

Statement on Reforming the Gender Equality Architecture of the United Nations

Women's groups from around the world welcome the recommendations on strengthening the gender equality architecture of the UN in the report released November 9, 2006 by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel for UN System-wide Coherence. We urge member states to adopt these recommendations during the 61st session of the General Assembly and to set up a process to ensure their full and timely implementation.

We support the Panel's proposal to establish an independent women-specific entity that will combine OSAGI, DAW and UNIFEM, have both normative and operational responsibilities, be better resourced, and be led by an Under-Secretary General. These recommendations are in line with what civil society, and in particular women's groups, have been calling for to enable governments and the UN system to better achieve their goals on gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights.

We are pleased that the Panel adopted the recommendation for a USG to head the new entity, as it will guarantee organizational stature and a voice for women at the UN decision-making tables. Women's groups called for an open, transparent and global search for a candidate who has substantive expertise in gender equality and we are pleased that the report includes this recommendation. We urge that civil society be consulted during this open search process.

The dual mandate of the new entity, which will include both policy and country-level functions, will strengthen the effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming work of other UN agencies, as well as advance women's rights directly. For this entity to function as a driving force throughout the UN system, and for it to better address women's experiences at the country level, every UN Country Team must include senior-level gender equality experts with adequate resources and support who can lead the team's efforts to fulfill and promote UN and government commitments to women's human rights.

A strong and well-resourced institutional accountability mechanism that enables women's participation and addresses women's rights in activities at the country level was one of the critical needs presented to the Coherence Panel.

The time to show support for a reformed and strengthened women's entity is now. Women's groups urge governments to demonstrate political will during the General Assembly by endorsing the Coherence Panel's recommendations on creating a stronger gender equality architecture at the UN, and by establishing and adhering to a process and time frame for implementation.

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