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**Keynote address on the importance of sex disaggregated data for women’s economic empowerment, collection methods and opportunities for use**

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Acting Undersecretary Munoz, Ambassador Fergusson, good morning

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear participants,

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to APEC Chile 2019, the Australian Government and RMIT University for inviting me to participate in this workshop. I have been leading UN Women’s work on gender data since the organization was founded almost 10 years ago. So, this is a topic that is close to my heart, which makes it a real pleasure to share with you some perspectives to kick-off the workshop.

Let me start with the obvious: what are gender statistics and why do we need them? Gender statistics – often interchangeably used with the term gender data – refer to statistics that adequately reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life. Gender data include data collected, analyzed and presented by sex and other characteristics, but also refer to data which is not disaggregated by sex but reflect the specific needs, opportunities and contributions made by women and girls in society.

Why do we need adequate gender data? We have all probably heard some version of the phrase: what isn’t measured is often ignored. This is partly true: we have seen that with the Millennium Development Goals, gender parity in education became a global yardstick for measuring gender equality, simply because data were easy to come by. Critical issues such as discrimination, violence against women, unpaid care and domestic work, equal pay, women’s leadership and participation, to name a few, were ignored because their measurement wasn’t compulsory, was difficult or data didn’t exist. We have seen it with the Sustainable Development Goals, where the global gender community mobilized early to demand and obtain goals, targets and indicators on these same issues. That same community is fighting today to ensure that we have the required data to follow through on the gender equality commitments of the 2030 Agenda.

This underscores the fact that data and statistics are indispensable tools for devising evidence-based policies to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment. Comprehensive and periodic gender statistics are important for setting priorities, planning interventions and assessing their impacts. They are also critical for putting the spotlight on inequality and underscoring the need to realize the rights of poor and marginalized women and girls who are left behind. When used for advocacy and awareness-raising, they can stimulate democratic debate on gender equality, ensuring accountability for the realization of women’s rights.

There is also an important efficiency and cost effectiveness element that we don’t always talk about. We invest billions trying to address gender issues such as violence against women but the data that we have at our disposal is often more than 10 years old, meaning that we are using scarce resources to solve last decade’s problems. Countries are keen to increase women’s participation in the labour force to grow their economies, but they are not so keen to invest in a time use survey that would tell them about the constraints that women face in terms of their care responsibilities and the economic value of that work. We know that unpaid care work is estimated to be anywhere between 10 and 39% of GDP; yet less than half of economies have any data on this. Hard metrics such as these can help to convince a Finance Minister, but unfortunately, they are hard to come by due to the lack of data.And the list goes on. If we don’t know who is affected by a particular problem, how many are affected and what the best remedy is, we cannot solve that problem, let alone do it efficiently.

**What are the key challenges standing in the way of adequate gender data today?**

Let’s start with some statistics:

I mentioned the strong gender equality gains in the SDGs. In total, we have 54 gender-specific indicators in the global monitoring framework. Yet only 12 of those indicators have adequate data and can be regularly monitored. Less than one third of the data needed to monitor the gender-related SDGs indicators is available.

Part of this is due to a large funding gap: Gender data remain woefully underfunded with only 10% of statistical development projects funded by multilateral donors in 2017 containing any activities for gender statistics. At national level, the picture is not better: only 13% of countries have a budget dedicated to gender statistics.

But funding is just part of the problem. The challenges for gender data run deep and are reflected in the entire statistical value chain. First, few economies have laws that mandate the production of gender data. At the policy level, there is a fundamental mismatch between national gender policies and the national statistical strategies that in theory should be designed to monitor them. Statistical policies seldom include gender considerations, while gender policies often have weak monitoring frameworks that are not backed by clear metrics. The result is that data on critical aspects of gender equality are often missing or are not collected regularly.

At the data collection and analysis and stages, data disaggregated by sex may be collected but the reports produced by national statistical offices are largely descriptive and do not provide the deeper gender analysis that policymakers need.

Importantly, while national statistical offices may have gender statistics focal points, this is not true of sectoral ministries. Therefore, data that comes from these sectors are less likely to be gender sensitive, posing a serious challenge for gender mainstreaming. Worse, there is a skills mismatch and often a lack of professional respect between gender specialists and statisticians: the former have little knowledge about data and the latter often have little knowledge about gender equality, making dialogue difficult.

This creates a host of problems: when data is not collected the way it should be, it can be biased and misleading, and in some cases can do more harm than good. For example, recent work that we did with the UN Statistics Division shows that we need to change the way we conduct household surveys to adequately collect data on women’s ownership of assets. Collecting violence against women data without taking into account ethical and safety concerns can lead to catastrophic consequences for the victims. When marginalized women and girls are undercounted, either through systemic neglect or because of methodology biases, we end up silencing their voices and priorities.

In turn, when data do not reflect the realities on the ground, they are less likely to be demanded and used for policymaking.

**A big leap in gender data**

Achieving a leap in how we produce and use gender data requires connecting these dots. First, updating legal frameworks, particularly Statistical Acts to include gender-specific language, is important to ensure that legal mandates exist, and timely gender data is collected. At the institutional level, a rebalancing is needed to ensure that national gender equality policies have adequate monitoring frameworks and national statistical policies are designed to respond to such policies. This would ensure that the design of gender equality policies is evidence-based, and their implementation is regularly monitored. Therefore, it is important to ensure that part of gender equality budgets are earmarked for statistical activities, including investments in technical capacity, data collection and analysis. In countries where such investments are taking place such as Mexico, a strong relationship between the national women’s machinery and the national statistical office has ensued, making Mexico a global leader in the way it produces and uses gender data.

At the data collection and analysis phases, training in gender statistics is needed for most data producers but it is also imperative to increase the data literacy of gender specialists, so they can contribute meaningfully to the process. Respecting and recognizing the contributions of different stakeholders can help set in motion a virtuous circle that can strengthen gender data production and public policy use.

Finally, a leap is impossible if we do not tackle issues that are relevant today, using modern tools and technologies. When it comes to gender data, we generally know what we want to measure and how to measure it. For example, unlike other areas, there are now only few gender equality SDGs indicators that need methodological work to develop standards. But in a way this also reflects the fact that we are still measuring traditional challenges. New ones, including measuring new forms of women’s work, big data and algorithmic biases that can contribute to lost opportunities in the labour market, new forms of civic engagement and participation in collective action in the age of social media, cyberbullying and harassment and gender equality and climate change, are all areas that need to be tackled but will require significant methodological work to be operational.

Investing in these areas, while continuing to refine and improve our traditional tools, including the integration of gender in censuses, surveys and administrative sources, should be a priority.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that without **data** equality, there is no **gender equality and we should all endeavor to make data equality a reality.**

**Thank you!**