

Remarks by UN Resident Coordinator, Yeşim Oruç at the Opening Session of the National Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Capacity Building Workshopⁱ

09 March 2023

The national workshop focuses on enhancing analytical and technical skills for analyzing public expenditures in different sectors to address VAWG.

- Permanent Secretaries, Representatives from the Bureau of Statistics, Government and other officials
- Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Guyana, His Excellency Rene Van Nes
- Civil Society Representatives, Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. Belatedly, Happy Holi and happy International Women's Day!

We are together today to discuss gender equality, as the Commission on Status on Women, the principal global intergovernmental body on gender equality and women's empowerment, convenes in New York where Minister Vindhya Persaud is participating in relevant ministerial meetings.

I just returned from Europe where I had the chance to meet principals of the European Union. Many of our discussions included the regional Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Guyana's very own Spotlight Initiative Programme – a representation of the shared values and partnership between our two organizations and with the Government of Guyana, which Ambassador Van Nes referenced.

Yesterday was International Women's Day! The President of the Republic, His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali – in keeping with the celebratory nature of the day and joined by many women hosted an event. Many women there spoke to their own personal achievements and of the national government programs that enabled those achievements - in education, in health, in STEM, in agriculture. The Head of State joined the celebratory mood. But when His Excellency came to the subject of Gender-Based Violence, he paused. In a night of celebration, this was the only subject that dampened the Head of State's otherwise celebratory remarks. He made a passionate call to all men and women to speak up, to stop protecting their sons and husbands who perpetrate those acts, to call out for help from the authorities and in short to be part of erasing this scourge!

This is precisely why I am proud to lead the Spotlight Initiative Programme, generously funded by the European Union, in Guyana where from the Head of State to Minister Vindhya Persaud - with whom I co-chair the Initiative's Steering Committee - the effort, the passion and the commitment are vocal and strategic, and partnerships with civil society are dynamic and effective.

Turning to today's topic, allow me to make a couple of points:

1. Financing for gender equality and the SDGs

I am old enough to remember the Beijing Platform for Action. It highlighted the need for allocation of financial resources for the advancement of women. Twenty-five years later in 2019, the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action revealed that the persistent lack of financial resources continue to constrain progress on gender equality.

For this reason, GRB was included in the monitoring framework of SDG 5, with Indicator 5.c.1 on establishment by all countries of the "systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment."

2. Budget 2023 Guyana

The Government of Guyana has made concerted investments in gender equality and women's empowerment. I mentioned some of the programs in education, health, STEM, and agriculture which many women highlighted last night on IWD.

Further, a quick look at the *Budget at a Glance* will show that "in keeping with Government's promise of empowering citizens, several initiatives were implemented across all sectors to ensure that women and girls as well as men and boys are able to participate in Guyana's development."

For example, Budget 2023 tops up by more than 30% the budget of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – the Ministry with the primary mandate to provide services for vulnerable women including survivors of GBV.

In addition, the Budget makes additional resources available for programs that are critical to ending Violence Against Women. To name a few:

- For the construction of day and night care centres to benefit women and men in need of child-care services;
- For training of thousands of national and community leaders on gender and social inclusion and development of gender mainstreaming into decision-making processes;
- For legal aid services for survivors of domestic violence.

Therefore, it is clear. The Government is budgeting for women and for ending VAW. This is very important. I cannot overemphasize this.

3. Call to Action

Ambassador Van Nes made a call to action for gender responsive budgeting across sectors for eliminating VAW including to integrate some of the initiatives that commenced with the Spotlight Initiative Program.

Let me echo that call and urge for use of Sustainable Development Goals and its indicators for budgeting processes. And indeed, in budgets for 2021, 2022, 2023 we see that the Government uses many SDG indicators.

In so doing, I urge for further sex disaggregation of the many SDG indicators that are already tracked in Guyana's budget processes.

Finally, in keeping with SDG Goal 5, I urge for the establishment of the systems for tracking allocations made for gender equality and VAW that allow for cross sectoral coordination as well as for women's organizations, civil society and the media to be able to understand and gauge the different impact of programs on men and women; and to constructively engage in improving, targeting and increasing the impact of the many successful programs.

4. Spotlight Initiative Sustainability

Many in this room are familiar with the Spotlight Initiative. When the Ambassador, Minister Persaud and I launched the Phase II of the Program, we dedicated attention to its sustainability. This is integrally related to the topic of GRB on which we gather today. For the Spotlight Initiative, the sustainability of the program is targeted through several means.

1. A robust legal framework – laws of the land that help eliminate VAW in all spheres.
2. Services that are budgeted in national systems including some of the Spotlight initiative activities.
3. Financing partnerships. The Government of Guyana has established robust partnerships with IFIs, notably the IDB, towards investments in sectors critical to eliminating VAW and children such as Justice.
4. Finally, and much more modestly, of course are the UN's own plans with the Government and institutions of Guyana. Going forward after the end of the Spotlight Program, we will have to sustain our own engagement on VAW in our work plans.

5. Finally, a word on civil society

While States are ultimately accountable for protection and for services delivery, our global experience for example with HIV/AIDS suggests that some communities, are best targeted through civil society or grass roots organizations. Guyana's strengthening public programs and public sector capacity and its increasing fiscal space all create opportunities for a new dialogue on what will likely be a changing role of civil society in the service provision space. Tracking, in terms of effectiveness and impact, national budget allocations through civil society in prevention of violence against women and children would also be an important aspect of GRB.

In closing, allow me to reiterate that the UN System stands ready to continue the work after these two days and to accompany our partners in Government and civil society towards

increasing the impact and effectiveness of all programs and initiatives towards eliminating GBV, including through GRB.

I wish you a successful workshop.

Thank you.

ⁱ Accessed and downloaded from <https://guyana.un.org/en/222396-remarks-un-resident-coordinator-ye%C5%9Fim-oru%C3%A7-opening-session-national-gender-responsive>