

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, and partners,

It is with profound honor to present the key messages that captured the rich insights from our recent Experts Group Meeting on SDG 5, that took place on January 21 and 22, 2025 in New York, organized jointly by UN Women and UN-DESA. The key messages and the report resulting from the EGM come at a critical juncture as we prepare for the 2025 High Level Political Forum, where SDG 5 will be under review.

As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 10th anniversary of the 2030 Agenda, our review examines progress and challenges not only in achieving SDG 5 but also in advancing all the SDGs, including SDG 3, SDG 8, SDG 14, and SDG 17 under discussion this year - reinforcing that gender equality is a cornerstone for sustainable development across all sectors.

The EGM situated our discussions within the broader framework of global agendas, drawing vital synergies with intergovernmental processes such as the 30th Anniversary of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UN Ocean Conference, the International Conference on Financing for Development, and the World Summit for Social Development. It reminded us that the realization of gender equality is essential to achieving transformative change over the next five years so that we can achieve the 2030 Agenda goals.

The gathering of experts from civil society, the private sector, academia, IFIs and philanthropic organizations has underscored the urgency of upholding the rights and empowerment of all women and girls as central to shaping global development.

The stocktaking section of the EGM laid bare the challenges we face. With just five years remaining until 2030, progress on SDG 5 remains too slow and uneven. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has left an indelible mark, as women have experienced unprecedented job losses, a surge in gender-based violence, and disruptions to essential health services.

Despite some legislative advances, such as 56 positive legal reforms between 2019 and 2023 and a modest increase in women's labor force participation, the pace of change is insufficient. Disturbingly, projections indicate that parity in management positions may take an additional 176 years. Moreover, a looming funding gap threatens to undermine critical gender-responsive programs, and if current trends persist, the annual shortfall could reach up to \$360 billion.

The participants also highlighted that, despite recent legal reforms, no country has yet closed the comprehensive legal gaps necessary to secure women's rights, leaving persistent challenges such as unpaid care work, low representation in decision-making, and insufficient access to sexual and reproductive health unresolved.

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Looking to the future, the EGM identified a mixed landscape of challenges and opportunities. Global shifts, including the impacts of climate change, armed conflicts, economic instability, and rapid technological transformations, are reshaping the environment in which we must pursue gender equality. Grassroots movements provide a hopeful counterbalance.

Yet, there is also evidence of backsliding on gender norms in different parts of the world and a concerning rise in regressive rights views and narratives, particularly propagated by online groups and movements opposed to change. The digital context, while offering unprecedented opportunities, continues to mirror these inequalities. Women and girls drop out of STEM education at alarming rates, face persistent biases in fields like artificial intelligence, and endure online harassment that further curtails their participation in the technology sector.

At the same time, the economic potential of gender equality is immense. Studies suggest that including women fully in the workforce could boost global GDP by as much as 20 percent, underscoring the critical need for targeted, gender-transformative investments.

The EGM also explored the policies and actions required to maximize synergies and drive transformative change. It called for the implementation of existing human rights and legal frameworks, emphasizing that gender equality is both a standalone goal and a cross-cutting priority essential to achieving the entire 2030 Agenda.

Dismantling discriminatory laws, stereotypes and negative social norms, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health, and addressing violence against women must go hand in hand with fostering women's economic empowerment. This comprehensive approach must also be supported by participatory data collection and policymaking, integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights to capture the lived experiences of marginalized groups and inform effective, evidence-based interventions.

Critical to this effort are the means of implementation. The EGM underscored that strong, resilient partnerships, spanning local communities, national governments, and international bodies, are essential for translating commitments into action. Innovative financing models, such as gender lens investing and blended finance, must be deployed to close the persistent funding gaps that currently hinder progress.

Furthermore, the integration of robust accountability mechanisms and harmonized global standards will ensure that policy reforms are implemented effectively, and that progress is measured accurately. This is particularly vital for addressing the challenges of unpaid care work, ensuring that social protection systems are responsive, and that the benefits of economic growth are equitably shared.

In essence, the report paints a clear picture: achieving SDG 5 is not an isolated goal in itself, but a force of change, which is key to achieve sustainable development as a whole. It is a call to action, a call to harness our collective expertise, to invest decisively, and to forge the partnerships necessary to build a future where every woman and girl can fully realize her potential. Our

collective insights reveal that while the road ahead is challenging, the pathway to gender equality is illuminated by innovative solutions, strategic collaborations, and an unwavering commitment to leave no one behind.

The EGM resulted in a report that serves not only as a diagnostic tool but as a guide as we enter the negotiations of the Ministerial Declaration at the HLPF. The report can help inform on the stark realities of unresolved legal gaps, persistent funding shortfalls, and the multifaceted challenges that women face worldwide, while also offering concrete recommendations to accelerate progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda.

As we reflect on these findings today, let us reaffirm our commitment to transformative change. Let us work together to implement and finance policies that bridge the gap between aspirations and reality, ensuring that the voices of all women and girls are not only heard but are central to shaping the future of our global community. The progress of the 2030 Agenda, and indeed, the future of sustainable development, depends on our collective action now.

Thank you.