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**Remarks by Ms. Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women**

**Side Event – 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**Women’s rights and the 2030 Agenda: 40 Years of Empowering Women with a View of Sustainable Development**

**Monday, 18 March 2019**

**10:00-11:15 a.m.**

**Conference Room D, United Nations Secretariat Building, New York**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

UN Women is pleased to co-sponsor this important event. I am delighted to join in the celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of the CEDAW Convention, with a focus on sustainable development, and to commemorate 10 years of the mandate of the SRSG on sexual violence in conflict.

CEDAW is the central framework for women’s human rights. It provides the roadmap for transforming gender relations within States, communities and families. The Convention and work of the Committee have been crucial tools to advance gender equality worldwide. CEDAW is a key framework for UN Women’s work and UN Women supports implementation of the Convention in every region. This includes support to countries for reporting to the Committee, in preparing for the dialogue with the Committee, and for follow up to the concluding observations. We support the preparation of civil society reports and the UNCT reporting for every session. UN Women also supports governments in the implementation of the SDGs using CEDAW.

I congratulate the Committee for its critical role in the last 40 years as well as for its leadership in linking the Convention with the SDGs, including highlighting the SDGs in its dialogues with countries and concluding observations. We appreciate the Committee’s partnership regarding SDG Indicator 5.1.1 on legal frameworks that advance gender equality. Data on that indicator will be released for the first time this year.

There can be no sustainable development without gender equality and Agenda 2030 makes this clear. Despite progress, gender inequalities are pervasive in every dimension of sustainable development. Women are more likely to be affected by extreme poverty and food insecurity. They continue to be underrepresented in positions of power and lack autonomy over their sexual and reproductive health. Discriminatory laws and gaps in legal protection, harmful practices and violence against women persist. The gender pay gap lingers and women face job restrictions. Women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination are often the furthest left behind.

Regarding Goal 16, although the gender dimensions of conflict and the pivotal role women play in building and sustaining peace are increasingly recognized, women’s leadership and access to justice remain curtailed. In times of conflict, women are disproportionately subjected to sexual violence. Targeted killings, rape and other forms of violence against women are often used as weapons of war.

The SRSG on sexual violence in conflict has significantly contributed to a robust framework to counter such violence and increased its visibility. I commend the mandate holders for these significant efforts. CEDAW’s landmark text, General Recommendation 30, provides further guidance on the protection of women’s rights in the context of conflict.

Unless progress on gender equality is accelerated, we will not only fail to achieve SDG 5, but also forgo the catalytic effect gender equality has for the entire 2030 Agenda.

Key actions that must be taken include:

First, we must ensure universal ratification of CEDAW and its full implementation. CEDAW provides the critical standards on equality and non-discrimination to underpin the transformative promise of the Agenda, including the commitment to leave no one behind.

Second, gender equality must be prioritized in a comprehensive manner across the Agenda. National institutions tasked with implementation should ensure that legal and policy action, budgeting and monitoring systematically reflect gender equality considerations.

Third, the heart of our efforts must be addressing inequalities, including gender inequalities. Guided by CEDAW, efforts should aim at achieving formal and substantive equality, ensuring equality of outcomes for all women and girls. Structural impediments, such as systemic biases, that perpetuate inequalities, must be addressed, root causes identified, and appropriate responses put in place.

Fourth, we need better monitoring of what works for women and girls. Investments and capacity building for national statistical systems are needed and there must be regular production of gender statistics.

Fifth, meaningful participation by all stakeholders, including women’s organizations, must be ensured throughout the implementation and monitoring of the Agenda.

Sixth, investments in gender equality must increase. Laws and policies must be backed by adequate resources.

Lastly, we need to strengthen accountability for gender equality commitments. Responsibilities for fulfilling these commitments must be clearly defined.

UN Women looks forward to our ongoing partnerships with all stakeholders to take these steps and move boldly toward the achievement of gender equality and the 2030 Agenda.