

Intervention by H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay on
“Women in water diplomacy as key to economic empowerment”
Side event of the UN Commission on the Status of Women
17th March 2017, 13:15-14:30h

Conference Room 2

Your Excellences, Distinguished Speakers, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a woman and a professional who worked extensively in decision making and multilateral diplomacy, a strong supporter of gender equality and a firm believer in women’s empowerment, I am honoured to speak at today’s event.

The empowerment of women and girls is an essential contribution to economic life and sustainability at all stages of development, including relief, recovery, building peace and achieving inclusive growth. The 2016 UN World Water Development Report on Water and Jobs reveals that women in formal, high-level positions have a significant positive contribution to the economy. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrate that the involvement of women in water management can improve efficiency and productivity.

Based on ILO’s statistics however the gap in labour market participation between men and women shows only moderate progress since 1995. Globally, about 50% of women were at work in 2014, compared to 77% of men. Twelve years ago, these figures were at 52% and 80% respectively. According to the International Water Association, the amount of paid jobs held by female workers in the water sector is very low comparatively: only around 17% of the paid jobs in the spheres of water and sanitation are held by women.

Obstacles that women have to face are threefold: negative stereotypes, a considerable gender pay gap, and social expectations that negatively influence their career choices, including the need for balancing family and career, fitting into existing social structures, or simply struggling with lack of self-confidence.

Gender equality is not only a matter of fairness. The untapped potential of brilliant girls and women is a great loss of economic opportunity, both for women themselves and for the society as a whole. Gender equality should therefore be considered as a crucial mean to promote economic participation.

The most important difference of Agenda 2030 as compared to the MDGs and at the same time the largest challenge and opportunity lies in bringing together the implementation of water-related goals and targets with gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The SDGs set out investing in women especially in the areas of education, health and employability. The ability of women to achieve behavioural change and cultural shift is the greatest potential of all for sustainable social development and inclusive economic growth.

Policy Recommendations of the Women's Forum convened at the Budapest Water Summit in November 2016 underline that access to water is key for women's empowerment, economic development and independence.

It is in the fields dominated by males, such as leadership positions in politics, economics, science and technology decision making that we should aim at breaking through gender stereotypes. Let me share some examples of best practices from Hungary in this regard.

The Hungarian National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality for 2010-2021 sets out that the percentage of women in leadership positions should reach at least 40% in Hungary by 2021. The National Research-development and Innovation Strategy for the period 2013-2020, entitled "Investment in the Future" builds on the priority of creating equal opportunities for women in the Research, Development and Innovation sector.

This will require multi-stakeholder partnership with civil society, private sector, academia, media and all relevant umbrella organizations that is well underway.

Promoting gender equality should be embedded also in education and vocational training. The scholarship programme called Stipendium Hungaricum is Hungary's most important bilateral development program promoting equal chances for education by providing access to our higher education institutes for students from developing partner countries. We are happy to see that every year there is a significant number of female applicants.

Just to reinforce the practical stance here at the UN, on the day before yesterday, we hosted an event in the ECOSOC chamber with Planet 50-50 champion chess grand master Judit Polgár from Hungary on fighting stereotypes. Yesterday we had a side event on work-life (im)balance to demonstrate that women do not necessarily have to choose between family and career, as both are possible!

As Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, I believe in preventive diplomacy, where even smaller countries can have an important contribution to peace and security by building bridges in areas like science, water resources management and promoting gender equality.

As co-moderator of the working level dialogue of 22 March under the auspices of the President of the General Assembly on *'Improving the integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations on the water related goals and targets under its sustainable development pillar, with particular emphasis on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'*, I paid special attention to the gender balance in the selection of speakers. I and my capital are pleased to see that Ms. Lesha Witmert, Steering Committee member of the Women for Water Partnership and UN representative for the International Federation of Business and Professional Women will give her introductory remarks in the first panel. We'll also have Ms. Sanjaasuren Oyuun, Chair of the Global Water Partnership in the second panel – both of them adding perspectives of women in important positions regarding the shaping of future water policies.

I am sure we all agree that women in leadership positions should promote the inclusion of women at all levels of decision-making in order to empower them. The ultimate goal is to enable women fulfilling their full potential through equal economic opportunities to increase their chance in conducting a balanced life. Women empowerment also starts with access to safe water and gender responsive sanitation so that they are in a position to act as experts, partners, agents and leaders of change.

I hope that I inspired you today to stand together and act for women and girl's future as well as their right and contribution to sustainable development.

I thank you for your kind attention!