

## Joint Statement to the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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*Delivered by H.E. Maria Cristina Perceval Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, on behalf of the Governments of Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Mexico, Montenegro, Mozambique, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay*

As we all know, too many people and communities around the world have been left behind under the Millennium Development Goals due to structural inequalities and discrimination.

This is what makes this session of the Open Working Group so critically important: a post-2015 development agenda that is truly effective and inclusive must place people at the centre and tackle the root causes of inequalities and discrimination for *all* members of humankind. Achieving gender equality and advancing the human rights of women, girls and all young people, especially those living in poverty or otherwise excluded and marginalized must be prioritized and the systematic inequities they and other groups face worldwide addressed.

Gender inequality undermines progress, not only for women and girls, but for families, societies, economies and countries as a whole. On the other hand, achieving equal rights for women and girls improves the well-being of children and households, increases prosperity and economic growth, enhances environmental stewardship and participatory governance for all. We should not forget the needs of older women and experiences they can share with the view to contribute to sustainable development.

Today's generation of adolescents and youth is the largest in history. Decisions about their place in the post-2015 agenda will be determining of humanity's and the planet's future.

At this stage of our discussions, we must be strategic, pragmatic and attentive to the realities people around the world face. Building on the Millennium Development Goals, and from an evidence-based approach, we consider that the following must be incorporated into the Sustainable Development Goals, as essential elements of a universally-relevant, transformative, high-impact and cost-effective post-2015 development framework:

\* The promotion, respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, without discrimination on any grounds, must be the basis of a sustainable development agenda rooted in principles of equality, equity and social justice for all.

\* Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be a priority in the new agenda, as well as mainstreamed, with commitments across the range of social, cultural, economic, civil and political rights. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring equal rights for women and girls to

education, health, social protection, economic opportunities, access to justice and decision-making in public and private life; and on fostering shared rights and responsibilities with men and boys.

\* While increasing access to quality education for all children, continue to close gender gaps at all levels of education, eliminate gender biases in curricula and teaching practices, enable secondary school completion for girls, ensure universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people, both in and out of school, and eradicate female illiteracy.

\* Ensure equitable access to quality universal health care focused on prevention that is affordable, and that protects individuals and families from financially-catastrophic consequences and impoverishment.

\* Respect, protect and fulfil the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all individuals throughout the life-cycle, including through universal access to quality, integrated sexual and reproductive health information, education and services.

\* End all forms of gender-based violence, including through public education campaigns for prevention and universal access to critical services, rehabilitation, justice and remedies for all victims/survivors; end harmful practices against girls, including early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation; criminalize sexual violence and end impunity of perpetrators, whether in peacetime or as a tactic of warfare; and eliminate sexual harassment and violence at home and in schools, workplaces and other public spaces.

\* Create decent employment and livelihood opportunities with decent wages, with emphasis on women and youth, including by supporting successful school-to-work transitions; ensuring women's equal access to economic opportunities and productive assets, equal pay for equal work, and equal access to land, property, inheritance, banking and financial services, agricultural supports and information and communication technologies; reducing disproportionate time-use burden and unpaid care work for women and girls, and strengthening family-friendly policies for affordable child and elderly care, maternity and paternity leave; and enact and enforce legislation to protect human and labour rights and eliminate exploitation in all its forms.

\* Increase women's and young people's participation in decision-making at all levels, including through temporary special measures for women's increased political participation, as well as leadership in all areas including economic, media, scientific and research spheres; and ensure women's and young people's voice and participation in decision-making in disaster- and conflict-affected situations and as an integral part of the peacebuilding process.

\* In all these areas, policies need to be implemented effectively, with transparent resource allocation and supported by stronger efforts on data collection and analysis.

As the thematic debates of this Working Group come to an end, we urge that the human rights and empowerment of women and girls and gender equality, the rights and empowerment of adolescents and youth, and the respect, protection and fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all be positioned as critical pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development

Agenda. These are fundamental priorities for any human rights-based, people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda.

We respectfully request that this joint statement and its main contents be reflected in the Co-Chair's summary report for this session and final reports of the Open Working Group deliberations.