

TICAD V

Yokohama, June 1-3, 2013

Thematic Session 4

Driving Development in Africa Through Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The thematic session on *Driving Development in Africa Through Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* was chaired and moderated by Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. It consisted of dialogue with panelists including: Rwanda President Paul Kagame, Liberia President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; Malawi President Joyce Banda; African Union Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma; Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida; United Nations Population Fund Executive Director Babatunde Osetimehin; and UN Women Acting Executive Director Lakshmi Puri. The session also benefitted from remarks by Mayor of Yokohama Fumiko Hayashi and World Food Programme Regional Director for West Africa Denise Brown, as well as other discussants including senior government ministers and officials and civil society members who volunteered comments from the floor.

The purpose of the session was to discuss how closing gender equality gaps is critical to addressing Africa's key development challenges and to identify priority actions for the coming years. The session began with remarks from President Kagame, who has ensured that women are at the center of Rwanda's development agenda. He said that gender equality "is not just a moral issue, it is a rights issue and a shared responsibility that concerns every member of our society."

Several panelists noted the rich body of evidence that demonstrates how gender equality drives development. For example, countries that eliminate gender disparities in education will accelerate progress towards eliminating hunger and will improve child and maternal health, as educated women and girls are better able to make informed choices about family planning, nutrition, health, and education. Panelists also noted that with the existence of international, regional and national frameworks and commitments that lay out both a promise and a plan to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, what is needed now is implementation of the commitments, as well as dedicated budgeting that supports the rights and needs of women and girls.

There was a clear consensus that driving progress in Africa requires investments in women's economic empowerment. Many discussants shared stories of how, in their countries, even small investments had tremendous multiplier effects across a range of development goals. The evidence is clear that when a woman has more income, she is not only materially better off, but also her children's health and education will benefit. President Banda argued that getting income into the hands of women is the best way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals target on girl's education. Panelists also noted that women should also be able to access sexual and reproductive health services.

High on the agenda at the discussion was a call for women to be at the center of approaches to improving food security. In sub-Saharan Africa, women make up a majority of those employed in agriculture and food production, and also have the primary responsibility for feeding their families, but overall are not able to be as productive because of a range of constraints such as barriers to owning, inheriting and controlling land and accessing credit and technical resources. It was noted that where women can own and control land and get equal access to resources, credit, and agricultural extension services, their contribution to production and food security grows. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent, raising total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent. President Johnson Sirleaf shared details about her country's food security programme in which women farmers have been placed front and centre. There was also acknowledgment of the need to provide access to resources to the many women who work in Africa's coastal fisheries in the "blue economy."

The challenges of tackling important issues such as maternal health, violence against women and girls and early marriage were discussed extensively. It was also noted that responses to conflict and disaster need to include specific and targeted interventions to address women's security and needs. Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs in his contribution specifically noted the importance of incorporating women's perspectives in conflict prevention and peace building processes and when formulating disaster risk reduction strategies.

Many panelists and discussants remarked on the importance of having a critical mass of women in decision-making positions. It was noted that measures to bring more women into positions of influence require more than the elimination of discriminatory practices. Affirmative measures need to be taken to advance women's participation in the political and other decision-making spheres.

There was a clear view in the thematic session that the TICAD process can help drive gender equality and women's empowerment. Panelists discussed the need to match commitments to gender equality with dedicated budgets to support them. As African Union Chairperson Dlamini-Zuma said, "In all our policies and budgets, we should make sure there is enough money...that goes to women."

There was also a strong call for TICAD to engage actively with women leaders and civil society groups across Africa.

In her closing remarks, the UNDP Administrator noted that the thematic session on gender equality in Africa also had great resonance with the debates now underway on the post-2015 development framework. She noted that the report released the prior week by the independent High Level Panel of eminent persons appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General on the global development framework beyond 2015 identified the need to address violence against women and girls, empower women economically and to take on leadership roles in public life.

Clark also noted that the thematic session on gender equality marked the first time that TICAD has formally addressed gender equality as a driver of development in Africa and she expressed confidence that it will remain high on Africa's development agenda.

End.