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Talking Points

- Coherence must not be perceived as a goal in itself. It is a means to achieve a goal, in this case improved development efforts. Coherence might be useful in some contexts, but not in others. In many cases, differing views are useful to improve efforts, an example being the critique of among others ILO and UNICEF regarding the World Bank structural adjustment policies. The strength in the diversity of the UN system should not be overlooked during UN reform.

- Gender mainstreaming must not be perceived as a goal in itself, either, but a means to empower women and achieve gender equality, and it must be supplemented with other means.

- A special UN agency for women, autonomous, with a strong mandate and adequate resources, is extremely important to promote gender equality. It must not be expected that the organisation should be perfect, however. That is impossible, but it should make the UN efforts with regards to gender equality considerably better, having a noticeably greater effect. A special women's agency must not replace nor weaken the efforts of other UN agencies to promote gender equality. On the contrary, these must be strengthened.

- The effective promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality in national as well as UN bureaucracies requires extensive institutional change. Political will is not sufficient. We have experienced this f.ex. in Norway, in our bilateral aid cooperation. We thought we were doing well, having introduced gender mainstreaming and giving continued political support, but we were not succeeding. A recent evaluation showed that the follow-up was in practice weak, fragmented and partly invisible. We have to institutionalize the efforts to get results on the ground. There must be a committed and knowledgeable administration, including the top management; incentives and gender expertise must be developed, human and financial resources allocated, accountability, reporting and evaluation systems established.

- In the UN system, the experience is that progress for women has often been achieved by means of a triangle of forces including committed feminists (usually women, but not necessarily all women, and sometimes also men) in the governing board, committed feminist staff in the organisation and active feminist groups or organisations outside of the system putting on pressure. It is important to stimulate and strengthen such triangles.