

***Speech by Dr. Maxime Houinato, Country Representative during the Launch of the Gender and Equity Strategy for Social Protection
Protea Hotel – Kampala***

19th July, 2018

- Dear Guest of Honour - Honorable Janat Mukwaya Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development;
- Excellencies, Heads of Diplomatic Missions and the UN Team in Uganda
- Representatives of DFID and Irish Aid
- Honorable Members of Parliament
- Dear Mr. Permanent Secretary Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
- Dear Senior Colleagues from Government

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure that I participate in this launch of the Gender and Equity Strategy. In my view, this is a significant achievement for the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and the people of the republic of Uganda in general because of its role in the enhancement of gender responsiveness and equity in the design, implementation and monitoring of the social protection interventions.

As you all know, Social protection is a human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is crystal-clear in the realization of this human right as it is vital to guarantee each member of our global society dignity and the freedom to development of his or her personality.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the nexus between social protection, quality job creation and sustainable economic growth is perfectly laid out in the ILO Social Protection Floor Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). Social Security is an important tool to prevent and reduce poverty; inequality and social exclusion; as well as social insecurity. This in turn promotes equal opportunity; gender equity and equality and inclusive growth. It further supports the transition from informal to formal employment.

Social Security is an investment in people that empowers them to adjust to changes in the economy and in the labour market, and that social security systems act as automatic social and economic stabilizers, help stimulate aggregate demand in times of crisis and beyond, and help support a transition to a more sustainable economy. Effective and flexible social security systems, in short, are not only the human right enshrined in international law, but an essential investment in modern economies.

Ladies and gentlemen, a social protection system cannot be built in one day and must be seen in the context of all other competing priorities. However, it is possible and justifiable.

As rightly observed in the Gender and Equity SP strategy, many social protection programmes are gender blind and are grossly inadequate to cover all the vulnerable groups that require social protection. Therefore, the identification and implementation of the SP interventions must consider all the factors that exacerbate vulnerability through gender and equity analysis. It is through this rigorous analysis that the appropriate programmes for the different categories of people will be identified and addressed.

It is against the above background that UN Women, under the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme, prioritized the support of the Social Protection programmes as among the most effective interventions to empower women. These interventions, and particularly the earnings received, help boost the esteem and bargain power of women at home and within their communities. When women are empowered economically, the entire communities benefit: Research shows that women reinvest their earnings in children's education and health. However, it is also estimated that 73% of the world's population still has no or only have partial access to social protection. The danger with this kind of situation is that, without secure income, either from earnings or social transfers, women and their families risk falling into poverty and depleting assets in situations of shock; or engaging in distress sales of labour to meet immediate subsistence needs.

Gender and equity issues and concerns, affect all people at every stage of growth and development. Social vulnerabilities are generally associated with demographic characteristics such as age and sex. People are exposed to various risks and vulnerabilities at every stage of life which if not addressed may limit their capacity to harness their full potential.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am aware that the MGLSD has been implementing the pilot Expanding Social Protection Programme since June 2010 with a goal to reduce chronic poverty and improve life chances for poor men and women and children in Uganda. The Programme is further guided by a Social Protection Policy that is premised on the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, laws that address issues of risks and vulnerabilities as well as Regional and International Instruments the country is party to. It is also consistent with other National Policies and Planning Frameworks. Therefore, I have no doubt that the launching and implementation of the Gender and Equity Strategy for SP, will strengthen the implementation of the social protection programmes in an equitable and sustainable manner.

The Expanded Social Protection Programme is currently implementing the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) targeting the elderly persons in 40 districts. The SAGE is covering 148,405 elderly persons (89,117 females and 59,288 males). Although this is a small figure compared to the population of the country, I

am optimistic that the government is committed towards including all the elderly persons and introducing other programmes to target the other segments of the population particularly the youth and the women who are the majority and they are mainly in the informal sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the launch of the strategy which was informed by the gender situation analysis, is an indication of the government's commitment to understanding the underlying causes of gender and equity inequalities based on which the Expanded Social Protection Programmes will be premised. The strategy seeks to enhance access to equitable social protection services for men and women, boys and girls of all categories.

At this juncture ladies and gentlemen, permit me to extend my sincere thanks to you Hon. Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development as well as the Permanent Secretary and your entire technical team for having provided both technical and material support for the development of this strategy. Further appreciation goes to all the different stakeholders who provided technical and material support to this cause.

UN Women is proud to be associated with this product and pledge support to contribute to its dissemination and implementation.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION