

**Intergovernmental Negotiations Post-2015**  
**Second Session / Declaration**  
**February 17-20 2015**  
**The Centrality of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls**  
**for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

**Joint Statement**

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Mr. co-facilitator,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, Zambia and my own country Suriname.

The Declaration framing the new sustainable development goals must provide strong and inspirational guidance for all, governments at all levels, as well as the UN system. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be at the center of our declaration.

In the book “Half the Sky”, Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn write: “In the nineteenth century, the central moral challenge was slavery. In the twentieth century, it was the battle against totalitarianism. We believe that in this century the paramount moral challenge will be the struggle for gender equality around the world.”

In other words, if the Post-2015 Development Agenda is supposed to be truly transformative, it must transform the lives of women and girls and actively pursue gender equality.

Recognising the intrinsic interlinkage between poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable development, we underline the need for a coherent approach which integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development. The future agenda must address inequalities and all forms of discrimination that women face.

When working to achieve **dignity** for all, we must ensure the respect for all human rights. Until this day women and girls are still disproportionally and systematically deprived of their rights. The pandemic of violence against women and girls is a critical barrier to sustainable development and must be addressed.

We must therefore educate and empower men and women, boys and girls to overcome these injustices and realize that gender equality and empowering women and girls benefits all. Addressing barriers to women’s leadership and participation is important to increasing economic growth and eradicating poverty.

Mr. co-facilitator,

It is clear that gender equality women's and girls' empowerment is critical towards realization of sustainable development and that it is essential to **well-being** for our societies. To be able to **end poverty**, we must address the persistent and growing poverty experienced by women and girls and tackle structural causes of gender inequality that perpetuate its cycle.

The proposal of the Open Working Group, the Future We Want and the Millennium Declaration have all recognized that we should focus on gender equality, not only to uphold the human rights of women and girls, but also because without gender equality and women's empowerment we cannot dream of achieving other goals, be that poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities or inclusive economic growth.

We have seen for example that when more women work and are empowered at all levels of decision making, economies grow and better health is achieved for them and their immediate environment. If women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's, the Euro zone's gross domestic product would be an estimated 13 per cent higher and Japan's would be boosted by 16 per cent. In 15 major developing economies, per capita income would rise by 14 per cent by 2020, 20 per cent by 2030.

If women had the same access as men to productive assets, agricultural output in 34 developing countries would rise by an estimated average of up to 4 per cent. This could reduce the number of undernourished people in those countries by as much as 17 per cent, translating to up to 150 million fewer hungry people.

Women and girls are both the beneficiaries and the drivers of the new sustainable development agenda. Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of the human rights of women and girls are key, as we push for the eradication of poverty and hunger, access to energy for all, or sustainable patterns of consumption and production. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses or science, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees. Women and girls are also doing most of the unpaid household and care work. Healthy, educated and empowered women and girls are key to a healthier **planet**.

Mr. co-facilitator,

There is general recognition among Member States that the post-2015 development agenda will include a strong and comprehensive goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well integrating gender perspectives throughout the entire framework, including with regards to **means of implementation** and the revitalized global **partnership**.

Without a strong, forward-looking statement on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, half of humanity, we cannot claim to have an agenda for the **people**.

The Declaration should recognize the existing normative framework for gender equality and set a clear context for our ambitious goals, which can only be achieved if we have the collective courage to promote gender equality and empower women and girls, and recognize their valuable contribution to a better future for all.

I thank you.