

UNGA STATEMENT by Jamila Aanzi, Dutch women's representative

Mister chair, excellencies, distinguished delegates,

A lot can change in one generation!

In the mid-seventies of the previous century, in a small village in Morocco, a man dreamed of a better future for his son. He empowered him to cross over from North Africa to Europe. The son's adventure started, from one city to another. Eventually, he settled down in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Little did he know then, that he and his wife, being both illiterate, would raise 8 children. 6 girls and 2 boys. The kids having a bright future, is not the first thing that comes to mind. But just like his dad, he had big hopes and dreams for his children. Because his children would have opportunities to develop and empower themselves through education and work. They now all have college degrees and their own career. One of them is very proud to address you this very moment as the Dutch UN women's representative.

Like I said, a lot can change in one generation.

I was fortunate enough to be born and raised in a country where your parents' wealth is irrelevant for you to have a decent education. I am not the only one. Dutch girls are doing great, education wise. Unfortunately, this doesn't show in senior levels and positions of power, it's still a man's world out there.

Even though we claim men and women are equal, this hasn't resulted in equal pay for equal work yet. The Netherlands even dropped 3 spots on the Global Gender Gap index by the World Economic Forum. The report found that gender equality is sliding backwards. And projections suggest that it may take another 116 years before equality for both genders is a fact. These are not data to be proud of, we should be ashamed of ourselves.

For the past year, I had many conversations, discussing the challenges, but mainly focusing on what needs to be done to decrease the amount of years needed to close the gaps. It comes down to **opportunity, support and commitment.**

Opportunity for women to develop and fully participate in society. Support and commitment from politicians, government, employers, women and men. Gender equality demands a multi-stakeholder analysis- and approach. We are all in this together.

Women's organizations have been working on these issues for years and their campaigns are still needed, to put- and keep matters on the agenda. We should all make sure that they will always have the space to keep working on their mission.

But gender equality is not a sole responsibility of women. Support from **men** is pivotal. If only because the gender pay gap for example affects their daughters as well. (But also, because gender-equality will benefit the business they are in.)

Just as crucial is support from **politicians and government officials**, when it comes to rules and regulations and setting an agenda which aims at achieving gender equality. **And by setting an example and appointing women in position of power and committing to it.**

Commitment is a key word. In the conversations I had with employers on gender equality, the lessons learned were that you need strong dedication from the top, have the conviction that diversity is essential, realize that you're in it for the long term and there is no such thing as a quick fix. No quick fixes, but we can speed up the progress by setting quota.

And then there's you, the United Nations. We need your commitment and support just as much. The progress report on sustainable development goal number 5, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, shows that gender inequality persists worldwide. Achieving equality will require more vigorous efforts, ambitious measures and quotas are needed to move from slow progress to actual progress.

Ladies and gentlemen, Yes, we have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. Let me conclude my speech by sharing with you my dream.

I am an aunt to 4 precious human beings. 3 boys, Lotfi, Hamza and Abdullah. The youngest one is a girl, Maysa. She is now 19 months and is growing up in a completely different setting than her mom and dad's.

In 2052, my niece will be the same age as I am today. I hope that she, and every boy and girl, grow up in a world where we don't talk about how gender equality is sliding backwards, but moving forwards. And that when this is true, my niece will look at me and say:

You see aunt Jamila, a lot can change in one generation.

I do need your help to make this dream come true. I truly hope that my niece, and every girl out there can count on your support! Can they?

Thank you very much!