

Statement of South Asian Campaign for Gender Equality on the proposed UN Gender Equality Architecture

August 2009

The South Asian Campaign for Gender Equality (SACGE) warmly congratulates the Co-Chairs of the System-Wide Coherence process Ambassadors *Juan Antonio Yanez-Barnuevo* of Spain and *Kaire M. Mbuende* of Namibia for their report and their recommendation that “the General Assembly take action during the current session and decide on the establishment of a composite [women’s] entity.”

SACGE is a network of more than 200 women’s and human rights organizations of South Asia formed in April 2006 to take forward the agenda of the creation of a separate gender entity within the UN system to effectively fulfill the commitments made towards gender equality and women’s empowerment. It brings together the voices of civil society, NGOs and individual women and men from all across the region who believe in the need for UN Reform to respond to country level realities and demands.

The last three decades have seen major achievement on the setting of norms and standards on gender equality by the UN. Nevertheless experiences of developing countries highlight the fact that women’s rights issues have not been adequately recognized and implemented in key areas. For instance they have been marginalized and ignored in areas such as access to and control over economic resources and markets, livelihood opportunities, participation in governance and the community, and personal security in the public and the private spheres.

Against this backdrop SACGE considered the UN reform process as a window of hope for significantly eliminating inequalities in all spheres: economic, civil, cultural, social and political. In this regard SACGE initiated various activities all over the region since 2006 including a signature campaign and collected a million signatures and send it to the co-chairs of the Coherence Panel in 2006 voicing its demands for a gender equality entity with a more apposite position and authority in a restructured UN, with the resources, privilege and position.

The SACGE Campaign is pleased to see that the present report on SWC of the co chairs, have emphasized on the composite entity which would consolidate the four existing women’s entities (OSAGI, DAW, UNIFEM and INSTRAW), perform the functions outlined by the reports of the Secretary-General, including to advance gender mainstreaming throughout the system, link the normative functions and the operational activities, recognize the universal nature of gender equality, support the normative activities of UN intergovernmental bodies and engage in expanded operational activities at country level.

We are very hopeful that the United Nations member states will adopt the resolution before the end of this 63rd session of the General Assembly by September 14, 2009.

As the South Asian focal point of the GEAR campaign SACGE supports all the demands of the GEAR campaign and would like to further urge the member states to ensure:

- Field presence in every developing country and a strong policy and programmatic mandate
- Let by an Undersecretary General to more effectively drive the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda
- The entity be funded at a minimum level of \$ 1 billion USD, with increases over time
- Meaningful involvement of civil society both from developed and developing countries in all processes of governance and programming

Women in South Asia and other parts of the world are counting on your support to champion our cause in the region and globally for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the most comprehensive manner.