echoing the calls of many who know women can drive success in achieving our bold 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and advancing the Paris Agreement on climate change.

On this International Women's Day, I remain outraged by the denial of rights to women and girls – but I take heart from the people everywhere who act on the secure knowledge that women's empowerment leads to society's advancement. Let us devote solid funding, courageous advocacy and unbending political will to achieving gender equality around the world. There is no greater investment in our common future.

I Thank You