

# News Release

 Women's Environment  
& Development Organization

Center for Women's  Global Leadership

## For Immediate Release

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## GENDER EQUALITY MAY FINALLY ARRIVE AT UNITED NATIONS

Panel Report Responds to Women's Demands, Groups Release Statement

**New York, NY** – A high-level panel convened by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan will recommend the creation of a stronger agency for women in its report to be issued on Thursday Nov 9. For months, women's groups and allies around the world have actively lobbied governments and Panel members for the creation of this new agency to strengthen the UN's response to gender inequality. Over 90 groups worldwide have signed on to a statement released today praising the Panel's recommendations.

"We and our colleagues around the world are pleased that one of the Panel's boldest recommendations is for an independent women's agency that will strengthen the UN's capacity, leadership and resources for gender equality," said June Zeitlin, Executive Director of Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO). "As we told the Panel members, there is a tremendous gap between rhetoric at the UN on gender equality and the reality of women's lives. We believe that this consolidated agency will provide a stronger voice for women at both the global and country level."

The women's agency will consolidate three existing women's units within the UN—Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)—and will be headed by a newly created Under-Secretary General. The agency head will have higher status, a substantially increased budget and additional staff for its work at global and country levels.

By enthusiastically endorsing the Panel's recommendations, current Secretary General Kofi Annan could signal the importance of gender equality to the UN mission to fight poverty, provide humanitarian aid and protect the environment. The Panel's recommendations also present an unprecedented opportunity for incoming Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon to take decisive political action on behalf of women worldwide.

"These structural recommendations will only be meaningful if there is also significant political will—including financial and human resources—for their implementation" said Charlotte Bunch, Executive Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University. "For years, women from around the globe have been calling on

governments and the UN to strengthen their efforts to realize the rights of women that UN documents have codified, and this is a good move in that direction. Now the baton passes to Mr. Ban Ki Moon to ensure that the UN takes bold steps to support the Panel's recommendations in practice and not in name only."

To make this real, women demand assurances that this agency have strength at both global policy and country "on the ground" levels.

"We demand that all UN country teams include senior gender expertise including at the decision making level, with adequate resources and not just where necessary," said Bene Madunagu, General Coordinator of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). "Women's rights are not optional and should not be subject to the will of this or that donor interested only in this or that country."

The time for gender equality at the UN is now. Several global women's leaders will hold a press briefing today at 2pm in the UN Press Room (S-226) in New York. Speakers include: Bani Dugal of Baha'i International Community to the United Nations; Doris Mpoumou on behalf of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN); Cynthia Rothschild of the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), and June Zeitlin of the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO).

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*Since 1990, Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) has fostered women's leadership in the area of human rights through women's global leadership institutes, strategic planning activities, international mobilization campaigns, UN monitoring, global education endeavors, publications, and a resource center. For more information, visit [www.cwgl.rutgers.edu](http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu). Center for Women's Global Leadership / Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey / 160 Ryders Lane / New Brunswick, NJ / 08901 / USA / +1 732.932.8782.*

*WEDO is an international organization that advocates for women's equality in global policy. Working in key global forums such as the UN, WEDO advocates for and seeks to empower women as decision makers to achieve economic, social and gender justice, a healthy, peaceful planet and human rights for all. For more information, visit [www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org). WEDO / 355 Lexington Ave., 3rd Floor / New York, NY / 10017 / USA / +1 212.9730325.*