

**Message**  
**from the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of**  
**Women to the Secretary General of the United Nations.**  
**Ms Angela E.V. King**

*to the*  
*Gender Mainstreaming Conference*  
*organized by Islington Enterprise Agency in London, UK*  
*Friday 29 June 2001*

I am honoured to have the opportunity to send this message of support to the important conference on gender mainstreaming in the European context organized by the Islington Enterprise Agency.

**Intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming was established as a globally recognized strategy for the promotion of gender equality at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Since then the importance of gender mainstreaming has been reinforced in many intergovernmental contexts. A particularly important endorsement was given in the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council in 1997 (1997/2) which provided a clear definition of the strategy and outlined what gender mainstreaming entails in practical terms. More recently the Commission on the Status of Women adopted a resolution on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (45/2). The mandate for gender mainstreaming is thus very clear and very strong.

In addition to these more generic mandates for gender mainstreaming, there are also very specific recommendations for all areas of the work of the United Nations, including the areas which this conference will be focusing on - poverty, power and decision-making and enterprise development. For example, in the chapter on Women in power and decision-making in the Platform for Action from the Beijing conference, paragraph 189 specifically addresses mainstreaming: "In addressing the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively." In relation to poverty reduction, the outcome document from the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action calls on governments and international organizations to: "Recognizing the mutually reinforcing links between gender equality and poverty eradication, elaborate and implement, where appropriate, in consultation with civil society, comprehensive gender-sensitive poverty eradication strategies addressing social, structural and macroeconomic issues" (para 101(e)). Numerous recommendations have been made in many different contexts on the need to give greater attention to gender perspectives in relation to enterprise development, including in relation to credit, savings and training. For example, the outcome document of the twenty-third special session encourages governments and international organizations to: "Encourage the establishment, in partnership with private financial institutions, where appropriate, of "lending windows" and other accessible financial services, with simplified procedures that are specifically designed to meet the savings, credit and insurance needs of all women."(para 101(f)).

**What is gender mainstreaming?**

The strategy of mainstreaming is defined in the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2, as "&the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and

programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." The term mainstreaming came from the objective to bring attention to gender equality into the mainstream of development activities. An important element in the mainstreaming strategy is the ambition to give attention to gender equality from the initial stages of processes so that there is potential to influence goals, strategies and resource allocations and thus bring about changes in policies, programmes and other activities and make a real difference to gender equality.

Mainstreaming involves taking up gender equality perspectives as relevant in analysis, data collection, and other activities, to ensure that all processes take into account the contributions, priorities and needs of the entire stakeholder group, women as well as men. Attention to the goal of gender equality needs to be mainstreamed into research, analysis, policy development as well as operational activities. The Platform for Action (Beijing 1995) made it very clear that gender analysis is the first essential step in the mainstreaming strategy. Before any decisions are taken in any area of societal development an analysis should be made of the current responsibilities and contributions of both women and men and the potential impact of planned processes and activities on women and men respectively.

The first step required is an assessment of the linkages between gender equality and the issue or sector being worked on, that is, to identify the gender implications of working on, for example, poverty elimination, decision-making and power, enterprise development, and all other areas. This involves understanding why promotion of gender equality is important from a human rights/social justice perspective as well as for achievement of all other development goals. Secondly the opportunities for introducing gender perspectives need to be identified in the work-tasks undertaken. These opportunities or entry-points can be found in research and analysis, policy development, use of statistics, training events and workshops/conferences, as well as in planning and implementing projects and programmes. Thirdly an approach or methodology has to be identified for successfully incorporating gender perspectives into these work-tasks in a manner which facilitates influencing goals, strategies, resource allocation and outcomes. This could include, for example, giving attention to gender perspectives in terms or reference and job descriptions. Institutional development, in terms of developing guidelines, utilizing gender specialists, providing competence development for all personnel, etc., is also required to support gender mainstreaming.

It is important to emphasize that gender mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes. Mainstreaming and empowerment of women are complementary strategies. The mainstreaming strategy should always be implemented in a manner which facilitates empowerment of women.

### **Responsibility for gender mainstreaming**

Overall responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming strategy should rest at the highest levels within Governments and other organizations. Management levels should develop adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress with mainstreaming. One means of ensuring accountability is to establish clear indicators of progress which can be monitored over time by management.

The Platform for Action and all subsequent intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming have been very clear on the important role of non-governmental organizations and civil society. In the Political Declaration in the outcome document from the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing +5), for example, it is clearly stated that Governments: "Recognize the role and contribution of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and encourage their participation in further implementation and assessment processes;" (para 5). Non-governmental organizations and civil society groups have a key role to play in advocating for gender mainstreaming at national and local levels and in holding their Governments accountable to international commitments.

The critical role of men, and the need for men to take joint responsibility with women for the promotion of gender equality, including through the gender mainstreaming strategy, has been increasingly emphasized in

recent years.

I congratulate you on the initiative to foster greater dialogue on the gender mainstreaming strategy and wish you a very successful conference.

Thank you.