



To: Ministers of Foreign Affairs of EU Member States  
Cc: Permanent Missions of the EU Member States in UN  
Cc: Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner/ DG RELEX  
Cc: Commissioner Špidla / DG EMPL

13<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Your Excellency,

**Re: European CSO comments on the proposed modalities for the reform of the UN Gender Equality Architecture**

We write to you on behalf of the European Focal Point for the United Nations Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a global network comprised of 307 women's rights, human rights and social justice groups. We wish to bring to your consideration our analysis of the UN Deputy Secretary General (DSG) paper "Further Details on Institutional Options for Strengthening the Institutional Arrangements for Support to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" of 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009. Especially in focusing on the option D, the so-called 'Composite Entity', the paper outlines a viable option for the reform of the existing UN gender equality architecture. However, in our opinion, the paper lacks the level of detail required for a more substantive analysis of the structure and financial implications of such an entity.

The following key structural aspects for the future gender entity remain vague:

- **Funding of the new entity:** We believe that **an initial budget of 1bn USD must be the funding benchmark** with annual increases.
- **Universal country presence:** The paper remains unclear how the new gender equality entity would scale up its much needed operations at country level. A clear timeline for this is desirable.
- **Civil society involvement:** The paper mentions periodic consultations with civil society organisations, but does not suggest a more formal structure for civil society involvement in the governance mechanism of the new entity. In our view a formal representation of civil society organisations including women's organisations is needed in the Executive Board, and of equal importance is a formal civil society involvement at country and regional level.

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Finally, we would like to stress that we welcome the urgency expressed in the paper **to come to an agreement on the new gender equality entity during the present session of the UN General Assembly**. We are confident that EU Member States will continue to show leadership in this issue, ensuring that the UNGA will come to an effective and positive conclusion on this issue. This is a once in a lifetime chance to improve the lives of millions women and girls worldwide.

We hope that you will take our concerns into consideration when the details of the new gender equality entity and the content of the forthcoming resolution are discussed informally within your government, as well as in the UN General Assembly.

We look forward to cooperating with you on this critical matter.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned

Actsa (Action for South Africa)  
European Women's Lobby  
International Gender Policy Network  
Oxfam Novib  
UK Gender and Development Network  
WIDE (Women in Development in Europe)  
WO=MEN (Dutch Gender Platform)  
WOMANKIND Worldwide

*The networks making up the European Focal Point of the GEAR Campaign represent more than 2600 member organisations and millions of women and men across the EU and Europe.*

## ANNEX

### **European Focal Point GEAR Campaign**

#### **Analysis of Gender Equality Modalities paper of 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

We welcome the UN Deputy Secretary General (DSG) paper “Further Details on Institutional Options for Strengthening the Institutional Arrangements for Support to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women” of 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009, which aims at offering more details on future options for the reform of the UN’s gender equality architecture. Especially in focusing on option D (the Composite entity), the paper outlines a viable option for the reform of the existing UN gender equality architecture. However, the paper lacks the level of detail required for a more substantive analysis of the structure and financial implications of such an entity. In our view, the paper does not give enough guidance and vision on how the Composite entity will integrate the normative and the operational work. We would like to stress that, combining and enhancing the synergies between normative and operational functions lies at the heart of this reform and must therefore be addressed through providing further details.

We are confident in the UNGA’s ability to come to an effective conclusion of this process by the end of the 63<sup>rd</sup> GA as the paper urges delegations to come to an agreement during the present session of the GA. We welcome this urgency, which is also expressed by the DSG in her cover letter. However, we hope it will be clear in the very near future, when the process of “detailed administrative and financial implications of the option would be presented to the General Assembly” will occur and would encourage this to happen in an expedient and transparent manner.

Below, we offer a summary of our analysis of and recommendations for further details of Option D (the Composite entity):

#### **Governance details:**

- The Executive Board (EB) model is suggested as a key governance mechanism. We support this model as it has proven an effective governance structure to provide oversight and operational policy guidance to the existing funds and programs.
- In para 36, the paper states that the EB should establish “effective ways” to engage with CSW. While we are confident that this can be achieved, we believe that such effective ways should also be established, as soon as possible, with the year, UN Security Council (UNSC), to support and ensure full implementation of UNSC resolutions 1325 and 1820, as well as the Human Rights Council concerning the implementation of CEDAW.
- In para 39, the paper mentions “periodic consultations” with civil society organisations (CSOs) rather than a more formal structure whereby CSOs are

systematically represented in the governance structures. This needs to be addressed further as we believe that CSOs, including women's organisations should be represented in the EB. Of equal importance in our view is a strong formal CSO involvement with the entity at country and regional level. The paper addresses this only somewhat in para 43 and we would like to see this strengthened as the structure is further worked out.

### **Funding:**

- The paper fails to address the issue of funding the Composite Entity's work. The only reference contained in the text is not concrete: Member States are "called upon to determine balance" between voluntary resources and assessed contributions based on identified operational needs in para 47. This reference is vague and gives no answer to what this balance is, and how it is supposed to be determined.
- As stated in the original Coherence Panel Report, the entity should be **fully and ambitiously funded** in order to meet its primary goals and present real reform. The Coherence Panel Report offers further guidance to this end which should have been included in the DSG paper: *"the gender entity needs adequate, stable and predictable funding [...] the policy advisory and programming division should be fully and ambitiously funded. The Panel strongly believes that substantially increased funding for the gender entity"*. To this end we believe an initial budget of \$1bn USD must be the funding benchmark with annual increases.
- Delegation of authority on financial matters and human resources is a bottom line requirement for the "composite entity".
- The paper uses existing comparative models of UNODC, UN-Habitat, UNHCR and partly UNAIDS for the Composite Entity. In our view, these entities represent smaller comparative models because of their limited funds and outreach and are therefore not recommended examples. In comparison, the existing comparative models of larger entities (UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA) used as a baseline for option B (Fund or Programme) represent models of effective entities with operational capacity, significant funding as well as influence and authority in the system also for developing the structure of option D.

### **Operational capacity:**

- The issue of how the Composite Entity would scale up its operations is uncertain (para 42.) and we fear that this could provide an 'escape'. The paper states the intention to have "universal coverage". However, the paper also states that country presence would be based on "need, demand and availability of resources". We recognise that it is not possible to suddenly create country offices in over 150 Member States, however, a lack of initial ambition and vision to this end may impact on the overarching objective of this reform. Furthermore it could cause problems in

resource mobilisation in the future and will limit the operational coverage the entity can perform and therefore not respond adequately to the need and demand at country level. . As previously mentioned, we emphasise the need for an ambitious initial funding target

- We welcome the ‘timelined’ approach detailed in para 43 backed with adequate commitments by Member States for achieving this growth’ as a positive and accountable mechanism. If ambitiously set and followed through with political will, real reform can be achieved. The danger is if a conservative approach is adopted and ‘several years’, as described in para 43, are used as a buffer to progress. It must be made very clear how and when the operational work will be scaled up.
- We support the motion that the Gender Equality Entity country representative should chair the inter-agency theme group on gender at UNCT.
- The principle of national ownership is well incorporated in the paper which is vital. It is positive that the paper advises on gender analysis and support programming in line with national development and poverty reduction strategies.