

**65sima Commissione sullo status delle donne:
Osservazioni del Segretario Generale delle Nazioni Unite António Guterres**

15 marzo 2021

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**REMARKS TO THE OPENING OF THE 65th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**

15 March 2021

I am very pleased to address the Commission on the Status of Women.

We meet for a second time in the context of the pandemic, which is having a devastating impact on women and girls.

COVID-19 is a crisis with a woman's face.

The fallout has shown how deeply gender inequality remains embedded in the world's political, social and economic systems.

Those disparities have themselves exacerbated the damage – and we have all paid the price.

Women make up 70 per cent of the world's healthcare workforce, and occupy most of the jobs in the economic sectors that have been hit hardest by the pandemic.

Compared to men, women are 24 per cent more likely to lose their jobs, and can expect their income to fall 50 per cent more steeply.

Women's and girls' unpaid care work has risen dramatically owing to stay-at-home orders, the closure of schools and childcare facilities, increased elder care and so much else.

The pandemic has also sparked a shadow epidemic of violence against women worldwide, both online and offline.

Every month, the toll rises – from sexual abuse to child marriage.

The damage is incalculable and will resound down the decades, into future generations.

Now is the time to change course.

Women's equal participation is the game-changer we need.

Decades of evidence show that women's participation enhances economic results, prompts greater investment in social protection, leads to more sustainable peace and advances climate action.

Now it is the COVID-19 response that has spotlighted the great power of women's leadership.

Over the past year, women leaders are among those who have kept transmission rates low and put countries on track for recovery.

Women's organizations have filled crucial gaps in the provision of services and information, especially at the community level.

Greater gender balance has led to better responses.

Conversely, countries with less effective responses have tended to be those where strongman approaches prevail and women's rights are under assault.

The United Nations, for its part, has placed women at the centre of its COVID-19 response and recovery.

We issued one of the first assessments of the impact of the pandemic on women.

We have pushed for stimulus packages that support the informal economy, invest in the care economy and target women entrepreneurs.

And we have worked with governments and communities to address the surge in violence against women, including by keeping shelters open and moving services online. My call for a global ceasefire was followed immediately by a call for an end to violence in the home. More generally we have used every possible occasion to highlight the effectiveness of women's equal participation.

Yet still, when looking across the world, we see that women's voices remain missing from the highest levels of leadership.

Women make up a mere quarter of national legislators worldwide, a third of local government members, and just one fifth of cabinet ministers.

Only 22 countries are headed by a woman Head of State or Government.

And at current rates parity among Heads of Government will not be achieved until 2150.

That's right, another 130 years of men making the same kinds of decisions they have made for the past 130 years and more.

The pandemic has provided yet another opportunity for men to dominate decision-making.

A study of 87 countries found that 85 per cent of COVID-19 task forces contained mostly men.

In global news coverage of the pandemic, just one of every five expert sources were women.

Let's consider what this imbalance really means.

When women are missing from decision-making, we see the world through only one perspective.

We create economic models that fail to measure the productive work that occurs in the home.

We create digital fora with built-in coding biases.

We see decisions threatening efforts to guarantee full access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights.

And we spend trillions on weapons that fail to make us safer, while neglecting the violence that one in three women globally have experienced.

Changing these default settings must be seen as an imperative.

That is why one of my first priorities as Secretary-General was to bring more women into leadership positions in my Senior Management Group and among Resident Coordinators and Special Envoys.

Last year, we reached gender parity at the senior-most levels, two-years ahead of our planning, and we are now forging ahead across all ranks.

We are also striving to ensure women's participation in peacekeeping, mediation and peacebuilding processes.

But we still have lots to do.

In peace negotiations from 1992 to 2019, only 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of peace agreement signatories were women.

Negotiations are still structured in a way that elevates and incentivizes the very people who have fuelled the violence, rather than those who are building peace.

Too often, when addressing the challenge of exclusion, it is suggested that we focus on training, capacity building, empowerment for women.

But women already have the skills, the expertise and the capacity. In many countries, they are graduating from higher education at higher rates than men — and have been for some time.

What we need is not more training for women, but to train those in power on how to build inclusive institutions.

We need to move beyond fixing women and instead fix our systems.

We must also support women leaders in all their diversity and abilities — including young women, migrant women, indigenous women, women with disabilities, women of colour and LGBTIQ+.

Pandemic recovery is our chance to engineer a re-set, reignite the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals and chart a path to an equal future for women and men.

I call on all leaders to put in place five key building blocks:

First, realize women's equal rights fully, including by repealing discriminatory laws and enacting positive measures.

Second, ensure equal representation – from company boards to parliaments, from higher education to public institutions – through special measures including quotas.

Third, advance women's economic inclusion through equal pay, targeted credit, job protection and significant investments in the care economy and social protection.

Fourth, to enact an emergency response plan in each country to address violence against women and girls, and follow through with funding, policies, and political will.

Fifth, to give space to the intergenerational transition that is under way. From the frontlines to online, young women are advocating for a more just and equal world – and merit greater support.

This year we have an opportunity to advance this agenda through the Generation Equality Forum and Action Coalitions being convened by UN Women, co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France in partnership with civil society and youth.

Gender equality is essentially a question of power. We still live in a male-dominated world with a male-dominated culture.

This must change. And males are an essential part of the solution.

This Commission will continue to play a central role in shifting mindsets, calling out systemic bias and mobilizing tangible, meaningful action.

Earlier this year, we lost an inspiring leader of this shared cause – Margaret Snyder, the founding director of UNIFEM and an ally of women's groups across the world.

Last year, reflecting on the early years of her efforts and the obstacles she faced, she wrote, and I quote:

“Through all of the administrative issues, we were reminded that working to empower the poorest women was threatening to some high level and powerful people. They could move us, but they couldn't stop us.” End of quote.

Together, you are an unstoppable force.

Together, we have a chance to leave behind entrenched exclusion, and build a just and equal future.

Let's make it happen together, and I thank you.

Il testo è tratto da:

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