

PRESS RELEASE

President of UN General Assembly receives global petition for urgent establishment of stronger UN women's agency.

17 June 2010

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign today presented the President of the UN General Assembly, Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki with its global petition and pressed for the UN to establish a strong new agency for women by July 2010.

The petition, signed by 34,555 women and men from 165 countries and territories and bound with the Campaign's slogan "GEAR UP!" was handed over to Dr. Treki, whilst all 192 UN member states of the General Assembly were meeting to negotiate a draft resolution that would establish the agency.

"The supporters of the new gender entity are not only from women's organizations but also are from social justice, human rights and development organizations," said Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, "all demand a UN that works for women."

Seydi Gassama of Amnesty International Senegal added: "It was important to me to meet the General Assembly President today to prove that this is a concern not only for women, but for all human rights defenders."

Bani Dugal of the Bahá'í International Community concluded: "Now is the time to adopt a resolution that will launch the new women's entity with increased operational capacity, civil society participation, ambitious funding and a strong leader".

Responding to the petition, Dr. Treki stressed that the situation for women continued to require urgent action, including changes to discriminatory laws and practices that held back advancements in gender equality and women's empowerment. He expected outstanding differences among member states soon to be resolved and hoped the new entity would be established by the end of the month.

Background:

The GEAR Campaign, a global network of 314 women's, human rights and social justice groups, was represented at the meeting with the President of the General Assembly by Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rachel Harris of the Women's Environment and Development Organization, Bani Dugal of the Bahá'í International Community, Antonia Kirkland of Equality Now, Seydi Gassama of Amnesty International, and Jan Peterson of the Huairou Commission.

The UN currently has four small entities dedicated to women's issues: the Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the Office of the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI). The work of all four entities is fragmented within the UN system. All lack the necessary

status, funding and country presence to enable the wider UN system and national authorities to better deliver on their numerous obligations and commitments to advance gender equality, women's empowerment and women's human rights. These include the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, and the Millennium Development Goals.

In September 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/63/311) supporting the consolidation of the UN's four gender equality entities into a composite women's entity, to be headed by an Under Secretary-General.

The GEAR Campaign and petitioners have stressed that the new entity must have:

- World coverage and the necessary country presence and strong policy and programmatic mandate to effectively improve the lives of women worldwide;
- Accountability mechanisms in place at both national and international levels, including through meaningful involvement of civil society, particularly women's groups;
- Substantial and predictable resources to ensure the capacity to meet expectations and deliver results at all levels; and
- An Under-Secretary-General, appointed in 2010, in order to lead the agency.

Public Document

For more information please go to the GEAR Campaign website - www.gearcampaign.org - or contact the GEAR Campaign at: gearcampaign@gmail.com or Jihye Kim of Amnesty International at +1 212 878 8878 x 1