

Excellencies,

No human rights scourge is more prevalent than gender inequality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated entrenched discrimination against women and girls.

The crisis has a woman's face.

Most essential frontline workers are women — many from racially and ethnically marginalized groups and at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Most of the increased burden of care in the home is taken on by women.

Violence against women and girls in all forms has skyrocketed, from online abuse to domestic violence, trafficking, sexual exploitation and child marriage.

Women have suffered higher job losses and been pushed into poverty in greater numbers.

This is on top of already fragile socio-economic conditions due to lower incomes, the wage gap, and a lifetime of less access to opportunities, resources and protections.

None of this happened by accident.

It is the result of generations of exclusion.

It comes down to a question of power.

A male-dominated world and a male-dominated culture will yield male-dominated results.

At the same time, the COVID-19 response has highlighted the power and effectiveness of women's leadership.

The lives of women are perhaps one of the most accurate barometers of the health of society as a whole.

How a society treats half its own population is a significant indicator of how it will treat others. Our rights are inextricably bound.

This is why, as a proud feminist, I have delivered on my commitment to make gender parity a reality in the leadership of the UN.

And I have made gender equality a leading priority for the Organization as a whole.

This is not just the responsibility of any individual or agency. If we are to be an inclusive, credible, and effective international Organization, it is the work of everyone. I am committed to doing much more.

Our Call to Action on Human Rights has a specific emphasis on repealing all discriminatory laws globally.

And on achieving women's equal right to participation and representation, in every sector and at every level through ambitious actions, including temporary special measures such as quotas.

Realizing this right will benefit all of us.

The opportunity of man-made problems – and I choose these words deliberately – is that they have human-led solutions.

But these solutions can only be found through shared leadership and decisionmaking and the right to equal participation.