



To: Ministers of Foreign Affairs of EU Member States
Cc: Ministers in charge of Gender Equality of EU Member States
Permanent Missions of EU Member States to the UN

16th February 2010

Your Excellency,

Re: European civil society analysis of the UN Secretary-General's "Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women"

Today, we wish to bring to your attention our analysis of the UN Secretary General's "*Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and women's empowerment*" of January 6th, 2010. We are pleased to see this report being prepared in a short time frame and in close consultation with relevant stakeholders

We believe the proposals made by the Secretary-General represent significant progress compared to the existing UN gender equality mechanisms. However, we are disappointed with the scale of ambition and ambiguity on key issues including funding, civil society participation, and operational capacity. We are concerned that some aspects of the report represent a step back in comparison to previous papers about the future UN composite women's rights entity and its functions¹.

With the enclosed document, we would like to offer our analysis of the SG's proposal as well as highlighting key concerns. We hope you will take our concerns into consideration when the Secretary General's proposal is discussed among EU member States as well as during the inter-governmental consultations at UN level. We are confident that the EU and its Member States will continue to show much needed leadership on this critical matter for women and girls everywhere.

Yours sincerely,

The Undersigned

European Women's Lobby
International Gender Policy Network
Oxfam Novib
UK Gender and Development Network
WIDE - Women in Development in Europe

The European GEAR Campaign Working Group represent more than 2600 member organisations and millions of women and men across the EU and Europe.

¹ e.g. "Further Details on Institutional Options for Strengthening the Institutional Arrangements for Support to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" 5 March 2009; "Institutional Options to Strengthen United Nations Work on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" 23 July 2008.



16 February 2010

Analysis of Report of the UN Secretary-General of 6 January 2010: “Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women”

The European GEAR Campaign Working Group² welcomes the UN Secretary-General’s “*Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women*” of 6 January 2010.

We believe the proposals represent significant progress compared to the existing UN gender equality mechanisms. However, we are disappointed with the scale of ambition and ambiguity on key issues including funding, civil society participation, and operational capacity. We are concerned that some aspects of the report represent a step back in comparison to previous papers about the future UN composite women’s rights entity and its functions³.

Below, we offer our detailed analysis of the proposal presented in the Secretary-General’s report. We hope that the shortcomings identified and recommendations made to improve the proposal will be addressed as a matter of urgency during the intergovernmental negotiations that have commenced on 4 February 2010.

The entity must have a clear role in programming and leading gender equality work at country level

- We believe the new women’s rights entity should be the driver for gender equality at country level. On this point, the SG’s proposal represents a step backwards in comparison to previous papers about the future UN composite women’s rights entity and its functions⁴. We ask UN member states to strengthen the entity’s mandate to lead the UN’s gender equality work at country level through catalytic programming.
 - More clarity needs to be provided on the mandate of the entity to design and deliver country-driven programming (§6b). This function is a core novelty for the new women’s agency and is central to improving the UN capacity to deliver for women’s rights on the ground. We are concerned that, in the proposal country level programming is not presented as a priority (§9a), and the report implies that the entity

² The Gender Equality Architecture Reform Campaign (GEAR Campaign) is a network of more than 310 civil society organizations globally, demanding reform of the way the United Nations works on women’s rights and gender equality. The European Working Group of the GEAR Campaign consists of The European Women’s Lobby, The International Gender Policy Network, Oxfam Novib, The UK Gender and Development Network, and WIDE.

³ e.g. “Further Details on Institutional Options for Strengthening the Institutional Arrangements for Support to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women” 5 March 2009; “Institutional Options to Strengthen United Nations Work on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women” 23 July 2008.

⁴ *ibid.*

would work through other UN entities rather than through its own programming capacity

- The entity should have the function to lead and coordinate UN system's actions on gender equality and not, as proposed in the SG's report, support the work of the other UN agencies on gender equality (6f and §9e).
- We are concerned by the language that the entity will “help” strengthen the UN country team's commitments to gender mainstreaming “with the leadership and strong support from the resident coordinator”. The new entity should have enough authority to perform this task even without the support of the resident coordinator and the UN country team (§9f).
- A timeframe should be put forward for expanding country level presence of the new entity after the suggested start-up phase.
- Clear criteria to assess the number of staff representing the entity at country level need to be established. In our view, important criteria are a) the status of women's rights at country level, and b) the needs that the countries express themselves. It is problematic that the proposal implies that the number of gender equality experts that already work within the UN country team will be a factor in planning the provision of support at country level (§17). Although duplication should be avoided, the number of experts already present in the country may not necessarily correlate with the needs that may exist.

The entity must ensure system-wide accountability for gender equality

- The entity's mandate should be to ensure system-wide accountability for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality following an annual review process. This should include a leading role in supporting, coordinating and evaluating the UN's gender-mainstreaming efforts. Compared to previous papers, the SG's proposal weakens the entity's future role in holding the UN system to account for its gender equality work because it proposes a role in “strengthening” (§6g).
- The monitoring of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action and other intergovernmental agreements should be a key function of the new women's rights entity. Yet, the proposal only mandates the entity to “support Member States” in implementing and monitoring these agreements (§6d). In order to make progress on women's rights and gender equality at country level, it is critical that the UN monitors alongside governments and makes recommendations, as was foreseen in the previous papers.

Effective mechanisms to enable meaningful civil society participation at all levels need to be established

- The report does not propose satisfactory mechanisms for cooperation between the new entity and civil society, especially women's rights organizations. We note that the SG's report proposes a civil society advisory board to the USG. However, no proposals are made for collaboration and liaising with civil society organizations at country level. This issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency when the report is discussed.

- Systematic and formal collaboration mechanism between the new entity and civil society organizations, especially women’s rights advocates, at national level are crucial to an effective progress on gender equality.
- We propose that the new women’s rights entity takes the coordinative lead on this collaboration on behalf of the UN country team, and identifies a focal point for CSOs working at country level.

The new entity must be ambitiously funded with annual increments to allow for expansion of programme work and country presence

- We welcome the fact that the report urges Member States to provide large part of their financial contribution in core, multi-year funding (§46; §49) and that the urge to provide funding is also extended to countries who are not part of the usual group of donors (§49).
- We believe 1 billion USD is the most effective start-up funding for the new gender entity The report, however, sets the funding benchmark at 500 million USD which accounts for less than 2% of the UN’s expenditure based on 2008 figures. Although this presents an increase over existing funding, this figure falls short of the existing financial needs to foster gender-mainstreaming within the UN system, and to achieve gender equality at country level. The World Bank has estimated that the cost of interventions needed to achieve MDG3 and of related mainstreaming activities in low-income countries will be \$83.2 billion in 2015⁵.
- A clear timeline for the allocation of voluntary resources is lacking from the proposal. Although, the report proposes that “the basic capacity and programmatic funding” should be in place by end-2013 (§47), there is no timeline allocated for the 375 million USD country specific and catalytic programme funding that will be generated through voluntary resources.
- Clear targets and timelines for scaling up funding for the new entity must be agreed during the intergovernmental discussions of the proposal.

⁵ Grown, Bahadur, Handbury and Elson (2008). “The Financial requirements of achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment”. In M.Buvinic et. al, *Equality for Women: where do we stand on Millennium Development Goal 3?*, World Bank. 2008.