

UK, Aus, NL– gender equality and women’s empowerment, education, Employment and decent work for all, health and population dynamics - statement as delivered

Mr co-Chair:

Our team strongly supports standalone goals on gender equality, education, and health. Delivering on these areas will be essential if we are to finish the job on the MDGs and achieve our overarching objective to eradicate extreme poverty. They are also universal issues, relevant in our countries as much as anywhere else.

I would like to say at the start that we believe the issues of “productive employment and decent work for all” are critically important for the SDGs. We see these as most relevant in the context of discussions on economic growth, and will reserve our comments for tomorrow.

On **gender** our comments reflect the recent consensus at the 58th Commission on the Status of Women, which sent a strong message on the SDGs.

We would like to join the overwhelming consensus here on both a standalone goal on gender equality and the empowerment and human rights of girls and women and for gender to be mainstreamed throughout SDG goals and targets. A dedicated gender goal, and gender mainstreaming, must work to advance the rights, and economic, social and political participation and leadership of girls and women.

Crucial targets for a standalone gender goal are as follows:

- Eliminate, prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls
- Promote economic empowerment of women, by supporting women as entrepreneurs, workers, employees and producers
- End child, early and forced marriage
- Eliminate harmful practices for women and girls and FGM/C.
- Ensure the equal right of women to own and inherit property, work and be fairly remunerated, sign a contract, register a business and open a bank account.
- Eliminate discrimination, and increase women’s leadership, voice and participation government and public life.
- Ensure the respect, promotion and protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

Gender mainstreaming can be supported by:

- Including participation of women and girls in governance and accountability frameworks and in conflict reduction mechanisms,
- Promote the availability of gender disaggregated data.

Education is both an outcome in itself and a critical enabler of other goals.

We should learn the lesson from the MDGs and focus on education outcomes as well as access. But this is not a criticism of the MDGs – it is thanks to the progress against the current MDG on education that highlighted the importance of focusing not just on access but also on learning.

Priority targets for an education goal are to:

- Increase the proportion of children, including disabled children, who are able to access and complete pre-primary education “ready to learn”.
- Ensure every child, regardless of circumstance, completes primary education able to meet minimum learning standards.
- Ensure every child, regardless of circumstance, completes lower secondary education and increase the proportion of adolescents who achieve recognized and measurable learning outcomes.
- Increase the number of young and adult women and men with the skills, including upper-secondary, technical, vocational, and tertiary, that support employment and economic growth

In addition, we need to make sure we leave no one behind in education and ensure targets are met by all, including the special circumstances of children with disabilities, those from the lowest income quintile and other disadvantaged groups.

Building on the achievements in **health** under the current MDGs, our team strongly supports an outcome-focused health goal, for example “ensure healthy lives for all”, with clear and measurable targets. This should recognise that health is both an enabler and an outcome of sustainable development.

We believe that targets under a health goal should include:

- Ending preventable neonatal, infant and under-5 deaths.
- Ensuring effective immunisation coverage of children and other vulnerable groups against priority diseases.

- Decreasing the maternal mortality ratio to less than 40 per 100,000 live births
- Reducing the burden of disease from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases and priority non-communicable diseases.
- Ensuring access for all to essential medicines, contraceptives and vaccines.
- Ensuring universal health coverage,
- Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights including universal access to family planning and reproductive health services, information, comprehensive sexuality education and services.

As we said at the outset productive employment and decent work for all is a critical issue, and we will provide our comments on this tomorrow in the discussion on the economic growth cluster.

Thank you