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**Remarks by UN Under-Secretary General and UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous at the Closing of the Executive Board at its Annual Session on 19 June, 2025**

***Ensuring that reform succeeds and delivers for women and girls; that gender equality is at the heart of transformation***

*[As delivered]*

Let me begin by extending heartfelt thanks to Her Excellency Nicola Clase, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden, for her exceptional leadership as President of the Executive Board. Your calm resolve, Madam President, your clarity of purpose, and unwavering commitment to gender equality have shaped our work this session.

To the Vice-Presidents of the Bureau, thank you for your invaluable support and dedication across the session. The strength and unity of the Bureau continues to guide us through an increasingly complex global landscape.

I would like in particular to thank H.E. Ms. Suela Janina, Permanent Representative of Albania and Vice President of our Board, for chairing our morning session yesterday.

To Jean-Luc Bories, Secretary of the Executive Board, and his remarkable team — your professionalism, precision, and behind-the-scenes coordination ensure this work not only happens, but happens with thoroughness. We are deeply grateful. I know this appreciation is widely shared by the Member States.

And to all of you, Member States, thank you. For your presence, for your persistence, and for your partnership. Both here in New York, and on the ground where our shared mission is being tested every single day.

Your commitment, especially in complex and crisis-affected contexts, brings our mandate to life every day.

Thank you for the adoption of decisions during this session, each one a meaningful step toward strengthening UN Women. I heard from the Secretary that all delegations have demonstrated maximum flexibility during the negotiations, and I deeply thank you for this and this testimony to effective multilateralism. Thank you again.

These decisions not only reinforce our strategic direction but enhance our accountability, operational effectiveness, and ability to respond in the most challenging contexts.

Your leadership, your thoughtful deliberation, and your sustained engagement ensure that we remain agile, focused, and fit for purpose. With your support, we are better equipped to deliver for women and girls everywhere, especially where the stakes are highest.

We all understand the significance of this year and the unique nature of this very moment.

The reform discussions underway in the context of UN80 are an opportunity to reimagine and to reset the multilateral system. A system that must deliver for women and girls. Be assured that my message and UN Women's message has been and will remain clear: gender-blind reform will be failed reform.

That is why we will ensure that reform succeeds and delivers for women and girls; that gender equality is at the heart of all transformation.

We also look toward the High-level Meeting on Beijing+30 this September. It will be a moment to reflect but also to renew our resolve, to refocus our efforts, to correct our course where we need to, and to redouble efforts where we do not. As we heard from you, it must be a launchpad for commitments. To ensure that ambition translates into action, and that no woman or girl is left behind. Because from every village to every capital, from refugee camps to negotiation tables, their futures depend on what we do next.

We look forward to working closely with you all in the lead-up to the High-level Beijing+30 meeting, to bring forward the voices and solutions of women around the world, and to making them the North Star of our collective commitments.

Over the past three days, you have worked through a robust and forward-leaning agenda. You reviewed progress on our ethics, oversight, and internal audit and control mechanisms. Your oversight strengthens our accountability. We thank you for your trust and we do not take it for granted.

You provided clear guidance on the importance of a realistic, sustainable funding model for UN Women. We welcome your recognition of the resource constraints we face, and we thank you for continuing to advocate for predictable, flexible, and adequate financing so that we can deliver on our triple mandate.

You examined our work to advance governance reform, ensuring that UN Women remains fit for purpose: efficient, transparent, and responsive in a changing UN development system.

You reaffirmed your commitment to anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion, as well as to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment prevention and mitigation, not as optional, but as integral to our effectiveness and legitimacy.

You upheld the centrality of gender equality across all pillars of the UN's work, from peace and security to human rights and development.

You reviewed our Annual Report and provided reflections that will guide our continued efforts.

Your feedback and your strong engagement across the consultative process on the draft Strategic Plan 2026–2029 will shape the direction of UN Women going forward, including through our coordination and normative efforts. We thank you for the important inputs you have provided, and we look forward to its adoption at the September session. Most importantly, we look forward to working together to ensure its full and effective implementation, including through the 2026-2027 Integrated Budget.

These decisions, every single one of them, chart a path forward for this entity that we cherish together, both Secretariat and Executive Board side by side. I have no doubt that we will deliver on them side by side also.

We pride ourselves on the honest dialogue we have with you, our Board. And we have been honest about the challenging financial environment within which we operate. We have been clear about the positions we are advocating for in the UN80 process. We have shared the measures we are taking to adapt prudently to that environment.

Our commitment to you is, as we always have, to embrace reform, to both shape it and embody it.

You heard in my annual report the results we achieve. And you heard it this morning from our Europe and Central Asia Region. You know the modest resources with which we achieve them. It is always our ambition to model the reform we advocate. To be efficient. Effective. Transparent. And most of all, impactful.

That is why my commitment to you is not to do more with less, nor to tell you that we will do less with less. Rather, as you heard me say on Tuesday, we will seek to do better.

The commitment to do better with less is one reality of reform, and we owe it to our mandate to be as realistic as we are ambitious.

As we enter into the final five years of the 2030 Agenda, let me repeat the critical point that I also made in my opening remarks: SDG5 is not an isolated goal. It is the thread without which the entire tapestry of the 2030 Agenda will unravel. That the environment around us is ever more challenging does not change that.

Over the past three days you have reaffirmed this, the criticality of our triple mandate and gender equality as a multiplier.

We will carry this with us, both as we mark the gender equality anniversaries ahead of us, and as we look to Seville and the Fourth Conference on Financing for Development, to UNGA80, to Doha and the Second World Summit for Social Development, to COP30 in Belem, and beyond.

The trust you place in us, that you placed in us at this session, is wind in our sails.

To our Bureau members, to every delegation, to the experts, to the Secretariat and to the UN Women teams here in New York and across the world, I thank you.

We will continue to move forward together, with courage, with clarity, and with conviction. We will make the vision of the UN Charter a reality for all women and girls.

And we will deliver on the mandate we have been given because gender equality remains the best hope and the best solution for a world that needs both more than ever.

I thank you.

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