Statement by United Kingdom  
**Beijing+20 Regional Review meeting**  
6 – 7 November 2014

- UK supports a standalone gender equality goal in the post-2015 development framework.
- We support the EU statement that the Framework should address justice, equality and equity, good governance, democracy and the rule of law, with a strong focus on the empowerment and rights of women and girls and gender equality, and on preventing and combating violence against women.
- We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights for women.

- A key focus of the post-2015 agenda is eradicating extreme poverty. To achieve this we must advance women’s economic empowerment and participation.
- Our strategy for increasing women’s economic participation is based on a partnership with business around three key priorities:

1) **Women’s Business Council**  
   - senior business leaders work with government to support women by
   - Supporting the career choices of young girls and women
   - Helping women to climb the ladder
   - Supporting women’s continuing development and contribution throughout their working lives
   - Helping women gain the necessary skills to set up and run their own business

2) **Think Act Report**  
   - Voluntary initiative that encourages and supports businesses to think about gender equality in their organisation, act where necessary, and report data and share best practice with other organisations
   - now supported by over 260 companies, collectively covering over 2.5 million employees

3) **Women on Boards**  
   - Lord Davies Voluntary Business led approach to getting more women on boards
   - now almost 23% on boards in the FTSE 100 – up from 12.5% in 2011 and 17.5% on the boards of the FTSE 250 –up from 7.8% in 2011
Our work with the private sector is underpinned by government policies such as

- extending the right to request flexible working to everyone
- introducing shared parental leave in 2015 to allow families to share their caring responsibilities
- promoting enterprise by providing support for women wishing to start their own business
- From Autumn 2015 almost 2 million families could benefit from new tax free childcare scheme, worth up to £2000 per child
- And I mentioned yesterday some of our programmes to raise girls aspirations and get more women and girls into STEM careers

**Gender equality makes sense!**
- I echo my colleagues from the Netherlands when I say that increasing women’s economic participation benefits society as a whole
- Through our work with the Women’s Business Council we established the following:
  - There are currently 2.4 million women who are not working and want to work
  - And a further 1.3 million women who want to work more hours
  - By equalizing men’s and women’s economic participation rates we could add more than 10% to the size of the economy by 2030

**Progress to date**
- In the UK there are more women in work than ever before – our employment rate is currently 68.1%
- More women graduates than ever before – including in STEM subjects
- We have eliminated the gender pay gap for full time employees under 40 and it continues to narrow for the over 40s
- More women led businesses than ever before

**Conclusion**
- In all these initiatives we are working with men and boys, and this offers real potential for change. For example Lord Davies has been a tireless advocate to get more women on boards
- Twenty years ago, governments pledged to work with financial institutions, business, academics and civil society to improve the lives of women and girls everywhere.
- It is this spirit of collaboration and engagement that will ensure we do not wait another four decades to achieve gender equality.
- On Monday the UK Government will hold its Annual National Consultation with Women event, which will be attended by 120 representatives from civil society.
We look forward to the meeting and to working with civil society on next steps to accelerate the Beijing Platform for Action and for creating a development strategy with women and girls firmly at its heart.