



28th October 2009

Moving Ahead with the Setting up of the New UN Women's Rights Entity Position Paper of the European GEAR Campaign Working Group

On 14 September 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/63/L.103 on System-wide Coherence. This resolution gives the much awaited go-ahead for the creation of a new UN gender equality entity, headed by an Under Secretary-General. Members of the European GEAR Campaign Working Group¹ consider the UNGA resolution a historic moment, which has the potential to be a start of a new era for women's rights globally.

At the same time, the resolution's provisions on the new UN women's rights entity need to be implemented swiftly and effectively over the coming months. In order to make this happen, the UN Secretary-General needs to step up his efforts and lead this process into the next phase. UN member states still face a number of key issues concerning the mandate, mission, organizational structure, governance and funding which need to be addressed during the 64th General Assembly session. We call on UN Member States to stay committed to this process and ensure that the establishment of the much needed single women's UN agency is moving ahead without any further delay.

We believe, the following issues regarding next steps on process and content represent require immediate action by the UN system and UN member states.

1. An effective process for UN Member States to discuss the mission, organizational structure, governance and funding of the new gender equality entity

UN resolution A/63/L.103 request the UN Secretary-General to prepare a report to clarify outstanding issues such as mission, organizational structure, executive board and funding of the new gender equality entity by the end of the 64th GA session. To date, no formal timeline has been announced by the SG or members of his team for

¹ The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign is a network of more than 310 civil society organizations globally, demanding reform of the way the United Nations works on gender equality and women's empowerment.

the production of this report. We believe it is crucial for this report to be finalized by the end of 2009. This should give UN member states enough time to discuss and build consensus on the report by the end of the 64th GA session.

The President of the UN General Assembly (PGA) needs to ensure that the formal intergovernmental process is ready to begin expediently once the report is finalized. To this end, the PGA should nominate in a timely fashion the co-Chairs to lead the formal intergovernmental discussions.

We would like to address below a few of the many issues that the report needs to cover.

The new UN women's rights entity needs a strong mandate

The resolution of 14th September 2009 does not provide sufficient detail concerning the mandate of the new women's rights entity and its responsibilities in holding the UN system to account on women's rights. The new UN women's rights entity will be no improvement to the current situation if member states fail to give it a clear mission that promotes women's rights and gender mainstreaming.

The mandate and responsibilities of the new entity should be more comprehensive than the mandates of the existing women's rights entities which will be merged into one. Previous suggestions made in this regard, for example in the Deputy Secretary-General's paper of 5 March 2009², provide a good starting point to strengthen the mandate of the new women's rights agency. Combining and enhancing the synergies between normative and operational functions lies at the heart of this reform and must therefore be addressed when the mandate of the entity is discussed. Also the promotion of gender mainstreaming within the UN system and ensuring its accountability should be a key responsibility for the new entity.

The new UN women's rights entity has to be ambitiously funded

Existing funding for gender equality within the UN is completely inadequate. Therefore, we believe that the new gender equality entity must have an initial budget of \$ 1 billion USD per year with annual increases. This figure appears to be ambitious but actually accounts for a modest estimate. \$221 million was allocated directly to the existing fragmented and ineffective UN gender equality architecture in 2008. This figure accounts for less than one percent of the \$27 billion the entire UN system spent in the same year. Moreover, we are already faced with an enormous funding gap for gender equality which makes reaching the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG3, unattainable³

The new entity should be funded from both voluntary and assessed contributions. Ensuring ambitious funding requires a broad donor basis involving all UN member states and countries that may not be part of the usual group of donors. Even the smallest amount will send the right signal to women and girls everywhere.

² [“Further details on Institutional Options for Stenghtening the Institutional Arrangements for Support to Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women”](#)

³ [“Ambitious funding will ensure an effective new UN Gender Equality Entity. A position paper by the European GEAR Working Group 23rd of July 2009”](#)

Furthermore, it is critical that the new entity have delegated authority on financial matters and human resources, similar to other UN funds and programmes.

The new women's rights entity needs the participation of the civil society

The new UN women's agency cannot function in a sustainable way without the participation of civil society and women's rights advocates from the national, regional and global levels. Therefore, the systematic and meaningful participation of civil society, especially women's organizations, needs to be part of the governance and the accountability structures of the new entity. This means that civil society should be represented on the Executive Board of the new entity. Of equal importance is a strong formal CSO involvement with the entity at country and regional level.

2. Under-Secretary General to lead the new entity by March 2010

The UN Secretary-General should immediately initiate a transparent global recruitment process for the Under Secretary-General who will lead the new entity. No time line has been put forth to this end and it is crucial that more information is provided as well as swift action taken. We believe that the USG should be nominated by March 2010.

Candidates for this important post that includes securing funding and leading the transition towards the creation of the composite entity, must have a vision for and demonstrated commitment to meeting gender equality goals and securing women's human rights, and meet the selection criteria of the GEAR Campaign⁴.

⁴ [GEAR Campaign selection criteria for candidates for the Under Secretary General to lead the new UN women's entity](#)