

Establishment of a New Composite Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

Key Messages, Background and Current Status

Key Messages:

In September 2009, the General Assembly adopted a resolution that “strongly supports the consolidationinto a composite entity”. All parts of the United Nations, its subsidiary organs, entities and programmes support the establishment of a new Composite Entity, which will sharpen the focus and impact of the gender equality activities of the entire United Nations system.

The new ‘Composite Entity’ (name still to be determined), will bring together the mandates and assets of the following existing entities: DAW (Division for Advancement of Women); OSAGI (Office of the Special Advisor for Gender Issues); UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women); and INSTRAW (UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women).

By bringing the mandates and assets of four separate entities together into one new organization, along with some important new functions, the new Composite Entity will be more strategic, powerful and catalytic than the sum of its parts.

It will be led by an Under Secretary General to ensure the necessary authority and leadership. The USG will be a member of all senior United Nations decision making bodies.

The new entity will provide:

- A powerful voice for women and girls at the global, regional and local levels;
- Better support for Member States as they enhance the normative and policy environment to accelerate progress towards gender equality
- Increased assistance for national partners as they address critical gaps and challenges in their efforts to achieve equality for women and girls – this includes leading the United Nations system in developing and implementing innovative and catalytic initiatives.

- Ensure an enhanced and coordinated UN response to country-defined needs and priorities, where the UN system works in a more effective, collaborative and coherent way
- Strengthened accountability in the UN system for gender mainstreaming including, through oversight, monitoring and reporting on system-wide performance on gender equality

As the centre of the UN gender architecture, the new Composite Entity would enhance, rather than replace, the gender role of UN entities such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, WHO, FAO, etc

All UN entities will continue to have a responsibility to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment throughout their programmes.

Background and Current Status:

- The four entities that will be merged (OSAGI, DAW, INSTRAW, and UNIFEM) along with other key UN funds and programmes, and Regional Commissions, are represented in the Working Group established to assist the Secretary General in proposing and steering the establishment of the new Composite Entity. Technical support is provided by OLA, and the Department of Management of the UN.
- General Assembly resolution 63/311, adopted on 14 September 2009 on system wide coherence, strongly supports the establishment of a new “composite entity” that will consolidate UNIFEM, the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). The resolution called for the new entity to be led by an Under Secretary General, who will report directly to the Secretary General.
- The Resolution stemmed largely from years of advocacy by the global women's movement and strong support by key Member States for the United Nations to be more effective and address critical gaps and weaknesses in its response on issues affecting women in every region. The 2006 High Level Panel report “Delivering as One” set out the gaps and challenges that needed to be addressed.

- In January 2010, the Secretary General issued a ‘Comprehensive Proposal’ proposing a mission statement, functions, structure, mandate, funding and governance arrangement for the Composite Entity, responding to resolution A/RES/63/311. Following the decision by the General Assembly, transitional arrangements will be undertaken to formally establish the new entity.
- It is anticipated that a decision by Member States on the ‘comprehensive proposal’ will be taken during the 64th session of the General Assembly.
- Under the ‘comprehensive proposal’, the Composite Entity would be a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. The Commission on the Status of Women will play a crucial role in providing normative and policy guidance to the Composite Entity. An Executive Board, possibly an autonomous segment of the current UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Board, will oversee its operational activities. As both the CSW, and Executive Boards report to the GA through ECOSOC, the establishment of a meeting of ECOSOC to align the work of these two bodies has been proposed.
- The creation of the new Composite Entity, as currently envisaged, will clearly have significant implications for UNIFEM, INSTRAW, OSAGI, and DAW as they will be dissolved to form the new entity. However, their mandates would be carried forward within the new entity. There will be implications for the other members of the UN System as well, being ready to support the leadership role of the new entity where it has presence, and working in close partnership.
- As currently envisaged, the new entity will have a similar country level program support role as that currently performed by UNIFEM. It will need to complement that with a much enhanced coordination role at all levels. The new Composite Entity will be a full member of CEB, and UNDG. It will head the Gender Thematic Groups in countries where it has a presence and will be the voice on gender issues within the UN Country Teams.
- At the Regional Level, it is proposed that the new Composite Entity will have a presence within the six UNDG Regional Centres and will be the thematic leader on gender issues in Regional Directors Meetings.

- The Composite Entity would be funded by both voluntary contributions and the regular budget of the United Nations. Under the proposal submitted by the Secretary-General, approximately \$125 million per year is needed for a basic staff complement, related operating costs and “start up” capacity at the country, regional and Headquarters levels. An additional \$375 million per year is needed in the initial phase to respond to country-level requests for United Nations programming support. Priority for enhanced capacity in the new entity will be given to country level.
- The responsibility for the implementation of ongoing programmes, projects and activities of OSAGI, DAW, UNIFEM and INSTRAW would be transferred to the composite entity.
- Once the comprehensive proposal in the SG’s report is approved, a transition process will be initiated and carried out in accordance with the applicable UN regulations, rules, policies and practices. A change management process will be part of the transition, drawing on existing UN capacity.
- Finding the right individual to be the first leader of the new composite entity is critical to its success. As the UN’s primary and most powerful voice for women and girls, the head of the new entity must be a persuasive and effective advocate and leader with a demonstrated commitment to fulfilling the promises made by the international community to the women and girls of the world.

Frequently Asked Questions

How will the adoption of GA Resolution A/RES/63/311 of 14 September 2009 impact UNIFEM/OSAGI/DAW/INSTRAW?

The adoption of the GA resolution does not yet establish a new entity. It strongly supports that establishment, requests the SG to prepare a comprehensive proposal on the operations and governance of the entity and supports appointment of an Under Secretary General to lead the organization. Once established, the new entity will absorb the above four entities. It will incorporate all of their mandates and strengthen the ability of the UN to support Member States and civil society, including women's groups and networks.

How will the adoption of GA Resolution A/RES/63/311 of 14 September 2009 impact UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and other entities of the UN system who work on gender equality and women's empowerment within their respective mandates.

Once established, the new entity will not relieve any other part of the United Nations system of their responsibilities for contributing to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment or for addressing women's rights and needs. Rather, the new entity will sharpen the focus and impact of the gender equality activities of the entire United Nations system by working through the Chief Executives Board for coordination at the global level, through the Regional Directors' Teams and the Regional Coordination Mechanisms at the regional level, and through the Resident Coordinator system at the country level, to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities and support for a more coherent and scaled up response.

When will the new Composite Gender entity be established and when will the USG be appointed?

This depends on the UN Member States. As far as the appointment of the USG, the Secretary General remains committed to a fair, open, transparent process for the appointment of the USG.

What will the new Composite Entity be called?

Currently a name for the new Composite Entity has not yet been formally announced. Following internal consultations, a set of options have been provided to the Secretary General for his consideration.

What are the next steps?

The Secretary General's Comprehensive proposal for the Composite Entity was circulated to Member States on 7 January 2009. It is too early to predict how long the process of considering the proposal will take and when a founding resolution will be adopted by the General Assembly. In the meantime, all steps are being taken to plan for the gradual transition toward a new unified entity.

What will the role of the new entity be in the UN Country Teams?

In the comprehensive proposal just issued, the entity will: (a) be the lead driver and voice on gender equality and women's empowerment globally, as well as regionally in the countries in which it is active; (b) provide technical expertise and catalytic programming support, as well as lead advocacy initiatives on gender equality, including on behalf of the UNCTs; (c) lead or co-

lead the gender theme group for the UNCT; (d) be represented at the Heads of Agency group by its Country Director/Head of Agency.

It is important to repeat over and over again that the creation of a new entity does not in any way diminish the responsibility of and need for other UN organizations to have robust expertise, programming and budgets in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. On the contrary, the entity should assist them to increase and improve their work on gender equality and women's empowerment, through stronger support and advocacy for their work by the representatives of the entity, enhanced coordination for gender equality programming on the ground, and improved accountability mechanisms system-wide.

How will UNIFEM's relationship with UNDP be affected?

The current relationship as defined in GA resolution 39/125 will be superseded by new arrangements in the establishing resolution for the entity. However, it is anticipated that the strong partnerships that currently exists between UNIFEM and UNDP, from those on political participation to peace and security, will continue and be strengthened. Other arrangements regarding UNDP service provision will be decided once more details about the entity's structure and presence are decided.

What are the legal implications of a consolidation of the gender-specific entities?

The new Composite Entity is expected to inherit the assets, liabilities, obligations and commitments of the existing entities (UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI, INSTRAW). These include commitments and obligations towards staff and other personnel embodied in staff contracts; toward donors as embodied in donor agreements; toward implementing partners as embodied in agreements with these partners; and towards contractors and vendors.

What role will civil society play in the process of establishing the entity?

Civil society partners in all regions – developing and developed -- have played a crucial role in the process of calling for and monitoring the process of advancing the creation of a new United Nations entity to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. It is critical that they continue to have a strong voice in the establishment, priority-setting, policies and programmes of the entity. Thus, it is important that all existing UN entities keep its partners – women's NGOs and networks and other civil society partners – up to date on the gender entity discussions and solicit and convey their views. With regard to how women's organizations will be involved in policies, priority-setting and governance of the entity, and according to the comprehensive proposal, the composite entity will provide a dynamic linkage with, and support to, women's organizations and networks. The Executive Director (USG) of the new Composite Gender Entity may find ways to ensure that s/he can benefit from the advice of civil society and women's organizations on a regular basis, including through the establishment of an advisory board.

How will UNIFEM's sub-regional offices be impacted? What about their country programme offices?

The comprehensive proposal envisions that the entity will have presence in the UN's regional operational support and oversight hubs. It is anticipated that in the first phase of the establishment of the composite entity, a minimum basic presence in at least 80 countries, that UNIFEM currently has a presence. An expansion will depend on available resources. It is

envisaged that the new entity will build on existing assets, including current presence at the sub-regional and country level. It should be noted that where UNIFEM has donor-supported programmes, either in sub-regional or country programme offices, these will continue since they are a pre-existing agreement with programme countries and donors.

What will happen to INSTRAW, the gender training and research centre based in the Dominican Republic?

The new Composite Gender Entity will continue both of the mandates of INSTRAW; training and research. The facility in Santo Domingo would be very appropriate as a Gender Training Centre.

Will the new entity monitor, or report on, the progress Member states are making towards the internationally agreed goals on gender?

No. Each Member State will continue to be responsible for collecting data, and compiling reports on its own situation. The new entity will offer support to countries to establish their own capacity in this area, and it will be up to each country to decide what kind of support the new entity will provide in that country.

Is the new entity only going to support developing countries? If it is supposed to support normative and policy work globally, why is there no regional presence in Western Europe, or North America in the organisational chart?

The new Composite Gender Entity will work with all countries to support inter-governmental efforts to develop global norms and policies. It will look for good practice, and foster the sharing of experiences between all countries. However, it will not be providing programmatic support to the wealthier countries. Technical support and advice to wealthy countries can be requested and provided from headquarter-based policy expertise units which support all regions.

What does it mean to be a “Subsidiary Body to the General Assembly”. Why is this appropriate for the new Composite Entity?

Subsidiary Body is the term currently used by the UN Secretariat to refer to large UN entities that come under the authority of the SG and report to the GA through ECOSOC. Other examples are UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA.

How will the governance system work, if the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) provides the normative and policy framework, and an Executive Board provides oversight to operational activities?

The new Composite Gender Entity provides an opportunity to bring these two dimensions of UN work closer together into a combined or COMPOSITE entity. The important inter-governmental policy guidance will continue to come from the CSW, which will report on its work to the GA, through ECOSOC. An Executive Board will provide oversight of the operational activities. The Executive Board would also report to the GA through ECOSOC. This would also be an opportunity to strengthen the role of ECOSOC in linking the development of global policy guidance and the provision of operational support to the implementation of those policies at the request of each country.

The Secretary General's Comprehensive Proposal on the creation of a new Composite Gender Equality Entity recommends establishing a new autonomous segment of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, but it also notes a second option of establishing a new Executive Board. Why is this?

There are many advantages in establishing an autonomous segment of the established UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, in terms of speed, efficiency, and more importantly, the need for strong linkage between the agenda's of the new entity with UNDP, UNFPA, and the UN's Resident Coordinator System. However, some Member States feel strongly that this could result in a loss of focus on the important agenda of the new entity, and thus asked for the option of a new Executive Board just for the new entity. Member States will need to decide.

The Secretary General recommends that the current pattern of funding of the four separate entities is continued in the new entity, that is, regular budget funding for support to normative and policy work, and voluntary funding for operational activities. This will mean around 3% of funds from assessed contributions, and 97% funding from voluntary funding. How can the new entity establish the necessary staff capacity at country level, and provide predictable support to countries with this funding pattern?

This touches on an issue that is relevant to all operational activities. Should the regular budget be used for operational activities for development? Up to now, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP, are all 100% funded from voluntary funding, and while this presents significant challenges in terms of fund raising efforts, these organizations have managed to provide substantial support. Member States should respond positively to the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's report and make their contributions to the new entity predictable, and multi-year, to minimize the managerial problems coming from erratic funding flows.

What will happen to existing staff contracts? What will be the implications for service contractor holders?

As a preliminary effort, all affected agencies are now examining the legal implementation of the consolidation on existing contracts and obligations including staff contracts. In general, the terms and conditions of existing staff contracts are honoured by the United Nations. More specifically fixed-term contracts which are due to expire before the new entity is formed could be renewed by the respective affected entities upon the decision of management, following the normal process for contract renewal. The renewal of others with terms going beyond the date of the establishment of the new entity will be dealt with when their term expires by the new administration of the entity, within the terms of the UN Staff Regulations and Rules. Service and SSA contracts holders will be governed by their existing terms and conditions.

What steps are being undertaken to ensure that staff receive updates related to the establishment of the composite equality?

The Working Group supporting the Secretary General is establishing continuous updates for all managers and staff members as process progresses. As questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact senior management responsible for 'System-wide Coherence' matters within your respective institutions for additional clarification.