



Statement by Ms. Lynn Hastings, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, on the occasion of International Women's Day

Jerusalem, 8 March 2021

Every year, on the 8th of March, the world celebrates International Women's Day. In 2021, the focus is on "Women in Leadership; Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world".

Before COVID-19, participation of women globally as national parliamentarians had only managed to rise from 11 per cent in 1995 to 25 percent in 2020 and only 21 per cent of government ministers were women in 2020. In business, the proportion of women in senior management globally grew to an estimated 29%, the highest number ever recorded. While these numbers represent progress, we are still far from parity and we don't know how they will be affected by COVID-19. We have seen already the compounded effects of the pandemic on all women around the world; increased domestic violence, unpaid care duties, unemployment, and poverty. In Palestine, these effects are exacerbated by continued occupation of the Palestinian territory, and a protracted humanitarian crisis.

In 2006, 13 percent of those elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council were women; in 2021, the discussions in Cairo to increase participation of female candidates in the upcoming Palestinian elections is an important step which if realized, will increase women's effective and full participation and leadership in all aspects of life including ensuring the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on women are remedied. Gender equality remains one of the most pressing challenges of our time as it is only with gender equality that we all thrive. While this year's focus is on Women in Leadership, our commitment must be to all Palestinian women, including those with disabilities, in marginalized and rural communities, refugee camps, Area C, Hebron-H2, and in Gaza. The United Nations affirms its commitment to continue to work with the Palestinian people and government, and our partners, to combat discrimination and violence, advance human rights, and accelerate progress for girls and women everywhere.

More specifically, greater action is needed to ensure policies, laws regulations and mechanisms are in place and implemented. Awareness must be raised, to combat deeply rooted attitudes and practices that discriminate against and exclude girls and women. To achieve this, women and especially young women, are needed at all levels of decision making and are pivotal to ensuring inclusive and sustainable progress is made. As the UN Secretary General has said - women's leadership and decision-making is not "a favour to women", rather it is essential to "peace and progress for all."

For more information and how to celebrate International Women's Day with the United Nations online, see: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/united-nations-observance-of-international-womens-day-2021-registration-141746857667>