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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

High-level interactive dialogue: accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: exchange of best practices in preparation for the 25-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action

Chair’s summary

1. On 13 March 2019, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue on the topic “Accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: exchange of best practices in preparation for the 25-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action”.
2. The Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Mauricio Carabali Baquero (Colombia), chaired and moderated the dialogue and made opening and closing remarks. The Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, made an introductory statement, with a focus on preparations for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Ministers and high-level government officials from 37 Member States, two observers, 10 representatives from diverse stakeholder groups and two representatives from non-governmental organizations participated in the dialogue.

Preparations for the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

3. Participants highlighted recent progress made and actions taken to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Many confirmed that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action provided an important



opportunity to reaffirm political will in working towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It was also the occasion for additional and intensified action in many areas by Governments and other stakeholders.

4. In many countries, preparatory processes had been initiated under the leadership of national gender equality mechanisms. Those processes sometimes included the participation of different government ministries and agencies, as well as local governments. Review processes also included civil society organizations, including in particular women's organizations and groups, grass-roots, faith-based and youth organizations. Examples of collaboration with academia, trade unions and the private sector were also provided. Speakers provided information about the ongoing preparations for their national reports to assess progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In that regard, reference was made to the use of the guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews, which had been issued by UN-Women and the regional commissions in 2018, in order to support the review process. Participants also referred to the availability of data and information collected in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the usefulness of this information for the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Accelerating progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

5. Participants described recent gains and implementation measures, which included legislative and constitutional reforms, in particular to end gender-based violence, including sexual violence, domestic violence and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. In several countries, the number of women in political leadership roles in government and parliament had increased, including the number of indigenous women. Progress in women's participation in armed, police and security forces was specifically highlighted. Speakers stressed that gender equality as a cross-cutting issue should be an integral part of national planning and budgetary processes, including through gender-responsive budgeting.

6. Policy reforms had also resulted in gains for women in the social and economic spheres, including through work-life balance measures, improved parental leave, measures to reduce gender pay gaps and to ensure women's property rights. Participants underscored the importance of women's leadership in the private sector and in business, and of their equal access to financing, loans and credits in support of women entrepreneurs. Speakers highlighted advancements in women's and girls' participation in primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education, including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The integration of a gender perspective in national climate change strategies was also highlighted.

7. Participants provided examples of accelerated action for universal health coverage and comprehensive health-care systems, including for sexual and reproductive health and rights. Steps had been taken to expand and establish universal social protection systems that also reached women in the informal sector. In addition, coverage was extended for unpaid care and domestic work, and in order to create a more secure situation for women in precarious work. Participants further stressed the importance of the active engagement of men and boys to create a normative shift and social change towards gender equality.

8. Participants highlighted the interlinkages of the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action with the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Such integrated approaches had resulted in greater policy coherence

and in the more systematic reflection of gender perspectives in national sustainable development policies and plans.

Contributions by stakeholders to accelerate implementation

9. Representatives from various stakeholder groups voiced concern about persistent implementation challenges and gaps. Speakers highlighted areas where a range of stakeholders had undertaken concerted action, including through political engagement, advocacy and awareness-raising to accelerate progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda and other international commitments.

10. International and regional organizations continued to play important roles in assessing progress in the implementation and monitoring of global and regional commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including by tracking progress through key indicators and regular reviews. Regional entities highlighted key priorities and strategies within their respective regions, while international organizations stressed the importance of collaborations and networks among various groups of stakeholders.

11. Several stakeholders pointed to the specific situation of women human rights defenders, providing data on the risks and challenges they continued to encounter in the conduct of their work. Civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and special procedure mandate holders highlighted their holistic strategies to support and protect women's human rights defenders, and in support of the national implementation of international human rights instruments. Participants called for greater protection for women human rights defenders, who often face greater risks of stigmatization, online harassment, physical attacks and even femicide, owing to the nature of their work. The creation of United Nations guidelines in this regard was proposed.

12. Participants underscored the role of the United Nations system in the review and appraisal process of the Beijing Platform for Action and in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Partnerships with UN-Women in the preparation of national reviews and in the implementation of national, regional and international strategies were also highlighted. Several requests were for civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and other stakeholders to be given increased access to the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.