

Gender Equality: 50-50 by 2030

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Robin Niblett

Thank you very much for joining us on this sunny evening, choosing to come and be down here in the cool but sunless Chatham House conference hall. But I think we're in for a warm and inspiring evening. So it's my very great pleasure to welcome here Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka who is now, as of nearly two years, the Executive Director, Under-Secretary-General at the UN for UN Women and she's going to be speaking this evening on the issue of Gender Equality: 50-50 by 2030. The target that she is helping drive now as the second holder of this position at the UN and a year, 2015, with the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, where keeping the motion and the moment or, certainly, picking up momentum where it's lacking is especially important, she'll be sharing her various ideas with you this evening and then taking some questions and engaging in conversation.

Just to remind you, this meeting is on the record, even though it's at Chatham House and you can tweet and it tells you what to do on our screens if you want to engage in sharing some of the ideas outside of the meeting.

Phumzile took up, as I said, her position about two years ago but she had been prior to that a deputy president of South Africa; she'd held several important positions prior to that as well, minister for minerals and energy from 1999 to 2005. We were just discussing her role in the Kimberley Process, another intractable and complex topic which she addressed in her role there in the South African government. She had been deputy minister for trade and industry from 1996 to 1999.

She's also had a role in civil society, having set up and founded in 2008 the Mlambo Foundation, working on leadership and education, especially for young women and the opportunities for women's rights have really been at the core of her work right from the beginning in government and in the private sector. So I can think of nobody better placed to address the topic this evening and somebody extremely well placed to take up the role within the UN system and push it forward.

We're delighted you'll be with us; look forward to your remarks and engaging in conversation but welcome back to Chatham House.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Thank you very much, Robin. Ladies and gentlemen, good evening and thank you so much for sacrificing being outdoors on such a wonderful evening to be here and engage in this conversation.

We are in a very interesting time in history, in the history of internationally agreed goals because 2015 is the year when we have been marking 20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the plan of action that came with it. It is also 15 years after we adopted the Millennium Development Goals, which were up for review at the beginning of this year and before the end of this year, we will enter into another big agenda with new internationally agreed goals, a much bigger agenda than the Millennium Development Goals. I take my hat off to governments who managed to sit down around the table and

agree on 19 goals and 165 targets and then the rest is going to be on how we implement this as different countries.

So in 1995, in Beijing, China, there were 189 countries that agreed to what we still regard as the most comprehensive plan ever written for gender equality and women's empowerment. Ninety-seven per cent of them were sovereign states and they reaffirmed the commitment to the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men.

This year, we then decided to see what has happened, how have we implemented those 12 critical areas that we adopted in Beijing? We reviewed 167 countries who had conducted their own internal reviews. This was followed by consolidated assessment by a UN regional commission, in parallel with civil society critical considerations and feedback and we were able then to identify the trends of what has happened in the last 20 years. Very interesting and I think it's important to answer this up front because I get this question all the time, 'Why did you not convene an international women's conference like we did in China, like we did in Mexico, like we did in Kenya, like we did in Copenhagen?'

The simple reason is that the degree of pushback on women's rights at this point is such that if we had convened the same conference as we did in Beijing in 2015, we would have lost some of the gains that we made in Beijing. So it was just too risky to reopen it. So what we therefore asked was for governments to evaluate themselves because then that is empirical data. A government writes about, 'What has happened in my country in the last 20 years; these are the gaps and this is the progress.' At least we are able to agree on a template on what it is that we are evaluating and then we aggregated what the countries gave us and the secretary-general was able to issue a synthesis report. And out of that, we were able to see the trends and how much progress and gaps we still have.

So what has happened in the last 20 years is that we certainly have seen more women coming out into the labour market, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and globally, we have seen an increase of 44 to 54 per cent of women coming into the labour market. The only challenge is that women are at the bottom of most economies, earning low wages and 75 per cent of them are in the informal sector, which means the jobs are unprotected by labour law; it means there is no minimum wage. But the resilience of the women is definitely there and it's strongly demonstrated in all the regions.

Most regions also embraced the challenge of affecting women in relation to women's health. We saw many countries having targeted programmes to address women's health. As a result, governments know exactly now how to address the issue of maternal health. A lot of the deaths that we still see of maternal deaths and infant mortality has nothing to do with the fact that we don't know how to deal with those; it is because we have too many children that are having children too early and, therefore, they die of preventable complications which have to do with lack of facility and capacity in many case.

In the last 20 years also, almost all countries enacted laws to promote gender equality and even amended constitutions. So if we could talk about something that has changed in the last 20 years, the legal landscape has changed fundamentally. What, however, has been a challenge is implementation. Implementation has been patchy and quite unequal.

Amongst the laws that governments enacted, in particular were laws that addressed violence against women, including for the first time after Beijing, we saw more countries criminalizing domestic violence, which for the longest time was seen as a private matter. It did not make it easy for it to prosecute but it meant that in certain countries, countries have been able to develop very sophisticated systems and effective systems to protect women, to reduce the violent behaviour of partners with impunity. What is still worrying us, however, is that the largest deaths of women that are violent are caused by an intimate partner, a husband or a boyfriend. So that is still a big concern and the level of violence against women is exceptionally high in the world.

But the fact that we have got legislation means that we have to do something to implement the legislation better to protect, to prosecute and of course to provide the services to protect women.

Again, in the last 20 years, what governments also have done was to recognize the challenges facing the girl child. We all now know how to designate the challenges, the boy versus the girl child, the cultural practices that affect the girl child in countries where there are cultural habits that are harmful to girls, those were exposed. In countries that have adopted child protection legislation and child protection acts, there has been a particular way of addressing the issues that impact on the girl child.

The other progress area that we saw was the creation of what we have called gender machinery in many countries, women's ministries, gender commissions, equal opportunity institutions and so on. In many countries, the challenge however has been that the institutions were created with very limited budgets and powers so they haven't always been able to be as effective as we would like them to be. But the fact that they exist, again, gives us a window that we need to address going forward, how can we use those institutions now that we know the strengths they could have and the limitations they have?

So the last 20 years also was a period when the 15 years of the 20 years of the Beijing platform we have also been implementing the Millennium Development Goals and the two sort of went parallel. Many governments found it easy to embrace the Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Development Goals, as far as women are concerned, was not as comprehensive as the Beijing Declaration, certainly not as rights focused as the Millennium Development Goals, much more development intense, much more quantitative.

For instance, in the Millennium Development Goals, we were counting how many girls we enrol at school, which itself is not bad but did not pay enough attention to whether the education that we are giving to both boys and girls promoted gender equality and the value system that you want in an equal society. But having the girls at school has been a major victory for many countries, especially those countries that started at a very low level, who have been able to, in some cases, even reach parity. Some countries that are better resourced have also been able to see girls even outperforming boys up to tertiary level.

So, is the glass half empty or half full? You be the judge. One thing for sure is that everybody has been busy in the last 20 years, trying to bring about the changes. One thing

that we have learnt out of this experience as UN Women is that there is something in business that they call the advantage of the first mover. When we adopt the Sustainable Development Goals, we want to be ready with what we can implement, literally on day one because in the Millennium Development Goals we took time asking questions, arguing between and amongst ourselves and by the time we were ready to implement, we'd lost some years.

We are also emphasizing the importance of addressing both quality and quantity of what the goals will bring about and what we have in the Sustainable Development Goals is a deadline of 2030 as the outer year for the implementation of all the goals together. But in the goal that is specific to women, we did not have a date so the push that we have and the campaigning for 2030 as a timeframe within which we must see substantive progress on gender equality, it is us asserting the fact that we should not make the issue of fighting for gender equality to be an open-ended agenda. I don't want to come here in 50 years with my walking stick to argue about the same things I'm arguing about now.

So we have been able to get member states to embrace the 2030 date and in areas where we are able to have fixed targets like numbers of members of parliament, representation of women on boards, equal pay for women, these are some of the things and measures that we think by 2030 we should be able to be concrete about. At the same time, we should pay attention to removing the structures that sort of root down gender inequality. And I'd like just to highlight some of those structures because then we did another study following the evaluation of the 20 years of Beijing, where we are actually looking at what are the structures that still pin women down? Why is it that the progress that we so much wanted as we were implementing the Beijing platform has not been as deep as we wanted it to be?

And what we have identified there is one of the challenges. Unpaid care work is an underlying root cause. When women and men in society take their place, we expect the man to be the breadwinner, which is another way of saying 'paid' and the woman to be a care giver, which is another way of saying 'unpaid work'. And both of them provide an essential service for society but in the full lifetime of a woman, she ends up with less or no economic independence. That compromises the capacity of a woman to play an active role in society.

Now we see, thankfully, in developed countries, we see more and more women who are able to get out of that but if we're talking globally, the large number of women in the world today are still trapped in unpaid work. In countries, for instance, where there is water infrastructure, it is the women and the little girls who must fetch water. For the little girl, just fetching water to quench the thirst of grown-ups may mean that she does not go to school, that she ends up dropping out. So for the failure of the infrastructure of a country, an 11 year old's life gets compromised and sometimes she never recovers from that.

In countries where there isn't adequate infrastructure for childcare that enables women to go to work, both girls and women will stay at home for childcare, which is unpaid and that could change the whole life of that woman and girl. Therefore, when we talk about unpaid care work, it is those areas and services that are provided to communities and to societies and to families, which we have struggled as policy-makers to recognize, to remunerate,

where we can, to reduce and to redistribute. So in countries and institutions where we offer parental leave, that is one of the most revolutionary things that can change the lives of both men and women, where we are able to redistribute the opportunities that both men and women can have.

We also allow for our economies, our countries to grow by releasing women into broader society. The just concluded G7 Leaders' Declaration document explicitly recognizes women's entrepreneurship as a key driver of innovation, growth and jobs, which changes the quality of life for everybody. And we shouldn't be doing that because we want to address economic issues; we also have to do it because it is the right thing and it is the right of women to have a better life.

The ILO this year stated that women's ever increasing participation in the labour market is the biggest engine of global growth and competitiveness. They further argue, together with IMF, that if we were to address all of the barriers that hinder women's economic participation, we could unleash the next emerging market of a billion active participants in the economy, which would be women. And you can imagine how much of a game-changer that would bring about for food security, for health and all of the other things that would come about if we were to make the cake bigger because right now, the cake is shrinking and too few people are eating the cake.

If female employment were to match male employment, we could increase GDP everywhere: by five per cent in the US, by 12 per cent in the UAE and by 34 per cent in Egypt. You can imagine the other countries where we don't have efficient data you could imagine how much change we could bring about in those countries.

We also recognize that in the case of unpaid care work, if we were able for instance just to structure childcare, we would train the women so that would be contribution to human capital, we would provide early learning that is efficient for the children, which then would contribute towards the growth and development of the children and we would be able to release women to make the choices about what they want to do with their time and their lives.

In the United States, the total value of unpaid childcare services in 2012 was estimated to be \$3.2 trillion. This is what the women who provide unpaid childcare would have earned if it was turned into an industry; probably not all of it is desirable to be turned into an industry. Women want to stay at home and look after their children and it is desirable in society that you have a little bit of that. But the size of an intervention that traps so many women who have a contribution to make, who want to make choices, who become dependent on their partners and their families and, therefore, never become the people that they really want to be is something that we need to be concerned about as society.

And, of course, the ILO also makes a point about what it calls the 'motherhood penalty' because if you become a mother, there are losses that you suffer because of the time that you take out of work in order to fulfil your duties as a mother and as a parent. Data from France [indiscernible] suggest that women earn between 21 and 75 per cent less than men over their lifetimes because of motherhood related responsibility and that's why the ILO regards that as a motherhood tax because fathers earn more, mothers earn less and we both want to look after our children. We joke but, being quite serious, it's almost like

society says, 'How dare you have a child? How dare you become a mother and give us the next generation? We are going to take a bit of money from you.'

Of course, the argument there could also be looked at from another perspective that if you do not give back to children, you are automatically more productive as a person. Come on! Women multitask, they can do it all and get it done so guys, you know.

So why do we need each other: men, women, youth, religious institutions? This agenda is very big. I've just picked on unpaid care work as one of the examples of how intrusive the issue of structures that sustain gender equality is. We cannot change and transform society if we retain a small group called the women's movement to shoulder this burden alone. Women have been torchbearers; I don't know if you can ask more from women, from what they've done over history, decades and centuries. The participants in the agenda need to be more and we need to broaden. And feminists of my generation, we confess we did not engage men enough but now we are open for business.

We recognize the fact that men are pen holders and decision-makers in most institutions. If we are going to wait until women arrive there, we are actually losing time. Men are CEOs of companies. There is the power of one. They can address unequal pay in their companies, they can address under-representation, they can address the glass ceiling, they can address doing business as women and we've made this simple. We've got seven principles called Women's Empowerment Principles that companies can sign to and adopt. The G7 last week endorsed these as the empowerment principles that they're encouraging companies to sign up to and through that you are able to do this thing systematically.

Heads of state, also, in most of the countries are men and the fact that the issue that has to do with women is, in many countries, left to one unit of government called the Women's Ministry shrinks the number of people who have a responsibility to address this very big issue. So my job, now, is to talk to heads of state about what I regard as their responsibility because I think we are where we are because of your spectacular failure of leadership, to actually see this as a broader human rights issue, not as a minority issue but as a majority issue that has taken away the capacity of countries to serve all its citizens.

And, of course, we encourage men to join our campaign for men, which is called HeForShe, and once they join up as a HeForShe, they then have to take a stand and actively address issues of gender equality. President Mandela had a saying that when good men do not stand up for gender equality in an active way, they conspire against women. So it's not good enough to be a cool guy; you've got to be a cool, active guy that addresses the issues very systematically and brings about the changes in your company, at home, in society, as a policy-maker. There is an opportunity in all of those entry points for all of us to make a difference and to make a change.

We've also reached out to universities. So we've reached out to CEOs of companies in the UK, Barclays, the CEO of Barclays, Jenkins, has put his neck on the block to be one of our HeForShe campaigners, Paul Polman of Unilever has also put his neck on the block to be one of our HeForShe but each one of them, they've got specific things that they address which are far reaching and destiny changing in their companies.

And heads of state, we are asking them to do that, for instance, Iceland has said that they're putting their neck on the block to be the first country that will reach gender equality on Earth, because, as you know, we have no country that has achieved that. So they're now busy looking at the different things that they need to address as a country, from violence against women, to unequal pay, to representation of women, to gender stereotypes and do all of this together.

And these are some of the examples of the things that we're asking either countries, companies, institutions to do, on which we are building this campaign of 2030 because we would like to reach 2030 having really pushed the agenda very far, having, in particular, addressed these underlying structural issues.

And one of the big areas where we are very hands on as UN Women is to address the legislation in countries that still discriminate against women. We have 124 countries that have one or more pieces of legislation that discriminate against women. In many of the countries, it has to do with land ownership rights, the capacity to contract, exclusion of women from doing certain jobs and all of those actually constrain women's economic independence and capacity to be active. And, of course, in some countries, they still have some residues of contradictory legislation where one legislation which, in the guise of religion, allows for women to be mistreated in a particular way, whereas in another part of legislation, women's rights are enshrined.

So we're trying to, between now and 2020, to have gone to every country and to make sure that we can actually relieve the countries of this. If we combine addressing unpaid care work, we combine industries playing an active role as companies to transform themselves from equal pay, to representation, to lifting the number of women out of the informal sector into the formal sector, if we take away legislation, we can really remove a lot of the structures, not all of them and I think as we work together, we will discover things that we need to be doing. But we could take the agenda and we need to evaluate, year on year, what we are leaving behind, what we are getting right, what is the best practice, how can we share and, hopefully, we should be able to get to 2030 in a much different and a better place.

Thank you.