

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Michael Linhart,
Director General for Development Cooperation
Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria
Closing Ceremony of the Vienna Policy Dialogue, 13 December 2012**

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**Mr. Under Secretary-General,
Mr. Vice-President of ECOSOC,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me first of all to thank you for your hard work during the past two days. The topic you discussed is one of the most pertinent of our times.

Allow me to underline the importance Austria attaches to the gender topic in general and in the field of development cooperation in particular. We are therefore pleased to have had the opportunity to co-host this important event together with UN-DESA and UN-Women in Vienna.

Even though the equality of men and women is in theory accepted throughout the world, reality very often speaks a different language. Women bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty, they are more likely than men to be poor and at risk of hunger because of the systematic discrimination they face in education, health care, employment and control of assets. Poverty implications are widespread for women, leaving many without even basic rights such as access to clean drinking water, sanitation, medical care and decent employment. Being poor can also mean they have little protection from violence and have no role in decision making.

Despite progress in women's status in recent decades millions of women throughout the world are still subject to physical and sexual violence, with little recourse to justice. As a result of discrimination, girls are less likely to attend school; nearly one out of every five girls who enrol in primary school in developing countries does not complete a primary education.

Gender discrimination also has a profound impact on the survival and well-being of our children, for whom women are the primary care takers. Gender equality and the empowerment of women produce the double dividend of benefiting both women and children and they are pivotal to the health and development of families and communities. When women are empowered to lead full and productive lives, children and families prosper.

Austria has therefore decided to make gender equality and the empowerment of women one of its top cross-cutting issues. They are key to poverty reduction, economic growth and social development. In addition Austria attaches great importance to the concept of gender budgeting, which makes sure that women get their fair share economic empowerment and fully participate in the decision making process.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yesterday's and today's workshop dealt with the fundamental question of how development cooperation can contribute to the empowerment of women. The outcome will be an important input in the deliberations of the next meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum in 2014, which is the only multi-stakeholder forum in the world where the whole spectrum of actors active in the field of development cooperation, including governments and the civil society, come together in order to find innovative ways of making development cooperation more efficient and effective. Feeding the results of this workshop into the Development Cooperation Forum is therefore an important avenue of making sure that the empowerment of women is considered adequately in the post-2015 agenda.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding my statement, let me take the opportunity to sincerely thank you for your participation in the Vienna Policy Dialogue and for having contributed to advancing the development agenda.

I hope you enjoyed your stay in Vienna and wish you all a good trip home.

I thank you for your attention.