As my colleagues have already noted, Agenda 2030 is far more than business as usual. It builds the strongest bridge we have achieved to date between the development enterprise and international human rights standards, including, crucially, the right to development. It squarely places the human right imperatives of universality, equality and nondiscrimination at its core. And it acknowledges, as it should and must, that gender equality and the human rights of women and girls are, and I quote, “a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets”.

As such, implementation of Agenda 2030 must be aligned with international human rights instruments. In the case of gender equality, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, with 189 States parties, remains central to the realization of women’s human rights, alongside various other key
standards. We must ensure universal ratification and the Convention’s full implementation as a foundation for Agenda 2030. Recommendations from international human rights mechanisms such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women should guide the implementation and follow up of the SDGs, in particular the voluntary national reviews. And those mechanisms must be supported to have the capacity to contribute in that way to Agenda 2030.

Gender equality and women’s and girls’ human rights must be prioritized across the entire 2030 Agenda. Goal 5 is crucial, and we worked hard to achieve it, but all goals must be implemented in a gender-responsive manner. In fact, most SDGs and targets are directly dependent on gender equality for their achievement. For example, addressing the gender gap in agriculture in terms of access to land, technology, information, finance, time and markets would reduce poverty, enhance food security, increase investment in health and education, support sustainable and inclusive growth, foster climate-resilient development and empower women to promote peaceful and stable societies.
However, gender inequality remains the most pervasive form of inequality around the world. Many women face multiple, or intersecting, forms of discrimination based on their gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, religion and other status. Discriminatory norms, stereotypes, prejudice and violence continue to prevent the full realization of women’s and girls’ rights.

Women empowerment and gender equality, I would argue, is a prerequisite to achieve Agenda 2030. As a result, SDG implementation efforts must as a first order of business address the structural gender barriers that perpetuate inequalities and disparities. National gender equality mechanisms must be strengthened and fully engaged to bring the perspective of women’s and girls’ human rights into those efforts. Women’s organizations have historically been, continue to be, and will be vital for Agenda 2030.

Going beyond averages, data must also be better disaggregated to identify the root causes of inequalities and develop an enabling economic and regulatory framework. Adequate financial resources, using tools
such as gender-responsive budgeting, must be mobilized to invest in women’s and girls’ human rights and support the effective implementation of these laws and policies. Last but not least, accountability mechanisms will need to be strengthened and better resourced.

We at UN Women look very much forward to working with all partners present today to achieve the human rights vision of Agenda 2030, built upon the rights of women and girls.