

General Discussion on the Position of Women

Speech UN Women's Representative, +-5 min (+-700 words)

Thank you Chair,

Before I begin, I'd like to stress that I'm speaking in my capacity as independent Women's Representative and not on behalf of the Dutch Government.

Gender equality can not be realised in a vacuum.

It is a fact that women and girls make up half of the world's population, but remain disproportionately at risk of *falling* into poverty and *staying* in poverty.

Let me remind you that global poverty rose again in 2020, for the first time in over three decades, from 75 to 95 million. This too, was disproportionately gendered.

Existing inequalities exacerbate inequality.

I could start by listing the reasons, but this General Assembly has taken note of them in Conclusion after Conclusion.

This General Assembly has recognized that the full economic participation of women and girls should be mainstreamed in all policies and programmes.

That investment in quality education for girls is indispensable for our full participation in society.

That unpaid and domestic work hinders the ability of women and girls to enter the workforce.

We *know* that investing in social protection, improving public services, and strengthening accessible infrastructure will greatly benefit women, and vulnerable women most of all.

For very good reason, the global community has invested in schemes such as microfinancing female businesses, cash assistance programs for the unprotected poor, and financing feminist and women's grassroots organizations.

All of this to say that the feminization of poverty is not new to us.

All of this to say, that our response still has not been good enough.

Well-meaning policies can only do so much they are developed in perfect isolation.

Because tell me, how beneficial is getting women on boards when gender biases keep us in low-skilled, informal and precarious jobs?

How helpful is microfinancing when we remain at mortal risk of intimate partner violence, honour killings and more types of gender-based violence?

How useful is cash assistance when we are fleeing from bombs, when we are in active conflict areas?

Gender inequality does not exist in a vacuum, and it does not exist only among one specific group of women. Or one part of the world. We are all a part of this.

This past year, I've spoken to women's organisations from all over the Netherlands. Women from urban and rural spaces, social workers and academics, young advocates and retired activists. In community centers and Parliament offices. The same message was repeated, over and over again.

We know the challenges.

We need more funding.

There is no credible commitment without genuine investment.

By which I also mean to say, we need more serious funding.

May I remind you that it was the United Nations that committed in 2015 to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

Gender equality is a precondition to meet all the SDGs.

it is incredibly worrying to see the trend of official development assistance declining.

When this is the best means to tackle the global root causes of gender inequality.

I ask the nations of the world to be serious about their commitments.

And if we are serious, we see that the 0,7% target would not be enough *but even this hasn't been met.*

The Netherlands has been sending a women's representative to speak before you since 1947.

And I am here today again because are still facing the same, stubborn inequality.

So I will repeat the same message: show us you're committed to empowering women.

Because we won't get far without consistency or coherency.

We *need* to have autonomy over our own bodies

and

We need to be safe from violence

and

We need equal pay and

equal distribution of care tasks,

fair wages,

strong social safety and protection.

We need all of this, at the same time.

Now is the time to step up on funding, to reach the SDGs and genuinely tackle the root causes of inequality.

Will you finally listen to us?

Thank you.