



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7 December 2020

Excellency,

Further to my letter regarding the constitution of the Advisory Group on Gender Equality to support and bolster my work on gender equality and women's empowerment, I have the pleasure to share with you a summary of the inaugural meeting of the Group held at UN Headquarters on 19 November 2020.

Excellency, in continuation of my work to advance the rights and empowerment of women in fulfilment of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, I count on your valuable support for this key priority throughout the Seventy-fifth Session.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Volkan Bozkir'.

Volkan BOZKIR

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



Summary
Inaugural Meeting of the President of the General Assembly's
Advisory Group on Gender Equality
Thursday, 19 November 2020

The President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir convened the first meeting of his Gender Advisory Group on Thursday, 19 November 2020. The meeting at UN Headquarters was attended by the six members of the Advisory Group. The inaugural meeting served as a platform for the President and the Gender Advisory Group members to become acquainted, gain insights into their respective professional contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment and decide on the format and structure of the Group.

The President recalled his Vision statement and that gender equality and women's empowerment were among his top priorities. Recalling the summary just circulated, the President said this priority had been reinforced by the successful Summit to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration in October.

Outlining the work ahead, the President asked the Group to consider how gender equality could best be mainstreamed through the mandated events and initiatives in the 75th session. These included events on COVID-19, water, desertification, land degradation and drought, middle income countries, least-developed countries, culture, corruption and HIV/AIDS.

The members discussed their work and existing challenges and shortcomings to progress the gender agenda within their respective spheres, such as the prevention of violence against women, economic empowerment, women's political and labor force participation, as well as the existing strategies to addressing these issues and gaps. Women's leadership, data and analysis, development of policies and targets, and implementation and accountability were identified as essential. The Women, Peace and Security agenda was also highlighted as an important framework for considering gender equality and peace and security in a holistic way.

There was broad agreement that gender equality is cross-cutting and that there are important interlinkages with many of the events and initiatives on the PGA's agenda, including due to specific and disproportionate impacts on women and girls, whether in relation to violence, education and the digital divide, and workforce participation. COVID has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities.

Recommendations by Advisory Group members regarding how the PGA could advance his objectives on gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the 75th session included to:

- Play a stronger role in meetings pertaining to women and gender issues, including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). He could also initiate a relevant thematic high-level event.
- Improve coherence and implementation by engaging with gender-related independent mechanisms. The reports of these mechanisms could feed into the President's events.
- Leverage the Group's relationships with the private sector to take action, as well as utilizing the vast network and resources of the women's empowerment principles (Global Compact/UN Women initiative) in advancing women's economic empowerment.
- Highlight the crucial role of men and boys in the effective implementation of the agenda and ending violence against women and girls through consistent references in his statements.
- Support engagement of civil society in UN processes, such as grassroots women's organizations, notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the COVID operating environment. An informal meeting of the PGA with civil society could be considered.
- Encourage Ambassadors to follow his lead and become International Gender Champions.
- Pay close attention to the participation of women, including young women, in panels and events to promote women's leadership and expertise.
- Consider conducting a gender analysis or audit of the General Assembly and its functioning, including in view of the serious lack of gender balance at the political level.
- Use UN Women's technical expertise to support the Group's work and the PGA's implementation of his priorities in the 75th session
- Consider the opportunities of virtual meetings to increase the pool of available female experts who would not need to travel to New York, leaving behind family responsibilities.
- Ensure that the Gender Advisory Group can have a long-term and structural impact and provide a legacy to OPGA for the use of future Presidents.

In closing, the President proposed an informal structure whereby group would meet on an ad hoc basis and especially ahead of important events. While the group's deliberations would be private, it would have an interface with Member States at some point and summaries would be shared to enhance transparency. There was some support for regularity of meetings and some virtual meetings to facilitate more regular contact, as needed.

Members of the Gender Advisory Group:

- Dr. Dubravka Simonovic, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences
- Amb. Jukka Salovaara, President of the Bureau of the UN Women Executive Board
- Ms. Nahla Valji, Senior Gender Adviser of the of the Secretary-General
- Hon. Patricia A. Torsney, Permanent Observer of the Inter-parliamentary Union –IPU
- Ms. Sanda Ojiambo – CEO & Executive Director UN Global Compact
- Dr. Soon Young-Yoon NGO CSW, Principal Investigator