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**Methods and tools development to promote gender mainstreaming:
Experiences from the United Nations Secretariat**

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The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women is mandated to support gender mainstreaming efforts in the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Offices in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, and the regional commissions. OSAGI works in a catalytic manner, assisting managers and professional staff understand and give more attention to the gender perspectives in their work. This presentation largely focuses on the Secretariat, although some of the conclusions also apply to the three regional commissions which have been visited by OSAGI in the past 18 months - ESCAP, ESCWA and ECE.

It needs to be noted that the Secretariat is in a unique situation in terms of access to gender specialists and training, compared with other parts of the United Nations system. There have never been gender units or gender specialists in the Departments in the Secretariat, although gender focal points have been appointed in most Departments in recent years and a network of these focal points will be established to facilitate the provision of training and support. In addition, the Secretariat has only very recently (since 1997 and in three Departments only) been provided with any form of competence development. The constraints which have been identified in the Secretariat need to be placed in this context.

The need for support within the Secretariat is great. In its different forms of collaboration with the Departments, OSAGI attempts to work in a consultative and collaborative manner - not doing the work for them but working with them to ensure the development of responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming. This involves a slow process of change, sometimes difficult to measure, which does not produce quick, "glossy" results.

Identifying the constraints

Collaboration has been initiated with the Departments through a process of consultation with senior managers and professional staff. In this process constraints and potentials are identified and approaches, methodologies and tools needs to be developed to tackle these. Four key constraints have been identified which will be addressed in this presentation: lack of understanding of basic concepts; poor knowledge of intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming; lack of knowledge on the linkages between gender and the areas of work of the different departments; and lack of capacity to incorporate gender perspectives.

It has often been claimed that the main reason gender mainstreaming is not implemented is because professional staff do not know how to implement it. The approach taken is a very technical one - all that is required is the provision of methods and tools to staff and they will be willing and able to do gender mainstreaming. Addressing the question of "how" in organizations which still have serious problems around the "why" and "what" cannot, however, be successful.

Within the Secretariat there is considerable confusion on what gender mainstreaming is, as in many other parts of the United Nations system, but the lack of understanding of concepts is even more complex, including a lack of understanding of the very basic concept of gender equality. Many professional staff equate gender equality with gender balance in the Secretariat. This confusion may come from the fact that Member States have historically raised questions on gender balance but not on gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat. It may also be connected to the fact that some focal points in the Secretariat have had responsibility for both gender balance and gender mainstreaming but, for different reasons, have given more attention to gender balance issues. A third possible reason is that there has simply been a lack of interest to investigate the concepts further. For whatever reasons, conceptual confusion exists which seriously hinders effective implementation of gender mainstreaming and must be specifically addressed.

Related to this is the second constraint identified, that most Departments are not conversant with the general intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming, let alone the more specific mandates gender mainstreaming on their own areas of work. Most professional staff have heard about Beijing and Beijing +5 but have not reflected on the implications for their own work. Professional staff are focused on the specific mandates relating to their own areas of work and give little attention to the interlinkages with mandates on gender mainstreaming in these areas. Provision of greater clarity on sector and issue-specific mandates could be very instrumental in securing greater management commitment to gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat.

A third major constraint is the lack of knowledge on why gender would be a factor in the substantive work of Departments. The process of consultation has revealed that many Departments have never addressed gender perspectives in their work. Promoting a greater understanding of why and how gender perspectives are relevant to their work is an important element in improving gender mainstreaming. The dual rationale for incorporating gender perspectives into their work, both to secure gender equality from a human rights and social justice perspective and to ensure effective achievement of the goals set for their work, must also be widely promoted.

The fourth constraint is a lack of capacity to incorporate gender perspectives into substantive work. This is dependent, of course, on adequate understanding of all the issues discussed previously - concepts, mandates, rationales and the linkages between gender perspectives and their substantive work. However, even with better understanding of the "why" and "what" questions related to gender mainstreaming, professional staff need to be supported with the "how" - for example, to identify the entry-points in their work and develop methodologies so they can effectively integrate gender perspectives.

Methods and tools to address the constraints

To address the lack of understanding of concepts, three short 2-page notes on gender mainstreaming have been prepared which specifically address concepts. One provides a historic background to the development of gender mainstreaming; the second provides more specific discussion on the different concepts underlying gender mainstreaming; and the third introduces the basic concepts in a discussion of mandates for gender mainstreaming. The two-page model is used to introduce concepts because non-specialists with little prior exposure to gender perspectives need to be introduced to the issue with tools which are accessible, manageable and not overwhelming. A two-pager can be an ideal means of reaching busy professionals who are not convinced of the relevance of gender equality issues for their work. These notes have been used in different contexts, depending on the specific needs, and have been distributed broadly. Confusion over concepts is also specifically addressed in the competence development programme on gender mainstreaming, as will be discussed further on.

A short paper has been prepared as an introduction to the gender mainstreaming strategy. This will be complemented with a more operationally-focussed paper which will address approaches and methods for gender mainstreaming. These papers are seen primarily as a means to develop greater capacity for catalyst roles among gender focal points in the Secretariat, but can also be used by interested professional staff.

One of the short notes on gender mainstreaming specifically addresses the overall mandates for gender mainstreaming contained in the Platform for Action, the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 and the twenty-

third special session of the General Assembly. In addition, the specific mandates for different areas of work of the secretariat, such as disarmament, peace support operations, statistics and macro-economics, have been compiled from different sources of intergovernmental legislation, including resolutions and agreed conclusions. The mandates for all areas of the work of the Secretariat will be compiled in this manner.

To assist in developing understanding of the linkages between gender perspectives and the work of the Secretariat, a number of series of briefing notes are under preparation on macro-economics, trade, statistics, disarmament, the environment, population and public administration. The briefing notes are four pages long and contain three sections. The first introduces the linkages between gender perspectives and the issue being discussed; the second section provides some ideas on what might need to be done differently as a result of understanding these linkages; and the third section provides a resource listing with good references, websites, etc., to assist in developing a deeper understanding of how to bring gender perspectives to the centre of attention in relation to the issue/sector under discussion.

These briefing notes are not simply developed for the Departments but must involve a process of consultation within the departments. The process involved has differed for the different series of notes, depending on the specific situation in the department, or division within a department. The notes on disarmament were initiated, for example, through a process of consultation with managers, to get information on their ideas and experiences. Close consultation was also initiated with NGOs working in this area. This was essential in relation to disarmament because there was so little materials available on gender perspectives. In the development of the notes in other difficult areas, such as on macro-economics, trade and statistics, reference groups of experts on gender in these areas were set up to provide inputs. It was interesting to see how such experts from academia or activism had to struggle to package their knowledge and experience in a concise form that would be relevant to policy-makers and planners.

Production of the briefing notes must involve a process of learning and they need to be "owned" by the substantive departments, i.e the substantive departments have to sign off on them, after close review of the final results. The value of this method has been particularly evident in relation to disarmament. These are the first to be completed and will be presented at a panel in conjunction with the forthcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

A fourth area of work has been the development of a competence development framework for gender mainstreaming in collaboration with the Office of Human Resource Management. Through competence development programmes it is possible to develop the awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity required for gender mainstreaming and to address all the constraints mentioned above, in relation to concepts, mandates, rationales and capacity. However competence development should not be seen as a panacea and has proven only to be successful if followed-up adequately. The collaboration with the Office of Human Resources Management also involves the development of a resource-base of good facilitators for competence development on gender mainstreaming.

The approach and methodology utilized in competence development is also critical. To move away from the one-off training workshop approach, a four-pronged approach is being utilized in the on-going competence development programme for all professional staff in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The programme is carried out division by division to ensure an adequate focus on the specific work programme of each division. An introductory meeting for the whole division, led by the Director, introduces the programmes, its aims and processes, and the commitment required from staff. In the second step working group sessions are held with smaller groups of professionals, usually by branch, in which the work programme is discussed in more detail, as well as the extent to which gender perspectives have been brought into account in their work. These sessions serve to provide a greater understanding for the consultants on the work of the professionals, their knowledge of gender perspectives and the constraints they face. It also provides an opportunity for the professional staff to start considering gender perspectives in their work. The third stage is a one-day workshop for groups of no more than 20-30 professional staff where there is opportunity for discussion of concepts, analysis of case studies to further develop understanding of the linkages between gender and the areas of work of the division, and work on developing capacity for integrating gender perspectives. The participants are encouraged to arrive at concrete steps which could be taken in their work to better incorporate gender

perspectives. Once all divisions in the department have participated in the programme there will be a "town-hall meeting" of the entire department, led by the Under Secretary-General, where all Directors of divisions will be required to present their plans for bringing greater attention to gender perspectives in their work programmes.

A constraint to using competence development as a means of improving gender mainstreaming is a certain scepticism in the Secretariat to training in general; the feeling that even one and a half days is too long to give to any one issue in busy work schedules; and a lack of openness to the possibility that a programme on gender equality issues might be interesting and useful for their work. The limits to what can be expected from a one and a half day programme need also to be kept in mind. To ensure adequate follow-up it is also important to ensure that the facilitators document the process and outcomes in sufficient detail.

The need to focus more on the planning processes in the Secretariat, moving beyond integrating gender perspectives in the Medium-term plan and the Biannual Programme Budget, has been recognized. The process by which professional staff translate the objectives and expected accomplishments in the Programme Budget into concrete activities need to be identified and addressed. Similarly there is need to promote the incorporation of gender perspectives into the monitoring and evaluation processes. Work will be carried out in close collaboration with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, as the logical next step in supporting gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat.

As part of these efforts, greater attention will be given to identifying and documenting examples of good practice. In departments where it is felt that everything has been done, that could be done, to give attention to gender perspectives, documentation of good practice in a consultative manner is an excellent means of both identifying the good practice that does exist and developing clarity on gaps and missed opportunities.

All of the above materials will be on the WomenWatch website in the near future.