



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**Speech by H.E. Ambassador Kristian Schmidt**

**Head of Delegation**

**AT THE LAUNCH OF THE UN WOMEN PUBLICATION; "  
PROGRESS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN 2015-2016: TRANSFORMING  
ECONOMIES, REALISING RIGHTS**

**Serena Hotel, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

Excellences,

Honourable Ministers

Members of Parliament

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me today for the Ugandan launch of UN Women's global flagship report, "Progress of the World's Women: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights".

I am relieved to be part of a gender-balanced list of speakers! And although this report is a testament to the injustices faced by women around the world, I stand before you with a fairly good conscience – and I will tell you why.

First of all, Europe is a strong global advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment. We have pushed, and pushed hard, whether at the Beijing or Cairo UN conferences, for women's rights to decide – over their bodies,

choices, careers and education. This year, as the world is rethinking and recasting its sustainable development models in the context of adopting a universal post 2015 development framework and defining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EU is of course pushing for clear and ambitious goals in this area.

Second, within Europe, the EU institutions have been leading the way in rolling out legislation to our 28 Member states, calling for equal pay, social protection and a stronger role for women in corporate board rooms. The European Commission, where I used to work, was the engine of these transformative, legislative proposals.

Third, in our development co-operation across the world, the European Union and its member states are strong supporters and loyal allies of the UN agencies, fighting for their role as strong global normative and operational institutions. I still remember the recent creation by the UN general assembly of UN Women, in 2010. It's surprising, really, isn't it that 55 years after agreeing to create the UN Security Council, the world finally sees the need to create a new powerful institution to lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality!

Anyway, better late than never, but there's a lot of catching up to do. At the EU Delegation to Uganda, we take this very seriously. Together with the government of Uganda, we are currently formulating the objectives of our \$ 578 Million programme for the next six years. And if I am here today without the Delegation's Gender equality advisor, it's because she's right now preparing a contract with UN Women to help to ensure that everything we will be doing in Uganda will have the greatest possible element of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Starting with our future flagship programme for Northern Uganda. How will Karamoja ever develop, unless – as today's report advocates – we do not put gender equality and women's empowerment as a key objective? We agree Karamoja has a problem in nutrition and a future in agriculture? Let us not imagine solving that without starting with the women of Karamoja. Like the report does, let's consider how gender inequalities are still entrenched in many cultural, social and political systems; let us honour women's actions and achievements, and recognize the challenges they face in achieving equity and fairness.

The report connects the local, national and global level. It investigates how the global economy is failing women, the underlying causes, and how the larger dysfunction of the world economic model is not conducive to the empowerment of women and girls.

In theory, but also in practice, and certainly in the history of Europe, women's emancipation started very much at the workplace. When childcare became organised, work was paid and women organised to voice their concerns and fight for their rights.

But as the report illustrates, it may not be that simply in the global economy. Where women are employed, for the most part, they are in poorly paid, insecure occupations, like small-scale farming, urban street trading or as domestic workers, a sector in which 83 per cent of jobs are filled by women.

Even in developed countries, many of the jobs that are being created are of poor quality, often temporary jobs that lack basic security.

What is remarkable about this report is that it addresses issues and speaks to the situation of women in all countries and contexts; and therefore has a universal significance and resonance for every woman. It builds on good

practices and examples from countries across the world; to demonstrate that the report's recommendations have been acted upon even in resource constrained, post- conflict, or otherwise challenged contexts.

Let me not be undiplomatic, but only state this: there are some very rich countries in the world, where women are denied the enjoyment of even the most fundamental rights. And there is a rise in extremism making it worse in many places.

On the other hand, there are some very poor countries and regions– and here I would include Uganda – where progress is being made on women's rights. Let me congratulate Uganda for recently receiving the AU award for progress in realizing gender equality and women's human rights in Africa.

In short, the report helps us realise that gender equality and equity cannot and should not wait in the mistaken belief that attitudes will evolve with development and economic growth. No – attitudes must evolve right now, or development will not come.

But even if we get that right, we're not yet there.

The report asks why the global economy is not working for women? It suggests a new economic agenda that works for women, while benefiting men, in an effort to redress existing social and economic disadvantages.

The report's key messages have been detailed by previous speakers, so let me just repeat the call on all countries to:

- Set out a vision for women's rights to work and be at work. This aims to achieve the target set in SDG 5 on recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure

and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family.

- Ensure that public services do not let women down by leaving them to compensate for government failures – in water, sanitation, healthcare, and childcare services, among others.
- Build dynamic and stable economies, that create good jobs which can generate the fiscal space needed to finance these vital public services, including social protection.

Let us recognise that this is tall order, for any country. And that Governments should not be defensive about it. Change is necessary, and it is only possible if Governments accept – and indeed solicits – the contributions and concerted efforts of many different actors: Government; private sector, employers, public services, and certainly also civil society and NGOs.

[I know the NGO Bill expresses concern for "subversive" NGOs in Uganda – well, maybe all the male-dominated institutions across the world need to accept a little bit of subversion to advance women's rights]

More seriously, when dealing with issues such as the prevention of violence against women and girls, and combating all forms of discrimination against women and girls, we need all the tools at our disposal and all efforts should be welcome – government, private, public, NGOs or individuals.

I therefore call upon all of us to use this report as an instrument for change and progress. It is now up to all of us to take it upon us to implement its recommendations.

I Say this for my wife, my sister and my daughter!

I Say this for the girls in the schools of Uganda!

I Say this for farmers of Karamoja and for the factory workers of Asia!

I Say this for Women and for our World!

It is now my pleasure to formally launch UN Women's "Progress of the World's Women Report 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights".

Thank you for your attention!

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