

Statement by Yvonne O'Neal to Executive Board Meeting of UN Women June 2016

Thank you, Mr. President. Excellencies, Madam Executive Director of UN Women,
Colleagues :

My name is Yvonne O'Neal. I am pleased to be here today to congratulate and celebrate the achievements of UN Women from the perspective of civil society, especially to bring the voice of African women and a small NGO in Cameroon, Africa Development Interchange Network. I am also the co-chair of the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-NY.

One only needs to look at UN Women's social media pages to see the tremendously important work that this organization is doing worldwide, at the grassroots level, to bring about women's increasing economic empowerment and gender equality. Under the esteemed leadership of Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women has embarked on many noteworthy campaigns to empower women and to bring men along on the journey. The "He for She" campaign has inspired many. In Africa, many male leaders have joined the campaign and called on others to do so. Worldwide, over 1.3 billion actions have been taken to achieve gender equity. Governments will have to work side by side with civil society in order to achieve "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality."

UN Women's editorial series "From where I stand..." tells of the achievement and advancement of women around the world in their own words. These are inspiring stories that tell the length and breadth of the impact that UN Women is having, and these stories speak much louder than impersonal evaluation statistics. These are women who have the capabilities to work in such male-dominated jobs as bus drivers and police officers; of women having the courage to seek elected office; there is the solar engineer bringing solar lamps to her remote community, having studied in another country through a partnership; a woman leaving a well-paying job to create a private business in steel and metal manufacturing; training women so they can provide safe drinking water; women entrepreneurs in agriculture; women taking risks.

Last year the UN unveiled its ambitious 2030 agenda for sustainable development, with 17 goals and 169 targets. Africa Development Interchange Network commends UN Women for its focus not only on Goal 5 – Gender Equality, but for working on the intersectionality of all the goals. Today, we especially want to commend UN Women on Goal 17, for the Partnerships it has formed in promoting the sustainable development agenda. The report on the evaluation function of UN Women states:

Thanks to its strong evaluation function, as assessed by the review of the evaluation policy presented at the informal Board meeting in March 2016 and its distinct regional- level presence, the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) is strategically positioned to work with partners in the United Nations system and beyond to actively contribute to strengthening national capacities for evaluating localized SDGs.

As Executive Director Ms. Phumzile Mlamba-Ngcuka stated recently, “Gender inequality has many facets and the causes are historically embedded within laws and cultures, so we need a variety of different actors and partnerships from across the board to get involved in challenging the multiple discriminations faced by women and girls around the world.”

I commend UN Women and its collaboration with EvalPartners to evaluate the achievements of its program. This is a shining example of UN Women working with an NGO. UN Women consults with civil society advisory groups and has a formal Global Advisory Group, as well as national and regional groups.

For example, UN Women has an effective partnership with Women for Human Rights in Nepal, assisting widows and female heads of households to fight for their rights. In Cameroon where ADIN is headquartered, UN Women has strong partnership arrangements with civil society organizations, especially with prevention and support for victims of gender-based violence. Africa has embarked on the path of the Africa Union 2063 agenda implementation, in consideration of the SDGs 2030 Agenda. We wish to work closely with UN Women to achieve these goals so that no one, especially no woman or girl, is left behind.

Another partnership that I am quite familiar with is that of UN Women with NGO CSW. The CSW is one place where women and girls get together to have their voices heard. Whether at side events or parallel events, the two-week annual CSW in New York is a time for women from all sectors, and from around the world, to make a meaningful impact on issues by learning and sharing with each other. The contribution of NGO CSW is invaluable in assisting UN Women with coordinating NGO participation. I am pleased to take part in the planning committee activities of NGO CSW in preparation for the annual CSW. Let me add that it is always a pleasure to work with Ms. Lopa Banerjee and her dedicated staff.

I thank you for this opportunity to address you today. Again, I congratulate UN Women for the vital work it is doing to promote gender empowerment and equality.