



Opening Remarks for
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UN Resident Coordinator to Namibia and
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International Women's Day (IWD) Round
Table Discussion

Namibia University of Science and
Technology (NUST)

19 March 2018

Director of Ceremonies,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Esteemed Panellists, Partners and Invited Guests,

My fellow UN Country Team Members and colleagues,

Students,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

The UN is pleased to join the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) to host this 'International Women's Day' round-table discussion.

Let me start by thanking colleagues from the MGECW, the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the UN Gender Theme Group, for making this discussion possible.

This year's International Women's Day global theme, calls for the empowerment of women and celebrates gender champions who advocate for women's rights¹.

This year's National theme calls on us to 'Press for Progress'; requesting each and every one of us to work tirelessly toward gender parity in Namibia².

And today's round-table, builds on both themes. The objective is to explore how we can transform our Namibian society, through SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empowerment across the country.

With the help of a wide array of stakeholders, we have assembled in this room today. We hope to continue our dialogue around our achievements, as well as our challenges, and agree a few concrete actions we can take together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

¹ "Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives".

² 'Press for Progress'

The new 2030 Development Agenda with its 17 Goals aims to eradicate poverty, save the planet and ensure prosperity for all.

SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 5 specifically aims to achieve gender equality, and empower the half of the world's population that are women and girls.

Here in Namibia, we are waging War on Poverty to ensure that no one feels left out. The NDP 5 speaks of 'Namibian women that are empowered, and free from gender-based violence'.³

And while there has been great progress towards gender equality (Namibia ranks 4th in Africa and 11th globally, in terms of gender parity in parliament⁴. Two of the four top positions in Government are held by women) there is still work to be done.

You only have to open the newspaper and read stories of women being beaten, or worse killed, or hear about babies being abandoned, or even engage in the social debate

³ Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5) – Social Transformation, pages 65-66.

⁴ IPU. Women in National Parliaments. <http://bit.ly/2gWccEF>

around the credibility and role of empowered women, to realise the serious task that lies before us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is an abundance of data demonstrating that women are great multipliers of development progress and are catalysts of change.⁵

- For example, women form a significant part of the global agricultural labour force, with approximately 30% of employed females in the agriculture sector⁶, and food security in most African countries is on the shoulders of women.
- A child who has a mother with some formal education is more likely to survive to their fifth birthday, receive adequate nutrition, and be immunized and enrolled in school.⁷

⁵ UNFPA: Gender Equality (2016) & UNFPA Welcomes World Leaders' Action Plan for Progress on Maternal Health, Poverty (2010)

⁶ World Bank. Employment in agriculture, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://bit.ly/2oyQpDm>

⁷ Save the Children State of the World's Mothers report: 2014

Therefore, reflecting on work that still needs to be done to ensure gender empowerment and equality, makes good development sense.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We see this round table discussion as an opportunity to continue exploring possible partnerships to address the challenges that women and girls face.

We hope to leave this room with at least one or two ideas/actions on what we can do differently. Ultimately it is about Vision 2030 and more immediately the War on Poverty; It is about reaching those furthest behind, including our women and girls.

I thank you!