DRAFT DG’S OPENING REMARKS FOR THE REGIONAL SHAREFAIR ON GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES: 14 OCTOBER 2015

* Hon. Najib Balala, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Mining of the Republic of Kenya;
* Amb. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region;
* Your Excellency Amb John Feakes, Australian High Commissioner to Kenya;
* Mr. Bruno Pozzi, Acting Head of the European Union Delegation to Kenya;
* Ms. Christine Musisi, UN Women Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa;
* Distinguished guests and participants;
* Dear Colleagues;
* Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome all of you to the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

It is an honour to be among you this morning, and to participate in this Sharefair on Gender Equality in the Extractive Industries.

I would like to thank UN-Women’s Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, as well as the African Union Commission, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, UNDP, the

Australian High Commission, the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and other partners, for organizing this event on a crucial topic of our time, and a critical issue for this region.

The recent discovery of large-scale valuable resources in various countries in Africa presents great potential for the development of the region. These resources can help propel economic growth. They can create employment opportunities, and they can significantly reduce poverty levels.

Women on the continent already play a vital but often overlooked role in the extractive industries. Previously thought of as a ‘man’s business’, the mining industry is witnessing the increasing participation of women, as operators, as employers and as workers. For example, it is estimated that women make up at least 40% of the workforce in the artisanal and small scale mining sector in Africa.

However, currently, women in the industry are at a distinct disadvantage due to several factors.

Firstly, they face the same kind of discriminatory and unequal practices and dynamics as in other sectors, such as lack of access to capital and credit, lack of technical know-how due to a shortage of capacity-building opportunities, and the persistence of gender-based inequalities negatively affecting women’s ownership and rights over resources. Women also lack a strong political voice and are often excluded from decision-making processes regarding mining projects affecting their communities.

Evidence suggests that the benefits from the mining sector accrue mostly to men, while women bear most of the costs, such as family or social disruption and environmental degradation.

In addition, women involved in the sector face disproportionate risks, including harassment, gender-based violence, as well as violence from resource-based conflicts.

It is clear that there is an urgent need to integrate gender-equality policies and actions within the mining sector in Africa, to address the social, cultural, economic and political barriers women face in the industry.

Among other steps, political and economic institutions need to ensure that resource-led development is transparent and that the development opportunities created by the sector are equally accessible to both men and women.

The United Nations is a strategic partner in the Extractive Industries. Through various programmes, the United Nations works to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks -- at the national, regional and international levels -- with a view to ensuring that the benefits from the mining industry contribute effectively to equitable development.

**Over the next 15 years, this will be part of our collective efforts as we seek to achieve the recently-adopted Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 on “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls”.**

**This Sharefair is bringing together governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders to share international best practices and to discuss how to promote gender**

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**equality and women’s empowerment in the Extractive Industries.**

**I am pleased that UNON – the only UN Headquarters in Africa and the entire global South -- is being used as the venue for this important gathering, on a sector that is critical for Africa’s transformation and sustainable development.**

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**I wish you all a rich learning experience.**

**Thank you for your kind attention.**

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