

Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller
Side-Event during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):

Gender Responsive Humanitarian Action:
GenCap de-brief featuring cases from Colombia and Central African Republic

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As delivered

Ministers, colleagues and friends, it is a pleasure to be here. Welcome and thank you all for being here. I extend a warm thank you to the Government of Tunisia and Canada for co-hosting this side-event with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). I am the new Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and I am really delighted to be here today. And thanks to all of you who have joined to hear from the Advisers on what they are doing in the field, with a specific focus on some of the experiences and lessons learned in Colombia and Central African Republic.

While the GenCap project is hosted within OCHA, it sets out to serve the entire humanitarian system. GenCap is an inter-agency capacity project and the leadership and strategic oversight of the Project is the responsibility of a steering committee made up of a full programme: WFP, UNICEF, UN Women – and I am delighted to have Caroline Rusten with us on the panel – UNHCR, FAO, UNDP, UNFPA and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). I would like to express my deep appreciation for their ongoing commitment.

So how do GenCap advisors contribute to more effective humanitarian action?

It is clear that crises and complex emergencies impact women and girls, men and boys, differently and thus to be effective, our response must reflect these different needs and priorities, particularly those of women and girls, and boys and men. Not only during, but also long before crises unfold, GenCap advisors are laying the foundations to be gender responsive into each phase of the humanitarian programming cycle. This includes efforts to mainstream gender into assessments and analysis, strategic planning and monitoring, the whole cycle.

Giving direct support to Humanitarian Country Teams, GenCap advisors also work to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into guidelines, training modules, and other technical support tools, to build capacity for gender equality programming long before a crisis hits.

The importance of mainstreaming gender into all of our work cannot be underestimated. Women and girls are differently, and often disproportionately, affected by conflicts and crises, which heighten pre-existing discrimination, inequality and vulnerability. If humanitarian action does not take these specific needs into account, it will fail the majority of those in need.

As protracted complex emergencies and climate change are now causing humanitarian suffering and displacement on an unprecedented scale, the GenCap project is also expanding. In 2016, we sent 24 senior gender advisers to 21 locations, including to Iraq, Yemen and Jordan, as well as many regional offices.

As a result of these deployments, in southern and eastern Africa, the GenCap adviser helped partners incorporate a stronger gender dimension in their humanitarian responses in Burundi, Somalia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. In the Pacific region, the adviser's efforts were in evidence in the gender focus of the collective response to Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji.

The critical work of these GenCap Advisers would not be possible without the generosity of our donors and partners. Since its inception in 2007, 10 years ago, ECHO as well as the Governments of Australia, Canada, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, have generously supported the GenCap Project, and we are enormously grateful for this support. But the sheer scale of suffering demands that we do more and this year the GenCap Project is calling for US\$4.33 million to carry out the work.

We very much look forward to hear from our GenCap Advisors, Devanna de la Puente, who will present on the Colombia experience; followed by GenCap Advisor, Merrin Waterhouse, who is stepping in for Anabel Carreras, to speak about the GenCap project drawing on examples from the Central African Republic.

And as the Secretary-General highlighted in his remarks this week for the Commission on the Status of Women, and I quote: *as you champion equality, you make the world better*. I would like to thank each one of you in this room for your commitment, working towards gender equality in humanitarian action.

Thank you.