

## UN Women Statement for Plenary Session at WCDRR 2015

Excellences, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

I am pleased to read this statement on behalf of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - UN Women.

Protecting human rights and promoting gender equality must be central to disaster risk reduction and resilience building. Through their relative poverty and social and economic exclusion and discrimination, women and girls are often among the most affected by disasters and often carry a major burden in the response.

Data gaps continue to impede proper understanding of, and prevention and response to the impact of disasters on women and girls as opposed to men and boys. Research has found that during natural disasters the increase of rape and sexual exploitation greatly increases the likelihood of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and complications regarding reproductive health

Disaster damage and loss assessments are seldom disaggregated by sex and are usually recorded in terms of productive resources, which tend to be owned by men. This leads to a substantial undervaluation of the impact on women.

In the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh that killed 140,000 people, 90 per cent of victims were women. More than 70 per cent of people who died in the 2004 Asian tsunami were women, in Myanmar, in the Nargis cyclone in 2008, 61% of the fatalities were women and 70% of the adults that died from tropical cyclones in both Samoa and Tonga were female in the 2009 tsunami.

However, disaster risk reduction efforts must also recognize the fact that women and girls—like men and boys—have much to contribute in preventing, preparing for, and responding to disasters and often play a central role in the survival and resilience of families and communities.

Women's participation, experience and knowledge are therefore critical to effective disaster risk management. Women must be included in decision-making about the forms of assistance and protection they need and disaster risk reduction should be seen as an opportunity to foster more progressive gender roles and relationships.

This Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction is taking place at the same time as the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, where progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action over the last 20 years is being discussed. The political declaration of CSW, in its current form, *makes the promise of historic action to achieve gender equality and deliver on rights of women and girls.*

As you are gathered in Sendai to finalize the post-2015 Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction for the coming 15 years, I urge you to keep this promise in mind. There is no better time than the present to take action.

I want to congratulate member states on the inclusion of strong references in the draft outcome document to central concerns for gender responsive Disaster Risk Reduction such as women's leadership, the important role of women's organizations, increased collection and use of sex- and age-disaggregated

data, and integrated gender sensitive approaches. This is all in line with recommendations of CSW Resolution 58/2 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters and other key normative documents.

However I also want to take this opportunity to encourage member states to hold to hold each other to account to delivering concrete results for women and girls in disaster risk reduction. This must entail using gender specific and sex disaggregated targets and indicators to monitor progress in implementation of post-2015 framework on DRR, and to systematically improve the availability of information on the impact of disasters on women and men of all ages over the coming 15 years. Lack of such data will continue to perpetuate responses that do not take into account the gender-differentiated impacts of the disasters.

Discussions towards the Sustainable Development Goals are indicating the willingness and ambition for historic action through gender specific goals, targets, indicators and data. The post-2015 framework on DRR is an opportunity to demonstrate that same ambition for gender equality and the empowerment of women in disaster risk reduction. It goes without saying that commitments to gender responsive disaster management, to go beyond tokenism and to contribute to historic action, must be followed by clear allocation of resources.

The UN System will continue to strengthen its support to national authorities and other stakeholders in their efforts to manage disasters. This work is underpinned by the collective UN commitments to taking a human rights based approach and to foster gender equality and women's equal participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction.

UN Women is dedicated to working together with the entire UN system, member states, civil society and other stakeholders to provide the support and leadership required to enable women and men to equally benefit from, contribute to and influence resilient, sustainable and just development of their nations and communities.

UN Women is also committed to support all partners in safeguarding development gains and implementing their obligations with regards to gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster risk reduction efforts within the post-2015 framework on disaster risk reduction.

Thank you,