

Fact Sheet on Reforming the Gender Architecture in the UN System

For consideration by the High-Level Panel on Coherence, Oslo Meeting, Aug 31 2006

By the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

August 29, 2006

The Coherence Panel is meeting today and tomorrow (30-31 August 2006) in Oslo to finalize among other things their report for the SG. We have some indications that many of our critical recommendations on the gender architecture may be included in the report for the SG. At this point, it is critical to send a bold message to the panel members about strengthening operational capacity alongside the normative functions. Below is a fact sheet we sent last night to members of the Coherence panel.

Throughout this process, women's groups from around the world have urged the creation of a **well-resourced, independent women's entity that would have normative, operational and oversight capacity, and universal country presence.**¹ It is the best way to ensure the effective implementation of gender equality goals and gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system.

We would like to take this opportunity to re-emphasize the importance of an operational capacity as a requirement for transforming UN commitments to women's advancement. Only with significant investment of resources and expertise on the ground can we bridge the biggest gap that exists in the current system between commitments to women's human rights norms and the realities of implementation and get down to the equally important business of institutional and operational change that is needed to deliver development benefits to women.

This entity must have **normative and operational capacities**. It will provide the coherence and clear leadership driving a more explicit and synergistic relationship between the two sides. In combining both, it should continue to promote and strengthen the good practices and policy contributions already established by existing UN bodies. In addition, system-wide responsibility would ensure the strengthened commitment of existing agencies towards gender equality goals and gender mainstreaming. To achieve this, the budget should be up-scaled to a minimum of \$300 million per year. Below we detail some of the functions that this entity must have responsibility for:

OPERATIONAL CAPACITY: A field presence to shape and conduct UN operational activities at country and regional level is essential to guarantee that gender equality and women's rights programming are carried out effectively. For example, UNIFEM already has made a difference on a broad range of areas such as gender budgeting, violence against women, women, peace and security issues and women's political participation. The independent women's entity would build on this work and grow - with vastly improved resources, size and authority, as well as a significantly raised profile - a body of high-quality technical and substantive expertise with the capacity to provide leadership on these issues, buttressed by research and practice.

¹ These characteristics and principles have been put forward in detail in the paper entitled "Gender Architecture and UN Reform" submitted by CWGL and WEDO on July 17 and endorsed, to date, by 114 global, regional and local organizations and networks. Other essential characteristics include the need for this entity to be led by an Under-Secretary General who would provide the leadership to affect change, upscale power, authority and resources, and guarantee organizational stature and a voice for women at high-levels. It must also have substantial and predictable resources adequate to implement its mandate.

The independent women's entity would also perform the following functions:

- **Act as a catalytic body** and driving force on gender equality issues, with the capacity to oversee the work of the UN Country Teams. It would facilitate innovation, share lessons learned and enable institutional learning throughout the system.
- **Work in close collaboration with governments and civil society**, and strengthening, in particular, the already existing relationships built with women's national and local constituencies.
- **Coordinate and monitor gender mainstreaming**, with the authority to ensure accountability. For this to happen realistically, Gender Focal Points that already exist must be upgraded to a P5 level, at a minimum.
- **Take on an advisory role** by becoming experts on gender analysis and gender equality goals that can provide guidance, advice and training to other implementing agencies in their activities and mainstreaming efforts.

NORMATIVE CAPACITY. It is equally critical that this entity have the responsibility to create and set coherent global policy for gender equality across the UN system, and to advocate for the necessary changes at both policy and institutional levels. The entity should have a comprehensive mandate dedicated to the full range of women's rights and concerns, derived from CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and other relevant policies. It must be able to create and set coherent global policy for gender equality across the UN system and advocate for necessary changes at both policy and institutional levels. While the primary change must focus on implementation and accountability for commitments that exist, gender discrimination is still embedded in many legal and policy frameworks at all levels and normative work must continue to be a priority.

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