



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025

Standing in Solidarity with Women Everywhere

#HRC58 • 7 March 2025 • 9:30-9:45 • Room XX



CHAIR'S REMARKS

H.E. Mr. Paul LESOKO EFAMBE, Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to UN Geneva, Vice-President of the United Nations Human Rights Council

International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate the progress made towards gender equality and women's empowerment and to reflect on the long road still ahead of us. On this day, our thoughts quite naturally go to all women victims of violence and abuse.

OPENING STATEMENT

H.E. Mr. Volker TÜRK, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

It is a very great pleasure for me to be here today on the occasion of International Women's Day. Thirty years ago, the incredible mobilisation, wisdom and expertise of feminist movements and women's rights organisations culminated in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It has led to significant progress for women, girls and societies more broadly.



More than 160 countries passed laws to address domestic violence. The number of women in parliaments around the world has more than doubled since that declaration, and 50 million girls have been enrolled in schools globally since 2015.

Much of this progress is thanks to countries that have championed this cause, both at home and abroad. It is also very much thanks to women human rights defenders from all regions of the world who have struggled at great personal cost for the basic freedoms automatically afforded to men. This courage, solidarity and determination must inspire us all because we still have a long way to go to achieve the transformational change that is needed for women everywhere.

Discrimination against women remains pervasive in our societies and our systems of governance, manifesting itself across all spheres of life. Every 10 minutes, one woman is killed by an intimate partner or family member, while cases remain largely underreported and insufficiently prosecuted. It alarms me to see growing limitations on the rights of women to make choices about their own bodies, and as a result, denying them control over their lives.

Online harassment affects almost six out of every 10 women and girls, and it often escalates into real-life threats. There are unprecedented levels of hate, demonization and arbitrary restrictions on the rights of LGBTIQ+ women, particularly transgender women. My office has just issued a report documenting that women's significant contributions to care and support work remain largely unpaid or underpaid.

Globally, women spend 2.5 more hours per day than men on unpaid care and domestic work, which deepens the gender poverty gap. This work is also not counted when it comes to calculating the gross domestic product. Only 30% of UN Member States have ever had a woman Head of State or Government. At current rates, it will take roughly five generations to close the gender pay gap.

These are not random or unconnected facts. Weakening, denying or dismantling women's rights are part of entrenched power dynamics which benefit from maintaining a system of dominating and subjugating half of the world's population. This old playbook reinvents itself in new shapes and forms. It's being used and manipulated in political debates, or it reveals itself in empty promises that distract from doing the hard work that is needed to achieve equality. Structural discrimination against women and girls must be dismantled piece by piece in order to make way for a governance model based on full parity across all spheres of life.

Full gender parity helps us build sustainable, inclusive economies and strengthens them. Women are disproportionately affected by the climate emergency, so their experiences hold crucial lessons for how to develop sustainable climate policy, including on climate finance. Including women in the design and rollout of new technologies is essential to avoid bias and build gender equality into the algorithms that rule our digital lives.

On these and other issues, the voices of women in all their diversity, indigenous women, women with disabilities, older women, women from racial, religious or ethnic minorities and from the LGBTIQ+ community are vital. This year we also mark the 25th anniversary since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. We must recommit to it and ensure women's equal and meaningful participation in political processes across the conflict spectrum because women's participation makes peace more durable.



I always find it shocking to see when there are peace negotiations or peace talks that most of those images have only men in them. States must step up efforts to adopt or strengthen laws and policies to counter gender-based discrimination and ensure accountability for violations ranging from gender-based violence to sexism and misogyny. Defending and supporting women human rights defenders and women's organisation is a vital piece of these efforts.

All of society has a stake in the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls. And the corporate sector also needs to seek and to take active measures to increase the number of women leaders in decision making roles. After all, we know that this makes businesses more sustainable.

Social media platforms also have a major role to play by regulating online hate speech and moderating content effectively. This can help women feel much safer to speak out and it enriches our information ecosystem.

Finally, we must invest in education based on the universal values that we all share to enable children and young people to deconstruct the patriarchy and broader power dynamics.

The support of men and boys is vital. They must denounce harassment and misogyny and call for full equality. We cannot stop pushing, advocating, striving and investing until we have achieved equality.

We stand in solidarity with women everywhere.

STATEMENTS

Mexico and Finland present this statement on behalf of a group of 52 countries.

International Women's Day gave us an opportunity to commemorate and recommit to important achievements on women's rights and gender equality. Let us highlight the right to bodily autonomy, the recognition that women's rights include the right to have control and decide freely over their body, has been indispensable for women's empowerment and for dismantling patriarchal structures.

Furthermore, since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action (BDPA), human rights norms and standards have developed to recognise sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The BDPA compelled us to remove discriminatory laws, ensure access to information, including comprehensive sexuality education, address root causes of gender-based discrimination and prevent sexual and gender-based violence. SRHR are central for the dignity, equality and rights for all women and girls, for eradicating poverty, for achieving the SDG and leaving no one behind.

Despite commendable progress, we are witnessing concerted efforts to chip away at gender equality - in the words of High Commissioner Volker Türk. These include attempts to restrict and deny SRHR, violating the principle of non-regression. This is alarming. Today, more than ever, we must join and redouble our efforts for the full realisation of human rights of all women and girls.



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) makes this statement on behalf of the Centre for Reproductive Rights, Franciscans International, ILGA World, the International Service for Human Rights, the Main Engage Global Alliance, the Sexual Rights Initiative, Women Deliver and WILPF.

International Women's Day emerged from the struggles of working-class women advocating for fair wages, better working conditions, and voting rights.

Yet today, corporate power and abuse have expanded, with a few corporations and ultra-wealthy men wielding unchecked influence that impacts the lives of billions without accountability. This is exemplified by big tech companies that bolster far-right voices and autocratic regimes, amplifying misogynistic, racialized, nationalist, and anti-immigration narratives that fuel attacks on minorities and feminist activists and actively undermine gender justice and human rights movements worldwide. Independent access to information and freedom of expression are increasingly at risk.

From attacks on reproductive autonomy to anti-trans legislation and hate speech, reactionary forces are undermining decades of progress. Feminist and queer movements are at risk, both online and physically. We are also witnessing an alarming trend.

Governments are shifting resources from humanitarian aid, social spending, and climate adaptation to the military. This shift is based on a misguided and short-term vision of security, which prioritises war over diplomacy, weapons over well-being, and militarisation over human security. This trend enables war profiteering by arms companies and tech companies that supply products and services for military purposes.

On this International Women's Day, we urge all governments to collectively resist the reallocation of funding from aid, development, and human rights to military spending and to uphold obligations and commitments to invest in human rights, social spending, and peace. Ensure respect of human rights by big tech companies, improve transparency and accountability, and end the concentration of power in the sector. Ensure protection of sexual reproductive health and rights, bodily autonomy and gender-affirming care as human rights, and resist anti-gender movements.

Safeguard civil society space while ensuring sustained funding to feminists, human rights, and other social justice movements, and ensure the full and effective participation of women, non-binary, and gender diverse people, as well as minorities in all decision-making spaces, including in peace efforts and conflict resolution.



UN WOMEN

SPECIAL COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025

Intergenerational Dialogue on Beijing+30

For ALL Women and Girls – Rights, Equality and Empowerment

#HRC58 • 7 March 2025 • 13:00-14:30 • Room XIX

WELCOME REMARKS

H.E. Ms. Sofia CALLTORP, Director of UN Women Geneva Office

It is a great honour to be with all of you here today. 2025 marks not only the 50th anniversary of the International Women's Day, but it is also the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration of Platform for Action. In many ways, the world of today is a more equal world for women and girls than it was 50 and 30 years ago. We see that women around the globe have won the right to vote and to work. There are more girls in school than in any earlier time in history. We see a new wave of fearless and youth-led activism that is rising across the world. But as we all know, at the same time, in this very pivotal year for gender equality, we see that the rights of women and girls are still under threat.

One-fifth of girls globally are still married as children. And the cases of conflict-related sexual violence have increased by 50 percent since 2022. And in the just-released flagship report that the UN Women gathered ahead of this commemoration, we hear from nearly a quarter of governments worldwide that the backlash on women and rights in 2024 is hindering their work towards gender-equal work. This quite mixed picture of the state of gender equality shows that progress is possible. But so far, this progress has been too slow, fragile, and uneven. And most importantly, this progress is not guaranteed.

That is why this celebration is so important. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of International Women's Day, we are reminded of the brave women that have walked before us, fighting for their rights and for their empowerment. But we are also very much reminded of the women and men, girls and boys of the next generation for whom our actions today very much set the standard for to what extent they will experience our joint vision and the full realisation of a gender-equal work which is free from discrimination and whose women's rights are fully respected.

OPENING REMARKS

H.E. Ms. Tatyana VALOVAYA, Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva

It is a really a great privilege to host this very important event with all our partners. This year 2025 is a particularly significant one because when we look backwards 30 years ago, in 1995 the world was completely different for women. In some countries women still did not have voting rights. In some countries there were many obstacles for women to make their career.

For example, I like many girls of my generation we were brought up with the idea that we have absolutely equal rights. When we were boys, girls, very young children at school and then at university, we were still thinking that we have equal rights. Then, real life started and we saw that there were not only glass ceilings, but there were also glass walls. There were still spheres like



diplomacy and multilateralism, science and technology, where women and girls were not really welcome - in government, in the political sphere and in many others spheres. That is why even for the boys and girls who were born in those equal societies, still there was a not equal rights. A lot has changed since Beijing Declaration, but the world is not really the world which we all would like to have as there is a backlash. Life is not very easy for girls and women all around the world. In some places, it is just terrible and it is getting worse. In other places, it is getting better but not as quick as we would. We still have to fight for equality and we still have to do it in solidarity - girls and boys, men and women.

We are facing enormous challenges - social and economic challenges, geopolitical tensions, growing inequalities among Member States and within each of them. I personally think that it might not be negative for equality because when we look into the history - and I'm a great history fan - you can see that the greatest progress in women's rights was always done in the time of crisis. Women received in a huge part of the world their political rights just during and after the first World War. Then after the second World War, they again started gaining their political and economic rights in many other parts of the world.

Why? It was very simple because during the wars women had to do men's job and men were fighting, women were doing what normally men were doing. Working, governing, taking care of everyday activities and after the situation stabilised it was not possible to send us back to the kitchen. So whenever there is a crisis, humanity realises that it can't go forward without the full support and full participation of the half of the community.

The current crisis shows again why we need equal participation and equal rights for men and women. Sustainable development. We cannot implement the Sustainable Development Goals if half of the humanity is left behind. I am happy that many countries accepted to host national exhibitions of our '17 Faces of Action' initiative. Already 10 countries have this fantastic exhibition showing 17 female faces who work hard for sustainable development. We are very glad that later this year - in June - we will host a big exhibition here in the Palais des Nations uniting all these national exhibitions. We are also very happy to run every year a project titled 'Not a Woman's Job?'

As we are celebrating the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, this year will have a 'Not a Woman's Job?' dedicated to women in diplomacy and multilateralism. I am sure it is going to be a great exhibition because just when I look now at this room I see equal participation, different ages, a really inclusive society. It is totally different from the rooms here in the Palais des Nations 30 years ago. We want to show that we are making progress. But we are making progress only when we have a political will.

The United Nations have to lead and give the example. It is a Secretary-General's priority to achieve gender balance within the United Nations without any backlash, a place where we work together and in solidarity. For us, events like today's are a great opportunity to show that we are committed and we will go step-by-step. If we cannot have absolute satisfaction now that we are celebrating 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, in several years we will move even closer, I am sure that if we work together we will succeed.



H.E. Mr. Volker TÜRK, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

When we look at International Women's Day, it is important to reflect on power and power dynamics. We know that essentially it is about power. We also know that there are the old playbooks of subjugation, of domination, but also of invisibility. I remember a couple of years ago I met a very excellent author who wrote a book about the invisibility of women. And it is very often related to invisibility.

If you look at statistics, data in the medical area, the investigation of the human body is a male dominated one. A lot of medicines and health information goes to male dominated studies. Female participants were involved in clinical studies only in the 80s – and in the US it was only made mandatory in 1993. We know that, for example, according to Harvard, 70% of the people impacted by chronic pain are women, yet 80% of pain studies are conducted on male mice or men.

This in and of itself gives you a very, very strong indication. So this invisibility is one that unfortunately is present even today in science, in technology, when it comes to what you also mentioned in work areas that are considered traditionally more for men than for women. Indeed, we need to break these glass ceilings. It is important to bear this in mind. But since the topic is an intergenerational discussion, I want to get back to history.

If we look at the feminist movements all over the world - by the way, these feminist movements were heroes at a time when it was sometimes they had to risk their life. Sometimes women activists were detained as a result of asking for some of the most basic rights - the right to vote, the right to have equal pay, the right to participate. I think we really need to honour these women. But we should also look at history, not only from the male perspective, but also from a female perspective and celebrate the heroes of the past.

This goes into each and every area. For example, I only discovered a couple of years ago that during Mozart's time, there was a very famous female composer that no one hears about. She was actually a friend of Mozart and she did her own compositions. You will hardly ever hear her being performed. Now I think she was rediscovered. This actually tells us something – classical composers was a men's job essentially, not a women's job.

When I lived in New York, I went to an exhibition by a Swedish painter, Hilma af Klint. She was absolutely marvellous. I mean, for the first time, the Guggenheim. By reading her biography, you discover that she was never during her lifetime. She said – 'well, because of me being a woman, I knew that I would not make it as an artist.' So she didn't even decide to exhibit her work in any prominent way. It was only 20 years after her death that she became this icon of modern painting. The same, and this connects us with Geneva.

The first woman who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace was Bertha von Suttner, who was a pacifist, who had a lot of ideas about anti-slavery, anti-racism, anti-imperialism, anti-militarisation, anti-Semitism. In particular, she was a founder of the pacifist movement at a time when the world was very militarised and went into the First World War. Bertha von Suttner's personal archives are at the UN library in Geneva, because her thinking went into the founding of the League of Nations. But hardly anyone knows about her as a contributor to the cause that we still are benefitting from when it comes to precisely the type of issues that we are dealing with.



At the forefront of the human rights movement, at the forefront of peace, at the forefront also of multilateralism. I think it is important that when we talk about intergenerational issues, that we are aware of the heroes and the champions of the past, that we are inspired by them, and that we let them influence us today. We of course have amazing heroes in today's world too. I have actually a good list of women leaders today, young women leaders. For instance, Greta Thunberg is certainly one on climate justice; Waad Al-Khatib, a citizen journalist documenting life in Aleppo; Rima Sultana Rimu, providing educational resources for women and children in the Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh; Anna Lukina, working with women and persons with disabilities who have been affected by the war in Ukraine - just to give you a couple of examples.

I think that is really the beauty of us here in the Geneva community, to provide a safe space for and also hopefully the funding opportunities that women activists around the world - those who are carrying the torch now - so much need. We need to make sure they are supported and can continue this work in all areas of life. We also need to spotlight on their work, on their actions. This is extremely important in today's world when we know how much there is still to be done on gender equality.

H.E. Ms. Claudia FUENTES JULIO, Ambassador of Chile to UN Geneva, and Vice-President of the United Nations Human Rights Council

This is an important occasion to honour the achievements of women and girls around the world and to acknowledge the persistent challenges that demand our collective and urgent action. This year, as we mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we reflect on the progress made while reaffirming our commitment to fulfilling its vision of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Thirty years ago, the Beijing Declaration set forth a transformative agenda for advancing the rights of women and girls.

It remains a cornerstone of our efforts today, guiding policies and inspiring generations of advocates. Since its adoption, we have witnessed significant advancements in education, health, political participation, and economic empowerment. Yet, discrimination, gender-based violence, the disproportionate burden of care and support for wage gaps, and unequal access to leadership opportunities continue to impede true equality.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of climate change, and global conflicts have further underscored the importance of gender-responsive policies. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by this crisis, yet they are also at the forefront of solutions, leading climate action, driving economic recovery, and fostering peace. At the same time, we are witnessing a concerning and growing pushback against gender equality in various parts of the world, including within intergovernmental districts.

Efforts to roll back progressive rights, including questioning of assistance to policies promoting equal representation, restrictions on reproductive health, and the rights of misinformation undermining gender equality, threaten to reverse decades of progress. We must remain vigilant and united in addressing gender equality as a fundamental human right, also essential for sustainable development, peace, and prosperity. When women and girls, half of the humanity, are denied their human rights, society as a whole loses its potential.



The Human Rights Council actively works to promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls. It regularly takes action towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. On the opening day of the ongoing session, the Council held its annual high-level panel discussion on human rights, focussing on the achievements that have been made and challenges being faced in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The Council's Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls has worked tirelessly against the global pushback against gender equality since its creation, especially as it relates to sexual and reproductive health rights, misogynistic statements in the media, the rise of media journalism, and attacks on women and girls' human rights defenders. The gender backlash undermines the very core of our human rights system. The Working Group has provided guidance through their work, thematic reports, country visits, and guidance documents.

Additionally, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council continue the essential work of addressing violence and discrimination against women and girls in all its different forms and manifestations worldwide, including sexual and gender-based violence and ensuring that violence against women is integrated into the UN Human Rights Framework and mechanism. Violence against all women and girls is a major impediment to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment. It violates, abuses, and impairs their human rights, and as such is completely unacceptable.

We must continue to champion for evidence-based policies that prioritise the rights of women and girls globally, support initiatives that promote equal opportunities, strengthen legal protections, challenge harmful norms, and actively engage in programmes and initiatives that enable all women and girls to reach their full potential. One of my overarching priorities as President of the Human Rights Council is to bolster the Council's actions and impact to address discrimination in all forms and make advancements toward achieving gender equality.

In light of this, I am continuing the presence of the Human Rights Council Advisory Board on Gender Equality that was established by my predecessor in September 2024, where I will work closely with UN Member States, UN Agencies, including UN Women's Society, and other organisations addressing gender equality, women empowerment, and the principle of non-discrimination throughout the work of the Councils and Partners in Support and Friends.

On this International Women's Day, let us reaffirm our shared responsibility to turn commitments into action. The next generation deserves a world where gender equality is not an aspiration, but a reality. Together, through collaboration, policy reforms, and an unwavering advocacy, we can accelerate the promise of making Black Lives Matter and build a more just and inclusive world for all women and girls.

H.E. Ms. Lotte KNUDSEN, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

The European Union is very pleased to be part of this event, and I think we are very lucky here in Geneva, and we do not want to take it for granted. I think that is what this day is about as well. We are very happy to be here. We must recall today is International Women's Day, and it is not something we can consider to be a key in our world.



Right now, in all EU delegations across the world we are celebrating this day. It is indeed in our DNA, and it is something we stand up for on every given occasion. It is also true that we are celebrating the achievements of women across the world with the Beijing Declaration today. It is also a reminder, indeed, that there is still a long way to go. A lot of progress has been made, but we are not quite there yet. At the same time, we see this global wide pushback on gender rights, which is also a wake-up call for us here in Geneva.

Political will is important, alongside processes and frameworks. I think that is what the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action is all about. Without this instrument, we would not be as advanced as we are today. The 30th anniversary should indeed be celebrated for what has been achieved over the last three decades, which with the declaration has driven forward legal reforms, led to better access to education and healthcare, and strengthened our women's role in terms of leadership, be it in the life, societal, or economic and business sector.

Needless to say, the EU is always ready to reaffirm its continued commitment to pursue the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration. It is indeed the collective responsibility of all of us to make gender equality a reality, and we must stand up at every given opportunity, especially during these times of constant backsliding across the world.

The very idea that gender equality should be a priority to be put into question can be a challenge. It is a strange notion for many of us. We need to be very capacious and transformative in our approach, and tackle and address the root causes of gender inequality and the societal factors that may lead to it.

Gender equality is not just about women. I am very glad to see this room many of my fellow ambassadors, be it male or female, but also a very strong ethical component, which is very refreshing, because indeed, in our daily meetings and in the political zone, it is not always the case. Gender equality is also about smart economics. There is a right-based approach which is vastly important in order to be able to uphold these rights, but we also need to say that smart economics is another way that runs well with many countries, it leads to better societies, it leads to more peace in the world.

We have about 60-65 conflicts today. It leads to a sounder democracy, better institutions, better justice. So we will, together with all of you, I hope, continue to stand up for women's rights and focus on the intergenerational aspect, which is also more than ever.

In Brussels, the EU has just started a youth dialogue with the High Representative Ms. Kaja Kallas, which will bear fruit in the era of foreign policy. It is important, as a message, to say that we can all make a difference on gender equality. It is every day, every single one of us, who should stand up for these principles and say, share responsibility.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

This intergenerational dialogue features insights from young senior officials, representatives from Permanent Missions, and also inspiring young voices from Afghanistan, Kenya, and Peru. It offers us the opportunity to stress role of younger generations in enhancing gender equality while also looking at the future. This interactive panel focuses on the legacy of the 15th Declaration of Platform for Action, where do we stand now, and how can implementation be accelerated.



**Ms. Suraya YOSUFI, Afghan Refugee, Recipient of Maria Rosario Lazzati Niada Scholarship,
Graduate Institute Geneva**

Today, I speak to you as an Afghan refugee woman, determined to lead to the collective effort to ensure that women's rights are not compromised in any setting or context. Women's rights should not be enshrined, and the notion for all women and girls' rights, equality, and empowerment should be enclosed, context-driven, time-sensitive, and accessible.

We are living in uncertain times, particularly considering the human rights situation around the world, specifically women's rights. Thirty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we are still fighting the most blessing women's rights, such as the right to education, to work, to be heard, to live with dignity, or merely to exist. While reading the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, I imagined a world that would go by these lines, and that was me.

If only the promises were fulfilled and practised to its full capacity. I am hopeful, but also challenged, by the weight of the responsibility as a young woman, for the privileges that I have had, and the platform that I have today to speak here. How can I enhance the situation for women, vulnerable and marginalised women in particular? How can I be an effective voice, and assist in implementing the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action? And how will countries improve these diverse voices of young women, and have access to them? I am very hopeful of the Platform for Action, and looking forward to continue the legacy, by being and including the voices that were not before.

**H.E. Ms. Usana BERANANDA, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the
United Nations Office at Geneva**

These reflections on the Beijing's legacy are not only very timely, but also relevant. You mentioned about the rights, equality, and empowerment. The high condition I mentioned just now, is that the feminist movement has a long history, and of course, the advancement of human rights also has a very long history. Throughout that long history, we have seen progress, but there are a lot of challenges, and progress itself - if I can use the word mentioned by the Director-General - has been too slow, fragile, and not given. So this intergenerational dialogue is really important, because we are not just considering a contribution of the Beijing Declaration, but just to strike a balance with our younger generations, that the high one provides an opportunity throughout the history and should not be taken for granted.

We need to enhance our solidarity, our efforts to preserve it. I would like to reflect on the question raised by you about the contribution of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in Thailand. It has a tremendous impact on the revolution, on the improvement of the issue of gender equality in our country.

One of the concrete outcomes or concrete impacts is the establishment of a dedicated Department for Women's Affairs, which started off in the office of the National Commission on Women's Affairs, but was later upgraded to the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development with its own budget and resources. So for us, institutional transformation is really important, and this could be possible thanks to the Beijing Declaration. At the regional level, the



Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action has also contributed to the development of women's rights and gender equality in Southeast Asia.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has implemented the spirit and the action plans outlined in the Beijing Declaration. Each year, at the Regional Plan of Action, we help address women's poverty, discrimination against women, violence against women. So all these spirit and the action plans of what we achieved in Beijing has led to our work for the region as well.

Beyond Southeast Asia, the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing Declaration was held in Bangkok to review the outcome of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration, hosted by UNESCO and the Government of Thailand. We brought together more than 44 countries, government officials from 44 countries, and over 300 civil society organisations to assess the implementation of the plan of action.

The key discussion during that conference focussed on economic empowerment, multiformity dispersion, gender-based violence, and emerging challenges such as climate change and mutual threat as well. We see the contribution of countries in the region to assess the contribution of the Beijing Declaration and try to identify gaps and plan on how we move forward. There are a lot of issues that has been raised, including poverty eradication, strengthening the care, engaging men in gender equality. I think this is important because we have the participation and engagement of our colleagues.

There is a lot of progress in the field of education, public health, and political participation. However, there are some gaps that remain, particularly in the field of discrimination as well as equality, opportunity, and equal opportunities, especially in the informal sector. So it is really important to enhance our efforts to ensure that what we have achieved throughout not only the past three years but throughout the long history of the movement to ensure that our future generation can enjoy a better and more equal future.

Mr. James MUMO NYUMU, Student at the Master in International and Development Studies, Graduate Institute Geneva

It is a privilege to contribute to this intergenerational dialogue at such an important moment, which is the 30th anniversary of the meeting declaration and platform of action. I extend my deepest gratitude to the UN Women and all the organisers for making space for diverse voices and especially those of the youth.

As we reflect on Beijing's legacy, we must ask ourselves if we have dismantled the structures that oppress women and girls, or if we have just merely adjusted them to make them more palatable. Nelson Mandela once said that freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. Today, I ask how far we have come in achieving this freedom. Because the Beijing Declaration was not just another international declaration. It was a revolutionary call to action, a global commitment to advancing women's rights and ensuring justice in all aspects of life.

It is recognised that the struggle for gender equality is not just about representation in political spaces. It is also fundamental about shifting power structures in education, in health, in



economics and other aspects of life. This declaration affirmed that women's rights are human rights. This statement should be obvious, but it is not the case in many spaces.

30 years later, while we have met and denied progress, no country has fulfilled the promise of a world free from violence against women. Every 10 minutes, a woman is murdered by a partner or a family member. Women still are not paid as men for the same work. Too many girls have been denied access to education, and too many women are forced to fight for work and autonomy. So I just wanted to begin by painting this picture so that I can allude to the fact that the Beijing vision was never meant to be a symbolic document.

It was a blueprint for a future that we are yet to fully realise. As a young person, I refuse to inherit a gender justice agenda that is performative rather than transformative. Yes, there have been gains. More women are in leadership positions. Not enough, just more. There is greater legal protection today.

There is increased but non-equal access to education for girls. But at what cost? If gender equality means integrating women into systems that are still patriarchal in nature and that are oppressive, then we are not talking about liberation. We are talking about adaptation to oppression.

Kofi Annan, while I have to say that women themselves have a right to live in dignity, in freedom from want and freedom from fear. Yet too often we ask women to navigate systems that were not even designed for their dignity. We tell them to be patient, to work harder, to prove themselves, while in reality it is these type of systems that we need to expand on.

For true transformation, we must move beyond representation and infrastructural change. We must preserve the frameworks that tokenise women rather than empower them. We must recognise that women's rights are not just a secondary issue. They are actually a fundamental to the very idea of justice itself. We cannot claim to champion gender equality while excusing violence, harassment, economic exclusion. We cannot tell women that they are equal while denying them land ownership, fair wages or safety, even in their own homes.

Every time we allow these injustices to persist, we betray the commitments that we made in Beijing. I want my fellow men, we must see gender equality not as a threat and start recognising it as a platform of liberation for all. The patriarchal system that harmed women also limited and dehumanised us. We are taught to suppress our emotions, to assert our true dominance, to measure our worth through control rather than compassion. Material strength does not come from oppression. Rather, it comes from courage, the courage to learn, to learn and to be learned.

Girls have been raised to cater to the fragile egos of men. This is not only a disservice to women. It is also a betrayal of what actually it means to be a man. True masculinity, according to me, does not demand submission from women. True masculinity stands alongside women in the fight for justice. Boys must be taught differently. They must be raised not to fear strong women, but to respect and to celebrate them. Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is saying, 'the type of man who will be intimidated by me is exactly the type of man that I am not interested in.' And she is right.



Strengthening women is not a threat. It is actually a gift to society. And so I wanted to just talk about the harm that patriarchy inflicts on men themselves. It stifles our emotions. It pressures us into rigid rules. It balances us with expectations of dominance rather than partnership.

So, fellow men, we must step up, not as allies who lend support when it is convenient, but as active participants in this modern operation. This means calling out misogyny in our workplaces, in our homes, in our communities, in our day-to-day activities. And so I do not dismiss the Beijing Platform of Action, but I refuse to see it as the final word on gender equality.

My generation demands more. We need a rejection of empowerment models that force women to adapt to oppressive structures rather than dismantling them. We need a refreshment of knowledge systems and governance models that recognise gender balance as a foundational principle.

We need a transformation of masculinity that sees men not as protectors of women but partners in liberation. We need a world where women are respected in all forms of their femininity because they deserve to be. We need a world where gender equality is not just a conversation but a lived reality.

H.E. Ms. Rebeca GRYNSPAN, Secretary-General, UN Trade and Development

The 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action is an landmark document for gender equality and women's empowerment. It has shaped policies, legislation, and activism worldwide and remains a guiding force for action to protect us. In the realm of trade, the Beijing Declaration was also a milestone. It acknowledged the opportunities and challenges that the globalization has brought for women, recognising these priorities in wages, job security, and market access. It urged governments to assess the difference in budgetary policies – a call that remains relevant today. Over the past three decades, we have made progress in the women and trade nexus in four different areas.

First, directly in the inclusion of gender provisions and even dedicated chapters in several trade agreements, for example in Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador and Argentina. And there has been also stronger multilateral engagement for example, in the 2017 MC11 meeting with the WTO Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment.

Second, on policy designed to eliminate obstacles and enhance women's capacity to participate in the international trade system.

Third, there are many more programmes and initiatives to support women-owned businesses in international trade. For example, UNCTAD's initiative on e-trade to support women digital entrepreneurs.

Fourth, there is a growing body of research and analytical work that has deepened our understanding of women's challenges and opportunities in global markets.

Now, despite these achievements, challenges persist. Policy implementation gaps remain, and trade impact on women's multi-economic roles is still not fully understood. Gender-disaggregated trade data is insufficient, limiting our ability to track progress. And many free trade agreements include gender provisions, but these are often not binding or lack enforcement



mechanisms. In addition, women remain underrepresented in global value chains and high-productivity sectors.

Short-term training programmes help, but without continued mentorship, access to finance, and market linkages, women struggle to fully integrate into international trade. To address these challenges, we must remove barriers that prevent women from benefitting equally from trade. This includes enhancing their access to resources and networks, education to expand and ensure effective implementation of free trade agreements. As new dynamics emerge, we must remain vigilant to prevent setbacks in gender equality.

Thirteen years ago, the Beijing Declaration set a vision for women's empowerment. Today, the work continues. At UNCTAD, we reaffirm our commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform Action and to fight all discriminatory rules and norms that prevent women to strive, for inclusive trade and development.

H.E. Dr. Xiaomei LI, Minister, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of CHINA to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Geneva

Today, I am very honoured to be here as a representative of the Beijing Conference as we celebrate International Women's Day and also the thirtieth Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Today's focus is intergenerational dialogue.

Myself, 40 years ago, I was in the third year of my college, I was here in the NGO Forum of the World Conference. We supported more than 30,000 NGO representatives from all over the world to attend the Beijing Conference. That was an exciting experience. For a young woman of my age, in my third year of college, you can imagine how this event influenced my life and defined how I saw women's rights, how I saw international affairs, and how I saw China contribute to the world.

Last week, I assume the annual mainstreaming panel of the UNHCR was opened, and China was very honoured to invite the first ever female Chinese astronaut, Liu Yang, to speak to the panel. According to her, all along the training process, as well as the qualification for being an astronaut, there is no male or female difference. There is only one word, astronaut. It is a pity that she could not come here in person to address the Council because she is preparing for her next space mission. We are looking forward to it.

Last year, we were very honoured to invite the chairperson of China's Association for Persons with Disabilities, as well as the President of Rehabilitation International. Her experience was very inspiring. She was paralysed when she was four years old. She could not go to school because she was disabled, so she learned by herself along the life journey. But now, women with disabilities in China, they could go to education at different levels. They can go to universities. They can drive cars with modern technology. So these personal stories, they were a sort of reflection of what's the impact of Beijing 30 years ago.

For now, still, although 30 years have passed, what has been visited at Beijing is still very live. We are still on the way to implement this very ambitious agenda. As we speak, the annual meeting of China's National People's Congress and National Committee of China's People's Political Consultative Conference is under way in Beijing. Many women from the grassroots level to the citizens, to the high-level officials, they were part of the two sessions.



In the second half of the year, China is going to host a summit in Beijing to celebrate Beijing +13. After 30 years, although we are in a world with a lot of unpredictability, China still wants to be here to support the multilateral system, to support women's rights. And over the past few decades, China led the advancement of the Global Cause of Women's Development through concrete actions.

We have supported the work of young women, partnered with UNESCO, in setting up a prize for girls and women's education, helped fellow developing countries in implementing 100 maternal and child health programmes, and trained over 200,000 female professionals for more than 180 countries and regions. This is just the last three decades. On the way forward, we are going to contribute more.

In the autumn in Beijing, we shall witness the determination of the world's women to seek gender equality. This year, the UN celebrates its 80th anniversary along with the 30th anniversary of Beijing. We are also part of the young women regional consultations all over the world, also the Asia-Pacific consultation in Thailand. With a spirit of true multilateralism, genuine dialogue and cooperation, let us rekindle the spirit of Beijing, accelerate gender equality and work together to advance the global cause of women's empowerment.

Ms. Danielle ROMAN, Junior Advocacy Analyst at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

I am honoured to participate in this panel and to commemorate such an important day. I will try to link this inter-generational dialogue to my personal experience.

I was born in 1995 when the Beijing Declaration was adopted and it has been very significant in shaping how my life has developed until today. It has been fundamental in changing policies, practises, and especially in people's mindsets regarding the value of women and girls in society. It has paved the way for many of us, women that are here. We have a better, safer, and freer life than all the rest of us. We have the possibility to have our own rights and choices recognised, and also to access information, services, and tools to enable us to unlock our potential in life, by ourselves, and for ourselves.

So for instance, comparing my experience with those of women in my families, I recognize many constraints into which I was born, particularly the cycle of poverty that shaped my mother's and grandmothers' lives, and the social expectations concerning children – meaning to have the capacity to decide when to have children up to safer medical facilities and practitioners - while my grandmother had ten children, and that put her in vulnerable situations and confined her to child work.

However, my current position is not a mother of lock or individual efforts or blessings. My journey has been deeply intertwined with the support of various peoples and circumstances that made it possible, especially the role of the family, the advocacy of civil society groups, and the role of other women I met in my life. Thanks to these interconnected network of support, I was able to access education and pursue an international career which is very difficult for women in my hometown in Peru. There have been other times when I doubted about myself, my family believed in me. So in this regard, I want to emphasise the importance of having allies, especially men, who have stood for us. For example, my brother and my father recognized the challenges that my



mother and I faced and did everything in their power to support us, allowing us to shape our future without any imposition or pressure about our ‘supposed place’ in the world.

So, beyond my network, the work of civil society and the support of international organisations has been transformative, especially women and feminist organisations in my country, in which I was an advocacy member for numerous years. UNPFA groups have legitimacy to fight for rights, especially reproductive rights, and have played a crucial role in disseminating and advocating for women’s economic and political inclusion, implementing project to combat various forms of violence, and holding governments accountable for their obligations and commitment to gender equality.

Specifically in my region, in Latin America, issues such as femicide and sexual violence remain prevalent. Thanks to these efforts, we were able to spread information about justice organizations that allow free consultations. We also provided free access to knowledge and tools that help build confidence, recognize dangerous situations to prevent femicide, implement boundaries and consent, and making informed decisions about our future. This also allowed me to have an idea of the type of choices and possibilism I had.

Finally, not less important, I had a great exposure and experience with empowering women in different moments in my life who challenged me and who were the fire for me to continue fighting for my dreams and building my career – from university colleagues to professors – mentors, diplomats and my mother. As an Andean woman, my presence here symbolizes the progress we have made in empowering women from diverse backgrounds, especially those from economically disadvantaged communities and Indigenous women. However, I am still an exception, because women in my region continue face immense challenges. Many still lack autonomy over decisions regarding their bodies. Access to healthcare and education remains limited. There is still much work to be done.

This panel reminds us that we are steadily advancing on women's rights and improving our lives, especially in these troubling times. So, the vision of the Beijing Declaration must continue to guide governments in translating commitments into actions and encouraging international cooperation to increase their investments rather that retreating from the inspiration to achieve gender equality. It continues to be as relevant as ever for the young generation of women and men in all our diversity to demand a place at the table and claim our rights. Let us continue the march towards a better future.