

UN Women Born! Civil Society Celebrates Creation of Gender Equality Entity After Four Years of Advocacy



[New York, 30 June 2010] The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign celebrates the United Nations General Assembly resolution, agreed to on 30 June and to be formally adopted by the General Assembly on Friday, 2 July, to establish “UN Women”—the new gender equality entity at the

UN. This move has been sought by women’s organizations and other civil society organizations around the world since the UN established a System-Wide Coherence Panel for UN Reform in 2006.

Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University, a founding member of the GEAR Campaign, stated, “We have high expectations for this new agency to be a solid foundation for advancing the human rights of women as central to global policy efforts to reduce poverty and move toward greater realization of peace and democracy in the world. The coalition of women’s groups and other social justice, human rights and development organizations that played a pivotal role in this effort will now turn its efforts toward ensuring that the new body has the human and financial resources necessary to succeed.”

Particularly notable in the resolution are the paragraphs regarding the importance of civil society participation in the new entity. The body must have increased operational presence at the country level including engagement with women’s groups and other civil society organizations invested in gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The GEAR Campaign’s global, regional, and national networks will be contacting UN representatives at all levels to work with the transition process and the new Under Secretary-General, once appointed, to ensure they are connected with organizations on the ground ready to provide their expertise and support.

As Patricia Licuanan of the Philippines, GEAR focal point in Asia and previous Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women at the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing says: “The new gender equality entity will assist countries in their efforts to carry out commitments made in Beijing. Working through the One UN system, we hope to see UN Women taking the lead in engendering the programs of the UN at the country level.”

As the new entity is developed, GEAR supporters will continue to advocate for four major elements critical to its implementation:

- Meaningful, systematic and diverse civil society participation at all levels
- Strong, country-level operational capacity and universal coverage
- Ambitious funding with stable and predictable resources aimed at reaching \$1 billion within a few years
- Strong leadership at the top with an Under Secretary-General who combines a global vision with gender equality expertise on the ground

“We know that this is only the beginning,” stated Rachel Harris of the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). “We must continue to ensure that we are building a United Nations that really works for all women!”

Background

The GEAR Campaign is a network of over 300 women’s, human rights and social justice groups around the world that have been working for four years to gain UN Member State and UN Secretariat approval for creation of a larger more coherent coordinated UN agency that can advance further the UN’s mandate of working for gender equality as a crucial component of development, human rights, humanitarian concerns, peace and security.

The new Gender Equality Entity to be headed by an Under-Secretary General, will consolidate the four existing UN bodies on women, increase operational capacity at the country level and have gain increased funding for work on women’s empowerment and advancement. The UN currently has four separate entities dedicated to women’s issues which will be combined in the new entity: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the Office of the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI). Bringing these together and coordinating their work more with gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system should the UN and governments to deliver more effectively on their obligations and many commitments to advance gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s human rights.

For more information please go to the GEAR Campaign website – www.gearcampaign.org – or contact the GEAR Campaign at: gearcampaign@gmail.com