

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year's General Debate aims to give a universal push to the Sustainable Development Agenda.

However all of today's greatest challenges – from climate change to fighting terrorism or ending world's deadliest conflicts – can only be resolved with full participation of women.

Successfully implementing Sustainable Development Goals will also require to dedicate special attention to women – often more impacted, but left behind and ignored. Let's take some Goals as examples.

First, ending poverty.

Both women and men are affected, but lifting women out of poverty is much more difficult.

As if poverty was not hard enough, women also have to face gender-based discrimination, stereotypes and social marginalization. According to a UN Women report:

- a woman earns around 24 per cent less than a man;
- finds it more difficult to get a loan to start a business;
- is likely to receive a smaller part of inheritance or nothing when she decides to leave her abusive husband.

The trend of poverty feminization has to change. By not allowing women to prosper we condemn entire families to poverty.

Second, ending hunger.

Although around half of the world's agricultural work is done by women, if food is running out, women are the first to suffer.

When public order breaks down, a woman's trip to bring her family food or water may easily cost her life.

In times of hunger, women give the little food they have to their children. In a bread line, however, they often end up being pushed aside or abused.

Empowering women by expanding land ownership or providing credit would not only feed a family, but would also raise incomes of women and make more food available for all.

Third, providing education.

For so many girls and women around the world the road to inclusive learning remains an impossible dream:

- according to the UN Sustainable Development report, out of the world's 750 million illiterate adults, two thirds are women;
- girls are sent off or sold into early marriages, blocking their path to education, higher income and independence;
- criminals abduct women and sell them into slavery.
- extremists burn down schools and kill teachers, because they do not want educated girls to make their own life choices

That needs to change. Education is a key that opens many doors. Educated women are a tremendous resource and a power for the common good. Women must be free to have

access to education, choose the profession they want. Information technologies must be available to uncover their full potential.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The task ahead of us is immense.

However, it *can* be achieved if each of us finds the strength and courage to become part of the change by:

- encouraging women to dream big and demand their rightful place at national parliaments, negotiating tables, science labs and company boards;
- ensuring that nothing can stand in the way of a girl's dream to receive free quality education;
- combating gender stereotypes and abusive social practices; making sure that laws give women and girls equal voice and power they deserve;
- reducing the cost of violence against women so that billions more could be directed into poverty reduction and development.

We cannot afford to fail in this challenge.

To achieve this, we need everyone on board.

Only if all members of the society – both women and men – are fully represented and engaged, can the world's future be truly sustainable.

Thank you.