DRAFT Remarks of Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde,

UNON Director-General at the PRE-RUN for the FIRST LADY’S HALF MARATHON

4 MARCH 2016

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning!

Thank you for coming so early to participate in this 5 kilometer Pre-Run to the First Lady’s Half Marathon.

As you know, the Half Marathon will take place this Sunday, 6 March, and will support the First Lady’s “Beyond Zero Campaign” and the efforts to save children, women and men from the tragedy inflicted on families by pregnancy-related deaths in Kenya.

This pre-run is also part of our own activities to mark International Women’s Day, which, as you know, will be formally commemorated around the world on 8 March. Of course, some of you will finish today’s run faster than others.

I congratulate in advance those of you who will be among the first to conclude the race.

But I also want to congratulate all of you for participating today. By running for a good cause – promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women – you are all winners.

That is because everyone – women, men, children – stand to benefit from greater gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in all facets of society.

Never before has the case for women’s full empowerment been clearer. It results in more peaceful and just societies. It improves the well-being of women, men, families and communities. Equality also means smart business, as women’s empowerment brings strong economic returns for all.

Like today’s pre-run, our work on gender equality is something of a race. A race against the clock.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs, we only have 15 years to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, as reflected in Goal 5 of the SDGs.

Goal 5 has a number of specific, ambitious targets, including: ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres;

eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation; recognizing unpaid care and domestic work; ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life; and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, among others. That is a tall order. We have no time to lose.

So, on your mark everyone! The race to gender equality has already started.

Before setting you off on your run, I would like to thank UN-Women for organizing today’s Pre-Run here at UNON.

And good luck to those of you who will be running in the First Lady’s Half Marathon on Sunday. I hope to see many of you there.

All the best in your run today, and thank you for your kind attention.