

UNITED NATIONS

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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE TO WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS GLOBAL FORUM

Mexico City, 7-9 October 2015

Delivered by Under-Secretary-General Susana Malcorra, UN Chef de Cabinet

It is a pleasure to greet the parliamentarians and other distinguished participants in this important global forum. I thank the Government and people of Mexico for hosting.

You meet at a moment when the world is wrestling with multiple crises, more people have been displaced by conflict than at any time since the Second World War, climate change increasingly threatens our well-being, and governance structures in many parts of the world are facing a crisis of effectiveness and trust.

As representatives of the people, you stand for peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development.

As women, you stand for the empowerment of half of humankind – without whom the world will not achieve its goals, but with whom everything is possible.

Far too many women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence, exclusion from positions of leadership and decision-making, and the denial of opportunities in education and employment.

We cannot achieve the newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without full and equal rights for women and girls, in law and in practice.

We cannot effectively respond to humanitarian emergencies without ensuring women and girls are protected, their needs prioritized, and their strengths utilized.

I continue my efforts to mainstream gender equality across the United Nations, at all levels. I continue to press world leaders to make tangible commitments followed by real actions that will secure true gender equality throughout the world.

This means urgently addressing structural barriers such as unequal pay, and realizing the right of women and girls to govern their sexual and reproductive health. It means ending violence against women and girls, promoting political participation and equality in the workplace, and reducing and redistributing unpaid care work.

It has now been 40 years since the first World Conference on the Status of Women in Mexico City, 20 years since the landmark conference in Beijing, and 15 years since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. We have progressed in many areas, but we still have a long way to go.

Among the obstacles we face today are the growing constraints that Governments in too many places are imposing on civil society, including women's organizations and women human rights defenders. As we strive to achieve the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals, the State and civil society should be partners in building the future people want.

Gender equality is the birth-right of every woman, man, girl and boy. Our shared goal is a 50:50 Planet by 2030. This is the foundation of a sustainable and peaceful world. To achieve it, we need leadership from the top and engagement throughout society.

The United Nations will look to you to serve as a bridge between the global and the national, to write the laws and invest in the programmes that will translate our objectives into meaningful action, and to hold your governments accountable. Thank you for your commitment to this effort. Please accept my best wishes for a successful gathering.