

Dear Chair

The UK welcomes the priority theme for this year's session and the opportunity to engage with international partners.

Progress has been made on the Millennium Development Goals. Globally, more girls go to school, women are living longer, having fewer children and participate in the labour market more. MDG 3, the gender goal, has been successful in galvanising resources and political will. But progress across the MDGs is uneven for girls and women, especially the poorest and most excluded. We must do everything possible to achieve the MDGs by the end of 2015.

And as we consider the future development framework, there can be no roll back on progress. We must recognise that the MDGs failed to capture many of the underlying causes of gender inequality. We believe that the post-2015 framework should retain a strong standalone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment, and it should mainstream gender-specific targets and indicators in all other goals.

The UK will shortly have a law requiring us to consider gender equality before we fund a programme or give assistance anywhere in the world. We will also be required, by law, to take into account gender-related needs before we provide humanitarian assistance. This will help ensure that gender is considered at the forefront of development assistance. It is hoped that over time other donors may introduce similar legislation.

Chair, I am also very pleased that we have the opportunity to consider the important subject of how women and girls participate

in education, training, science and technology. I share the view of many that the shortage of women in these areas is a global crisis. It is certainly an issue that we cannot afford to ignore in our fiercely competitive world.

I believe that driving up participation is important for two reasons. It is good for equality. And it is good for the economy. In the United Kingdom we have established the Women's Business Council to advise the Government on how to increase women's participation. Critically this programme of work has been taken forward by business leaders who recognise the importance and want to change the current situation.

The issues that women and girls face in our countries will sometimes be different. But I am convinced that the solution is usually in front of our noses. Empowering women to take responsibility for their own lives.

Chair. I also believe that the Commission on the Status of Women is an opportunity to shine a light on the impact women are making around the world. To celebrate the leadership shown by women such as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first elected female Head of State in Africa. Throughout her distinguished career she has fought for freedom, justice and equality.

It also provides an opportunity to encourage support for better representation of women in decision making. In both the political and economic spheres we all need to do more to ensure that women are involved in making the decisions that affect us all.

Different countries take different approaches to ensure a fairer representation of women and other underrepresented groups. By learning from each other and sharing our ideas, we can ensure that gender equality in political and economic life becomes a reality.

I commend the Bureau for its leadership to date. We hope for constructive negotiations and I am confident that all countries represented here will work to ensure improving the lives of girls and women around the world remains a priority for us all.

