



Transitioning from the MDGs

By Joan Goldstein

“Transitioning from the MDGs” briefing was moderated by Mr. Jeffrey Brez, Chief of NGO Relations, Advocacy and Special Events in the Department of Public Information. He outlined the United Nations’ role and strategy for transitioning from the historical 2000 Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) to the 2015 development agenda in partnership with civil society.

At the Millennium Summit, September 2000, member states adopted the UN Millennium declaration committing to a new global alliance to reduce extreme poverty and its many dimensions by 2015. While significant progress has been made in achieving many of the original goals, advancement has not been uniform in all countries and across all goals. Building on the momentum of the MDGs is the transformational change to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda leaving no one behind in poverty and no one living without dignity.

Leading the panel of speakers was Ms. Amina Mohammed, special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Post - 2015 Development planning. Ms. Mohammed spoke of the successes of the MDGs in her country, Nigeria, and the need to address unfinished business in the successive SDGs of education, gender equality, health systems, water and sanitation, technology and climate change.

Mr. Mitchell Toomey, director, Millennium Campaign, UNDP, talked about the direction and planning for the next fifteen years with a framework of measureable goals. NGOs (DKG) and civil society (you) need to take part with their input and governance, building awareness and linking to a global agenda with universal accountability.

Ms. Florencia Soto, Public Information Officer, Strategic Communication Division, DPI, addressed the need to find common ground on the seventeen goals and to campaign on how we are personally affected.

Notes on a Briefing and a Conference held in conjunction with the Commission on the Status of Women, March 2015

By Grace Murphy

"Women Taking the Lead: Designing and Monitoring Sustainable and Gender-Responsive Infrastructures" was a panel discussion led by Jan Peterson, head of the Huairou Commission. (www.huairou.org) She set the tone by asking, "How do we implement the changes we want?" and she also called for women and issues pertaining to women to be a major part of the SDGs.

The first speaker, Olga Segovia, recommended that there be a "new partnership modality to change the shape of cities" by assigning public space with gender equity (think restroom spaces), providing safe transportation and public services, and building leadership schools for women.

Esther Mwaura-Muiru from Kenya pointed to the decentralization in her country, saying that it makes health care and access to markets and trade easier since the voice of the people can be heard. She said the increase of productivity on the farms made it necessary to improve roads; public land and its use should be a priority; women should monitor public policy.

Ruth Serech urged that some of the money now designated for disaster relief and war be spent on resilient infrastructure and developing cities. She mentioned work in Guatemala where planning and evaluation include women and local government agencies working together.

Professor Moran Stipisic, an architect, pointed out that few women go into the profession of architecture, and only one has won the prestigious Pritzker prize (out of 37 recipients). She advocates renewed thinking in urban design and transportation.

Jo Berg (www.unhabitat.org) pointed out the challenges to cities now that the majority of people live there. He mentioned urban planning, more public spaces and housing as top priorities. Most urban planners are men.

"Arts Advocacy Campaign to End Sex Discriminatory Laws" was sponsored by UN Women and Equality Now. In her opening remarks, the Assistant Secretary General said that gender equity is a shared human right - everyone has the responsibility to act.

Jane Fonda, the actress, clarified her role in the conference by saying she was present to mark what women have achieved in the 20 years since Beijing. She pointed out that girls blossom when they feel self-worth and all governments should be sure that both boys and girls are equal before the law. She cited many statistics about problems that women face, among them

-domestic violence, equal pay, and property rights. She also recited advancements by women in many countries.

Then by placing a scarf that she wore and changing her accent, Sarah Jones, a performance artist, gave a one-woman show, highlighting with humor and ingenuity discriminatory laws in different countries. For example, in India, spousal rape is a crime that is not always reported. In Paris, it was against the law for a woman to wear trousers. In Russia, women are not allowed to drive a train, be a carpenter or a plumber, but there is no law against them cleaning the bathroom. In England, her character spoke about women in the Armed Forces; in Jordan, in some cases, a woman does not have the right to keep her children if her husband objects. In the Dominican Republic and the United States, a girl can be married at 13, but she can't drink until she's 21, vote until she's 18; however, she can be a contestant on American Idol when she's 15. According to strict Jewish law, a woman needs permission from her husband in order to get a divorce (a gett). In Kenya, polygamy and female genital mutilation are the problems.



Ms. Jones received a standing ovation at the end of her performance.

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(Note: Plane and Africa Map pictures with permission from UN website, Scarf picture of Cathy Daugherty)