

UPDATE ON UN REFORM and the GEA

The President of the General Assembly has appointed two facilitators, Barbados and Luxembourg, in order to chair the negotiations on United Nations System-Wide Coherence.

On June 6, the first informal consultations meeting was held. The Chairs made clear that the underlying principle in discussions should be to remember that the system needs to work for the poor. They noted that the report needs to be considered in a holistic manner but proposed a programme of work to discuss the various issues covered in the report. They made the suggestion to look at the Coherence Panel by separating it into 8 separate issues by theme:

1. Delivering as One: Country Level (Also being dealt with in the Triennial Comprehensive Program Review (TCPR) during ECOSOC session)
2. Humanitarian Aid and recovery
3. Environment (Also being looked at within the 3rd Committee of the GA)
4. Governance and institutional relationships
5. Funding
6. Gender
7. Human Rights
8. Business Practices

The placement of these issues was not in order of priority but rather in the order in which the issues were dealt with in the report. All the issues seemed to require some inter-governmental process but some were already being addressed in other fora or processes (see above). In such situations, the Chairs suggested that there needs to be a symbiotic relationship and that there would be benefit in cross-briefings, e.g. a briefing on the ECOSOC process on the TCPR within this Coherence Panel process. A number of member states later reiterated the need to keep things focused within, and the need to utilize, these existing fora and processes.

The next meeting will be held the 18 or 19 of June, and the Chairs made the suggestion to keep each meeting dedicated to one of these issues, the next one dealing with humanitarian aid. It was suggested that the future programme then be considered at that point. The need to utilize time well was emphasized.

Country statements:

European Union (and states seeking admission) – Since the ONE UN process at the country level is being looked at by the TCPR, must address issues of gender, governance and humanitarian aid because they are not included in other processes and there is not an established procedure on how to move them forward.

The EU underlined the need to strengthen the GEA and expressed its willingness to contribute to swift progress on this. The Gender Equality Architecture within the UN System needs strengthening and it would be wise to move quickly on this. They are looking for the co-chairs to put forth a

proposal on how to start on this and believe that a separate-track approach (such as having a separate Gender track) would be appropriate.

Cuba on behalf of the Joint Coordination Committee of G77/NAM/China: Reaffirmed their letter of March 14 and restated that they prefer an integrated process, especially around financing for development and governance as a priority. In order to achieve the MDGs, there must be a reaffirmation of socio-economic development as a cornerstone of the UN system and using the MDGs as a framework for UN activities. In addition, there must be an international commitment towards universality, neutrality and multilateralism in decision-making within the UN system. UN operations must remain universal, voluntary, of a grant nature and be responsive.

They were concerned that cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and sustainable development would be misused to introduce new conditionalities to development. They supported a rules-based system of negotiations and stated that a artificial time-limit should not be imposed on these negotiations.

Colombia: Aligned itself with G77 and reiterated that there is no need to divide into thematic tracks and that financing for development within the MDG framework is what should be moved forward.

Denmark: Need not only focus on reforms at HQ - like the GEA - but also reforms at the country level. Need to look at GEA in a manner which will allow us to take early action in this regard.

Portugal: Concrete steps must be taken towards implementation of CP recommendations: there needs to be a stronger, more coherent UN system so as to achieve MDGs, stronger participation among pilot countries, and creating ownership of development programmes. A large number of states support the restructuring of the GEA and it is something that is ready to be moved forward and "gather an early harvest on this issue." They offered their constructive support to the Chairs for moving the GEA part forward.

Egypt: Aligned its position with the G77/NAM. Began by stating the mistrust between developing and developed countries and the need to break this. Breaking issues into those with a fast track and those without would not be conducive to building trust. There should not be separate tracks, and human rights and gender should not be limited to developing countries. Should not link cross-cutting issues to the capacity of the UN to operate at the national level, calling it "discriminatory reform" if only implemented or monitored in developing countries. "Gender and the environment are among the priorities of partners and are ours. Are willing to support a strengthened GEA although funding does not need to go into creating a new gender entity and this entity should not be conceived around strengthening the operational side, but possibly the normative one. The distinction between normative and operational roles should not be mixed. Women's issues should be looked at from a development perspective, not a human rights one. There is no need for new bodies which require new resources. The UN system already has CEDAW and therefore does not need another women's body.

Chile: Strongly supportive of looking at recommendations separately. Gender Equality is a priority area to Chile because of national and regional experience and because it is a necessary condition for development.

The GEA is a key priority area and they are convinced that women's empowerment and equality cannot be achieved unless there is a new centralized agency capable of achieving results on the ground. Expressed support for the 1 UN and the Pilots project. Also expressed support for strengthening the role of NGOs whose role is important for coherence and whose experience should be brought to the UN. It is also very important to heighten the role of regional organizations (such as the Economic Commission on Latin America) which has important regional lessons that the system could benefit from. There must be an increase in core budgets to finance these recommendations. Expressed the need to strengthen the normative capacity of ECOSOC.

Norway: Support the Coherence Panel Report, including the strengthening of the GEA. This discussion must pick up speed and be acted upon through a different track. This is a quick win and a way to show progress and achieve results. Two part proposal in order to fast-track a proposed structure on consolidating the gender structure within the UN (combination of the existing agencies as recommended by the Coherence Panel)

- 1) A GA resolution in this session requiring the SG to report to the 62nd GA on the structure of the new entity.
- 2) On the basis of the SG report, a resolution for this entity and its funding to be considered in the 62nd GA

The GEA is a quick win and it would be unfair, if 1 UN and GEA were linked and GEA proposals slowed down or sacrificed to the other larger discussion. Suggested to the co-chairs to appoint facilitators on different tracks, including on gender.

Rwanda: With G77.

Mexico: Important to consider those elements in the Report that are not being dealt with in other processes (such as the TCPR or the Third Committee), so need to find a methodology to deal with the different issues of the Report. The GEA piece should be discussed in a separate track in order to move quickly. Need to find out more and have a greater analysis of the actual system, as well as the financial implications of this. Suggested that it would help to have a working proposal from the co-chairs on this.

Switzerland: TCPR is the appropriate venue to look at the ONE UN programs, including the Country Pilots. The new institutional structures being proposed (including the GEA) at HQ need to happen and an independent expert could help.

The creation of the post of Under-Secretary General leading GEA would strengthen the efforts to achieve the goals of gender equality.

UK: Affirmed those who argue that the GEA is a quick win and would rally to that. In terms of ODA, not just looking for efficiency but for increasing assistance to the UN system (programmes, funds, and agencies) to those who "get their act straight". Want to substantially increase contributions and core funding allocated towards both normative and operational activities.

Lichtenstein: The GEA needs clarification and must be discussed now. Establish sub-groups and a plan of action on different themes.

Zimbabwe: With G77. No thematic tracks, gender is a conditionality issue, one-size fits all does not work. ONE UN system would only make the UNDP Resident Coordinator more powerful and would then blur the line of checks and balances in the system.

CANZ represented by Canada : Urge early action on the GEA. The new USG position would strengthen the entire gender system at the UN, but there needs to be more detail around what this would look like and how it would be implemented on the ground.

France: With EU, separate tracks, need to share responsibility.

Estonia: The GEA process has been inactive for too long. There was a reaffirmed commitment at the World Summit and this is a consolidation opportunity for the UN system to really deliver for women. The UN System (agencies) is awaiting clear guidance from member states, hoping to move ahead on this and arriving at a conclusion.

The Netherlands: Their group meetings outside of NY on System-Wide Coherence (in Indonesia and in Benin) have been very good and created widespread support for the Report. There will be one in Nicaragua for the LAC region on June 25, 26.

Japan: Support for the idea of dividing thematically into the 8 issues, but should consider these issues substantially and therefore not impose artificial time-lines on implementing recommendations straight away. Suggested to the Facilitators that they issue a progress report by the end of the 61st session.

Belarus: With G77. There must be ongoing monitoring of progress of pilot countries. Actively support the proposal on strengthening humanitarian aid and support a gender office.

USA: Careful not to impose any artificial deadlines and avoid “reinventing the wheel”. Closely following Pilot Countries for a way forward.

Nicaragua: With G77. Latin American consultation meeting on 25, 26 June, co-organized by the Netherlands and inviting NGOs, agencies, and the states in the region to contribute to the debate on system-wide coherence.

Cape-Verde: With G77. Pilot countries had made a statement during the GA session on April 16 and reiterated it. Also mentioned that those recommendations not being taken forward in any other process should be addressed now (gender).