

Mainstreaming Gender through the Work of the Agencies and Envisaged Collaboration with UN Women

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Statement by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women, to the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP, 4 February 2011 – Item 2: Mainstreaming gender through the work of the agencies and envisaged collaboration with UN Women.

[Check against delivery.]

Thank you Madame President.

In the past four months I have had the opportunity to consult with my colleagues in the UN system, and with many of you, about how UN Women can set priorities that will add notable value to UN efforts to support countries to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. I have also received very good insights about how best we can work together to realize these.

I have been gratified by the very warm and positive response I have received from my Chief Executive Board counterparts: Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; Josette Sheran, Executive Director of WFP; and Helen Clark, Administrator of UNDP and UNDG Chair. I would like to say a special word of thanks to Helen for the excellent support UNDP has provided to the UN Women Transition. I look forward to working very closely with Babatunde Osotimehin, the new Executive Director of UNFPA, and establishing the same productive relationship that I enjoyed with Thoraya Obaid.

Throughout these discussions, I have heard very consistent messages about how UN Women should conduct its work. Among these, three stand out:

1. UN Women should prioritize demand-driven country-level support, focus on a few critical thematic areas, and generate visible results.
2. We should work with the UN system, not compete with it. We should build partnerships across the UN system and create more opportunities for each UN organization to support gender equality from its area of comparative advantage.
3. There is a need for consistent and sustained coordination support and greater accountability across the UN system on gender equality.

Today's discussion is a very welcome opportunity to share my ideas on how UN Women should carry out this coordination role, and how we can align our work with the UN system.

Madame President, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

Guiding my thoughts on coordination, as on all of UN Women's work, is our founding mandate, which states that UN Women shall consolidate the mandates and functions of the four entities that compose it, "with the additional role of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the UN system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women."

I want to be clear therefore that in carrying out this mandate, UN Women has neither the intention nor the capacity to replace the responsibility of each agency to deliver on gender equality. Rather, we will support what each is doing and assist where we collectively identify gaps. If UN Women is successful, we will see much more investment by UN organizations in gender equality support, not less.

It is also important to state that we see coordination as a means, not an end or goal. The goal is to achieve more sustained results on the ground, by drawing more effectively on our combined strengths to support our national partners.

In this regard, as I said to the UN Women Executive Board last week — that "behind my vision is a strategic approach to leadership that is central to how we will work."

There will be some areas where countries will look to UN Women to lead. UN Women's leadership of UN system work to implement the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign through the Regional Directors' Teams and Regional Coordination Mechanisms, is a good example. We cooperate closely with all UN partners, and often co-lead with other UN organizations, such as UNFPA.

However, there will also be many areas that impact women's lives where others are already doing excellent work, and with whom we will form strong partnerships, bringing attention to issues related to gender that may be overlooked. One example is our work with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to strengthen attention to the gender dimensions of migration; another is our frequent partnerships on elections with UNDP at country level.

And there will be still other areas where we can add most value by ensuring the work of others is coherent through our coordination role. Indeed, if we play our UN system coordination role well, we can have a major impact on women's lives, without being operational in all areas.

The UN Women Vision and 100 Day Action Plan, which will guide the work of UN Women while we develop our first Strategic Plan, sets out five thematic areas in which I believe that UN Women can add value and provide focus and leadership to the UN system, namely: 1) expanding women's voice, leadership and participation; 2) ending violence against women and girls; 3) strengthening implementation of the women, peace and security agenda; 4) enhancing women's economic empowerment; and 5) making

gender equality priorities central to all aspects of national and local development planning.

The selection of these five areas reflects what we have heard as priorities from many of you also during our Executive Board discussions last week. I look forward to discussing them in greater depth with our Executive Board when I present our Strategic Plan in June.

Over the next four months as we develop our Strategic Plan, we will meet with different organizations in the UN system working on each of these areas, and initiate an ongoing dialogue with those most active, especially our colleagues from the Funds and Programmes, so that we can usefully partner with each other, and how we can support each other to maximize impact. I anticipate that these dialogues at senior and technical levels will continue on an ongoing basis and will be mirrored at the country level working through the Resident Coordinator system, and within the Country Teams.

Madame President, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

Since I joined UN Women I have also heard various messages regarding UN system coordination. On the one hand, Member States tell me that the UN system is still far from coherent in its work at country level, although progress has been made in recent years, especially through the Resident Coordinator system. On the other hand, UN agency staff at headquarters and at the country level, tell me that there are too many coordination mechanisms, and too much time is spent on coordination, with too little effect.

The background paper for this session makes clear that the UN system has much to build on and contribute to enhance coordination and promote accountability. For example, the reviews of Common Country Assessment/UN Development Assistance Frameworks (CCA/UNDAFs) by the UN Development Group (UNDG) Task Team on Gender Equality in 2006 and 2010 found that the quality of the CCA/UNDAFs has improved over the last three years with a higher level of gender analysis and programming results, and with the use of relevant and transparent indicators to measure progress. However, it noted that “few UNDAFs specify the amount of resources that are allocated to gender equality outcomes. When this is done, it indicates a transparent commitment of the UNDAF and makes possible better tracking of resources for gender equality over time.”

UN Women’s own tracking of participation in joint programming shows a steady increase in the number of programmes that have a strong gender focus, and in the number of joint initiatives on gender equality. But, we do not have enough information on the results of these efforts. The fact that there has been a steady rise in joint programming begs the question: do joint programmes deliver results better? And if they do, what factors lead to that? In line with our commitment to results, UN Women will work with partners on an evaluation of joint programming on gender equality, to be completed by August 2011.

The background paper also sets out examples of the good results already being generated through coordination, including joint programming. To cite just one example: in Rwanda,

where the government addresses gender-based violence as a security issue under the mandate of the police and the national army, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women are supporting a multi-sectoral approach to combating such violence, with well-defined roles for security actors in implementing it. The report of the field visit by the Joint Executive Boards last March endorsed the regional gender-based violence training services offered by the police force as “an initiative worth replicating,” particularly for South-South cooperation, and to date, 12 African countries have agreed to do this.

Other examples of joint programmes in the paper demonstrate what coordination can achieve when it adds value, not just process. Coordination itself is not enough to add value and we need to do much more to add value.

Madame President, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

UN Women must work with the existing coordination mechanisms, but we must make them more effective. We should seek to reduce ineffective and time-consuming coordination processes and mechanisms wherever possible. I will continue to work with my fellow heads of agencies, to build understanding among us, and to enhance clarity as to how we can each add value, and work effectively to complement and support each other. We must set the example that our staff will follow.

We will carry out our coordination role at the global level within the Chief Executives Board (CEB), working with the undg, the High Level Committee on Programming (HLCP), and the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM). And as a member of the UN Country Teams, we will continue to work within the Resident Coordinator system at country level, under the auspices of the Resident Coordinators.

We will look closely at the experience of other UN entities that play a coordination role, and learn what they conclude works, and what does not. We will work through the existing analytical, planning and reporting tools, improving them where we can, but resisting any temptation to introduce additional process. And we will also learn from the Delivering as One pilots, to find a range of best practices that we can model in different situations.

My staff are working with the secretariat of the HLCP on accountability, and with the undg to agree on how UN Women should carry out its coordination role in a way that adds greatest value to their work at country level. The UNDP Administrator and I will shortly send a joint letter to the Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams, explaining how we see UN Women working at country level, and reassuring all UN system staff that the establishment of UN Women means they have to do even more for women and girls, not less.

Madame President, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

With regard to our mandate to promote accountability with the UN system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women will not be the “gender

police” for the UN system. But there is an important role to play in assisting all parts of the system to account for what they have committed to do, both globally and in each country where they are working. The current undg focus on enhancing country-level, results-based planning and reporting offers an important opportunity in this respect, and UN Women will make it a priority to see what we can do in each country to support every member of the UNCT to review and report on achievement of the results it has agreed to support. We have already tested performance indicators for UNCTs that could be finalized, standardized and adopted by all undg agencies.

At the global level a similar effort to introduce the gender marker that UNDP and UNICEF as well as members of the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) on humanitarian assistance are already using to track gender-related investment, could serve to reinforce and expand the country-level work to promote accountability throughout the UN system. UNFPA is instituting its own gender marker this year. We look forward to discussing and moving ahead on a shared tracking system for the UN with the HLCP and the undg.

I look forward to working closely with my colleagues here over the coming months, to set out a clear strategy for UN Women’s coordination role as part of our broader Strategic Plan.

Thank you.

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