

Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller – Opening Remarks at Side Event during the 63rd Commission for the Status of Women: Mainstreaming Gender in Humanitarian Response – Examples from Mali, Nigeria and Uganda

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As delivered

Gentlemen and ladies,

It is a pleasure to be here at the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women, to talk with you about gender equality and the empowerment of women. These issues are at the core of the humanitarian mandate and are also very close to my heart.

Over recent years, we have seen growing recognition of the importance of gender equality in humanitarian action. We have benefitted from new tools and guidelines. We have seen strengthened leadership, from grassroots advocates to the top levels of international organizations.

Despite this progress, we still have a lot of work to do.

In the last year, I have met women and girls in crisis zones across the world, and each time, I have been moved by their stories and humbled by their strength.

I was in Burkina Faso earlier this month, where I met 22-year old Fatoumata. She had arrived at a camp for internally displaced people just two weeks prior to my meeting her. Her main wish was to go home, back to her land to harvest her crops and support her family.

Last year in the Central African Republic, I had the opportunity to meet Ivonne, who was forced to flee her home due to violence. Now living in Paoua, she has become an advocate for other displaced people, so that their voices are heard and their needs are met.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues,

This side event shines a spotlight on the crucial importance of delivering gender equality and empowering women and girls through our humanitarian work.

The inter-agency Gender Standby Capacity Project is a particularly effective way to do this. The project deploys GenCap advisors to crisis zones around the world, providing vital support to Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, as well as Humanitarian Country Teams, to mainstream gender in response efforts.

Last year, GenCap advisors were deployed to 18 humanitarian crises, from Cameroon to the Republic of the Congo, from Pakistan to the Philippines, and from Uganda to Ukraine. In each, they worked to incorporate a gender perspective into all aspects of humanitarian response, spanning advocacy, analysis, coordination and capacity building.

In protracted crises like the Republic of the Congo, Djibouti and Uganda, GenCap advisers have helped bridge the gap between humanitarian and development programming.

In protection crises like Bangladesh, Cameroon and Nigeria, they helped create gender strategies for Humanitarian Country Teams. In fact, in Cox's Bazar, they helped set up a gender hub, establishing safe spaces for women and girls where they could receive psychosocial and livelihood support.

And in all crises, GenCap advisors have played an instrumental role in coordinating efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

Last year, GenCap advisors also helped roll out the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's new Gender with Age Marker tool, which identifies to what degree humanitarian programmes are incorporating gender into their work. In doing so, they are helping hold all of us to account, so that we put our gender promises into action.

Today is our chance to hear from these GenCap advisers about their achievements and ongoing challenges in the field.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all the donors who financially support the Gender Standby Capacity Project.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an exciting time both for the gender community, and for the wider community of women in humanitarian action. Our numbers are growing – as is our collective voice.

But we cannot afford to lose momentum. We must continue to build and expand our community, by including a larger number of Member States, academics, and NGOs, and most importantly local women’s groups and civil society actors, and in this regard, I am delighted to see civil society representatives from many countries here today.

We also need to continue to support initiatives like the Gender Standby Capacity Project, so that women and girls in crises around the world are more included and empowered in humanitarian response.

Thank you.