Remarks by Ms. Sima Bahous, UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director, at the opening of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 10 March 2025, UN headquarters.

*[As delivered.]*

This year marks three decades since the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration) set forth a bold vision and game-changing roadmap for equality. In 1995, 189 governments came together in a collective promise to advance, and I quote, “the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere, which is in the interest of all of humanity”. Thirty years on, there is progress to celebrate, earned through the efforts, bravery and inspiration of those who, from these rooms to the homes where lives are lived, have fought the fight for equality.

Today, more girls are in school. More women are in parliaments, in boardrooms, in the judiciary. Maternal mortality has fallen. Legal barriers have been dismantled. Policies to protect and advance women’s rights are advancing. Violence against women and girls is widely recognized as a global scourge. There is progress. You, Member States, have pushed progress.

UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous delivers remarks at the opening of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 10 March 2025, UN headquarters. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.

Yet, as we meet here today, in too many places women’s rights are being rolled back. The Beijing Declaration’s noble goals, its call to the undeniable interest of all humanity, elude us still.

We see opportunity spurned, solutions foregone. We face pushback and a peak in resistance to gender equality. Misogyny is on the rise, and so, violence and discrimination. And the crises of our time—from conflict to climate change—accelerate and amplify these inequalities. Women and girls are the ones bearing the heaviest burden.

We see widening inequalities, an unravelling of hard-won progress. Women’s and girls’ voices silenced when they need to be heard loudest. Precisely when we should be investing more in an equal future, in the shining potential of women and girls, we instead invest less, and spend more on guns and bombs.

[One hundred and fifty-nine of you reaffirmed your commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in your national reports this year](https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw69-2025/preparations), recognizing equality as both a moral imperative and the bedrock of peace, prosperity, and sustainability.

I know, therefore, that you share my frustration that domestic and ODA allocations to gender equality remain woefully inadequate and, in some cases, are being cut altogether. That women’s political representation lags behind. That too many girls are still denied an education. That the gender pay gap remains stubbornly wide. That every 10 minutes a woman is murdered by someone in her own family. That in conflict zones women’s and girls’ rights are systematically stripped away, from Afghanistan, the DRC, to Palestine, Gaza, Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine, and beyond. And that in the past year alone, the proportion of women killed in wars doubled.

We, you, the champions of gender equality, are not afraid of the pushback. We have faced it before. We have not backed down. And we will not back down.

The powerful words of the Beijing Declaration, mean little without action. [The Secretary-General’s report](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/03/womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing), based on your review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, shows that at the global level, while there is progress, it is neither fast enough nor far-reaching enough.

We need, and women and girls expect and deserve, acceleration, redoubled effort, and an overdue recognition that what has been done does not suffice, what is being done is not enough, and what must be done can no longer be deferred.

To that end, UN Women has undertaken a rigorous, expert-led review of your reports, combined with an analysis of the realities women and girls face today. From this, we have identified [six key actions and one cross-cutting imperative, forming a Beijing+30 Action Agenda](https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/actions-to-accelerate-gender-equality-for-all-women-and-girls%22%20%5Co%20%22Actions%20to%20accelerate%20gender%20equality%20for%20ALL%20women%20and%20girls%C2%A0) for the world deserving of our energy and investment:

**1. Harness technology for equality – for a digital revolution**
The digital divide is now the frontier of inequality. Closing this gap for the 259 million women still without access to the internet has game-changing implications. Technology has the power to accelerate progress on every front, from ending violence to expanding economic opportunities.

Equal access to digital skills, digital financial services, markets and networks offer huge economic benefits for all of society.

**2. Freedom from poverty**
Today, poverty continues to have a female face, with nearly 1 in 10 women living in the most extreme forms of poverty. Their economic disenfranchisement costs the global economy tens of trillions of dollars every year. Yet, when women thrive, economies thrive. Every dollar invested in women’s economic empowerment returns multiple times over.

Transforming care systems can unlock the time and resources for women to gain economic power, changing the trajectories of their lives.

**3. Zero violence**
The prevalence of violence against women remains staggering. [One in three women globally has experienced physical or sexual violence](https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence), most often by an intimate partner.

Strengthening laws, rigorously enforcing them, and providing survivor-centred services breaks this cycle of violence. Investment in prevention of violence does not just build safer communities, it also creates a foundation for equality and well-being for everyone.

**4. Redefine power structures to ensure full and equal decision-making power**
Women remain underrepresented at every level of decision-making, with [three-quarters of parliamentary seats held by men globally](https://www.ipu.org/women-in-parliament-2020).

When women are at the decision-making table, democracies are stronger. Put simply, inclusive governance is good governance.

**5. Women, peace, and security**
When women have an equal voice in peacemaking, peace lasts longer. Yet, time and again, women are excluded, making up [less than 10 per cent of peace negotiators worldwide](https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security%22%20%5Co%20%22Facts%20and%20figures%3A%20Women%2C%20peace%2C%20and%20security). How can we repeatedly profess our commitment to peace while excluding women from its pursuit?

We need fully-funded national action plans for women, peace, and security; fully-backed women-led organizations on the front lines of crisis; and fully gender-responsive humanitarian action.

**6. Advance climate justice**
Climate change is the defining crisis of our time, and it is not gender-blind. Without bold action on climate, 256 million more women and girls could be pushed into food insecurity by 2050.

Investing in green jobs for women could create [24 million jobs by 2030](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/04/green-economy-could-create-24-million-new-jobs/), fuelling both the global economy and environmental sustainability. Climate justice and gender justice are inseparable. It is time to champion them both together.

**And our plus-one imperative: Young women and girls as agents of change**
A new wave of fearless, young-people-led activism is rising across the world. Their voices, their power, their leadership must be at the centre of the Beijing+30 Action Agenda.

These “6+1” priorities offer a modern lens on a timeless plan of action, a considered and practical path to acceleration. They represent proven solutions, pragmatic and rights-based. They are the best way to live up to the promises that turn 30 this year.

The commitments made by your countries, are powerful and enduring. From the [[United Nations] Charter’s](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter) call for equality, to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action’s vision of justice and opportunity, we owe them our best efforts.

In this spirit, the adoption of the [CSW Political Declaration](https://docs.un.org/E/CN.6/2025/L.1), hopefully, this morning, will stand as a testament to what we can achieve—even in challenging times—when we come together for women and girls; when we affirm the ongoing commitment of these United Nations to equality and the role of multilateralism in its pursuit.

This year, you will also have an opportunity to revitalize this very Commission, as called for in the [Pact for the Future](https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future), so that it is a strengthened CSW and remains fit for purpose.

In all this we owe a debt of gratitude to civil society and to women-led movements, whose courage and unwavering advocacy have driven transformative change. Civil society and women-led movements—you are the conscience of our global commitments, the voices urging us to do better, to be better.

To those at the grassroots level, to those smallest women’s organizations working tirelessly against the greatest of odds, you are our inspiration.

As you know, this year is not just any year. It is the year of anniversaries, [Beijing+30](https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/for-all-women-and-girls), which we will also commemorate at UNGA80 [the 80th session of the UN General Assembly], the 25th anniversary of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, and the 15th anniversary of UN Women, which you have created, in this very hall. But anniversaries are not achievements. They are reminders—of progress made, of rights not yet secured, and of the work still ahead.

2025 must be a turning point, a moment in the history of this long struggle where we embrace bold, urgent, and transformative action. Where we show our resolve to push forward for rights, for equality, and for empowerment. For all women and girls.

And before I conclude, I would say *Ramadan Kareem* to all of you observing this holy month.

Let this pivotal 2025 be a time for peace, for justice, and for solidarity. Again, I repeat: for rights, for equality, and empowerment, for all women and girls everywhere. Let us be reminded of the power of unity and compassion.

I thank you very much.