

STATEMENT

Executive Board of UN Women – Second Session

27-30 June 2011

Madame Chairperson:

I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a network of over 300 women's rights, development, human rights and social justice groups around the world that worked for over four years with UN member states and the UN Secretariat to help create UN Women. Since the creation of UN Women, the GEAR Campaign has continued to engage with the new entity to monitor its implementation of promises made, to advocate for the integration of a human rights-based approach to its work and for meaningful participation of civil society in its work. GEAR has also continued to advocate with Member States for robust funding for the new entity.

Member States, civil society, women and men worldwide expect the UN system to work towards gender equality and the empowerment of women as crucial components of development, and the realization of human rights, peace and security. Addressing barriers, such as gender-based violence and discrimination, as well as persistent underrepresentation in political and economic leadership positions, which hold women back from achieving their highest potential, will take a united and committed effort. We appreciate that civil society was consulted for this plan in a rapid manner and hope that an inclusive assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the process takes place to ensure that a meaningful process of NGO consultation becomes part of all future strategic planning.

We congratulate UN Women on the completion of its first Strategic Plan. As the foundational document that spells out the vision, workplan and programmatic activities for the new entity globally, the strategic plan is an important step towards the development of a global agenda that will advance human rights, development, peace and security for all women.

As the Executive Board gathers, today, to endorse the UN Women's strategic plan, we are deeply concerned that the new entity does not have the opportunity to budget on an equal footing with other UN agencies -- although the expectations for performance and results are equally high. We all know too well that in the absence of adequate resources, this well-laid plan will fall short of its potential. UN Women must be equipped with adequate immediate and long term predictable multi-year core funding – comparable to the core commitments made to other UN funds and programs – if it is to succeed in its ambitious normative and operational functions and deliver its promises to girls and women around the world. The current call by the entity for \$300 million is a small request compared to the other UN funds and programs.

We thank all current donors and call on all Member States, especially members of the Executive Board to observe their commitment to the Entity and contribute accordingly. We would like to applaud in particular government donors such as Spain for contributing \$25 million to the Gender Equality Fund; Canada for increasing its contribution from \$1million to \$10 million, India for its 5-year contribution of \$5 million and Nigeria for its \$500,000-contribution. Yet, despite these financial

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commitments, the total core contribution for this year stands at \$126 million, far short of the \$250 million target and certainly of the \$500 million the Secretary General initially called for and the one billion dollars called for by the GEAR campaign. In light of this, we urge all donors to scale up their contributions, and we remind all Member States that a substantial increase in their financial support is vital to ensuring that UN Women is successful in building a solid foundation and making a difference in the lives of millions of women, their families and communities around the world.

As the Executive Board is responsible for ensuring sufficient resource mobilization for UN Women, we especially call on the leadership of all the ‘contributing’ Executive Board Members to be champions in this regard to fill this gap between the level of financial contributions as it stands now and the target, and to live-up to their responsibility to mobilize with all Member States for more resources.

Equally important is the robust country presence that women’s groups called for in order for UN women to deliver on the UN and governmental promises made to women over the past decades. While we acknowledge that efforts are being made to bridge the gap between the ideal universal presence and current realities, we urge that a universal and substantive operational presence continue to be envisioned and authorized as a mid-to long term strategy. It is critical that the work of the new gender entity at country level be strengthened. It should be led in every office by a senior person who has sufficient program authority to make decisions for the new entity, similar to other agency representatives, and who has a budget and the authorization to use it for programmatic purposes. UN Women must also lead efforts to mainstream gender as appropriate in other agency’s programs and provide leadership to coordinate activities on gender equality across the UN system. Scaling up to the needed level will take several years. Nonetheless, there must be a firm timeline backed with adequate resources and concrete commitments for achieving this growth.

A strong and effective presence in the regional hubs would also enhance the new entity’s capacity to deploy gender programming staff to countries in the region where it lacks a presence or a substantive program. This would not only strengthen work on gender in those countries and throughout the UN system, but it would also help to expand the gender capacity of the UN as staff continue to be deployed in a graduated fashion.

GEAR welcomes the Executive Director’s commitment to creating an NGO Advisory Group. We are hopeful that UN Women will also establish other formal mechanisms to facilitate civil society participation. In particular we urge that UN Women, designate dedicated senior staff to partner with civil society at all levels – global, regional, and national. It is essential to have women’s voices heard in all their diversities –especially grassroots and marginalized women– in order for UN Women to fulfill its mandate and be accountable to the people it serves. Finally, we refer you to the GEAR document on elements of the Strategic Plan of particular importance to civil society which is available here.

The GEAR Campaign stands ready to work with UN Women and the members of its Executive Board so as to contribute to the achievement of its goals, including the implementation of its fully funded strategic plan.

Madame Chairperson, I thank you for your attention.