



## **GEAR Campaign Response to the Report of the Secretary-General - Comprehensive proposal for the composite gender equality entity Revised February 2010**

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a network comprised of more than 300 women's, human rights, and social justice groups from around the world urges Member States and the UN Secretariat to move swiftly forward on a resolution that will create the gender equality entity and set up a global transparent process for recruiting the Under secretary General to head it. In this historic year of celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the four world conferences on Women held since 1975, there should be no further delay in moving to implement changes that the United Nations has recognized as critical to fulfilling its mandate in working for gender equality as a critical component of development, human rights, peace, and security.

The GEAR Campaign has been actively engaged in the process of working to reform the United Nations gender equality architecture over the past four years and in this context, welcomed the September 14, 2009 General Assembly's decision to support the consolidation of the existing four UN gender equality entities into a composite women's entity (Resolution 63/311) and its request for a comprehensive proposal outlining key organizational arrangements for the new women's entity. We are pleased that the Secretary-General has produced this report including detailed organizational recommendations for the new entity, for consideration by Member states during this 64<sup>th</sup> session of the GA.

The "Comprehensive proposal for the composite gender equality entity" moves the process forward and addresses many of the key issues that are critical for the launch of the new women's entity. We support the Secretary-General's report as a guideline for taking action to set up the entity. However, it falls short of what is needed on several important issues related to country level operational capacity, long term funding for the entity, civil society participation, and a clear timeline for the appointment of the Under Secretary-General to head the entity.

Following is an analysis of some of these concerns in relation to our Campaign's key principles. We hope this will contribute to the intergovernmental discussion and to a resolution adopted soon that addresses these matters and sets up a strong and effective gender equality entity.

### **Strong country level presence and operational capacity**

- We support the universal country presence outlined for the entity and the description of the Composite's work as flexible, varying from country to country, with its functions performed in accordance with the needs and circumstances of each host country. This is consistent with the UN Delivering as One's principles of country ownership, and an understanding that one size does not fit all.
- Strengthening the UN's programming capacity for women's empowerment and rights at the country level has always been a top priority for GEAR in seeking a new entity, and this needs to be unequivocally stated in the resolution that creates

it. Previous DSG papers about the entity (August 2007, July 2008 and March 2009) also led with country driven programming as the number one function. We note with concern that the order and description of the functions of the entity in this Secretary-General's report has been modified in ways that could weaken or downplay the importance of the entity's operational capacity on the ground.

- For example, The report positively indicates in Para 9-e that the new entity will “lead and coordinate” the UN system actions on gender equality including within the UN country team. However the paper goes on to describe it in ways that imply it is a subsidiary entity, putting emphasis on its need to work through others rather than on its leadership of the system and its own programming capacity.
- The functions of the Composite entity at the country level in relation to monitoring intergovernmental agreements has also been weakened to say only “support member states in implementing and monitoring international agreements” (Para 6-d and 9-c). The GEAR Campaign believes that the entity should support states in implementation, but it must also play a significant role in monitoring implementation of relevant UN processes/agreements.
- On the issue of *accountability of the UN System*, we are concerned by the language “with the leadership and strong support from the resident coordinator” that the Composite entity will “help” strengthen the UN country team's commitments to achieve results on gender mainstreaming. Based on experience, the GEAR Campaign sees the need for a clear definition of the entity's role as the leader for gender equality at the operational level in countries, that is to be a strong driver on these issues, regardless of whether it has support from the RC and the UNCT. Member states can strengthen this critical function by indicating in the resolution their support for the entity as responsible for holding the UN system accountable for gender mainstreaming and for leading the work on gender equality at all levels.
- With respect to the strong country presence, the report fails to propose “a firm timeline backed with adequate resources and concrete commitments by Member States for achieving ... growth” that the DSG paper of March 5, 2009 clearly called for. We expect the resolution and process set up to address this need.

### **Financial architecture and Ambitious Funding**

- The GEAR Campaign welcomes the report's provision that the Executive Director will have full authority in respect to all financial matters.
- The report sets the total funding requirement for the start-up phase at approximately US \$500 million<sup>1</sup>, with \$125 million for basic support capacity at all levels for normative and operational support, and \$375 million in catalytic funding for country-specific programmatic support. The GEAR Campaign has called for a budget of US \$ 1 Billion and the proposed \$500 million falls short of what is needed to achieve effective gender mainstreaming throughout the system

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<sup>1</sup> This figure represents less than 0.5% of the expenses of all UN agencies in 2008.

and catalytic gender equality programming at the country level. The \$500 million figure can only be understood as the resources necessary for the initial phase. Member states must recognize that there will need to be increases in resources rapidly and continuously over time. Furthermore, it must be ensured that countries, especially the poorest ones, do not receive less funding than what they are currently receiving from UNIFEM.

- The GEAR Campaign welcomes the SG's call for core funds and urges member states to pledge adequate multi-year core funding now to enable the Composite entity's effectiveness and its success at delivering for women worldwide.

### **Effective civil society participation**

- The GEAR Campaign has called for systematic and meaningful participation of civil society, especially women's organizations in the new entity. The report does not propose adequate mechanisms for Civil Society involvement in the new entity, proposing only an Advisory board to the USG. The organizational chart and structure only mention a "liaison with civil society and NGOs", which is less than a previous DSG's paper that clearly noted that the new entity would "develop solid partnerships with women's organizations and other stakeholders so as to ensure that the programme best meets the needs of women on the ground." (DSG paper, March 5, 2009 -para 43) The resolution and process for setting up the entity should take this opportunity to provide for creative ways to partner with civil society as a critical component of creating a strong and effective women's entity that reflects a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision of the UN.
- References to women's organizations – the constituency that has a long history and expertise in working for gender equality throughout the report are few. Previous Secretariat reports on the entity highlighted the need to find meaningful ways to tap into the expertise of these groups, and the process setting up the entity needs to do likewise.
- While the proposed global civil society advisory board to the USG is a useful mechanism for participation, it is imperative that there be such advisory groups comprised of representatives from civil society, especially women's organizations, at regional and national levels as well.
- Further GEAR continues to call for a formal role for civil society in the governance structure of the entity.

### **Leadership Criteria and USG Appointment**

- In consultation with its broad global membership, the GEAR Campaign has developed a set of criteria outlining the competences that we believe a "strong, dynamic and capable USG" should possess, which is attached for your consideration. We urge member states to call for such qualities in the leadership of the entity.
- The Secretary-General's report provides little clarity on what "an open, transparent and rigorous recruitment process" for the Under Secretary-General post will entail



and fails to provide any timeline for this critical appointment. We believe this process must begin now in order to ensure an effective entity is in place before the end of 2010.

The United Nations has been an important arena for galvanizing progress on women's empowerment and gender equality over the past 60 years. Yet, 15 years after the landmark Beijing Platform for Action spelled out many steps to advance women's rights in 12 areas, too little has changed for the world's women. To implement that agenda and close the gap in realizing women's rights, the UN has recognized the need for a strong, well resourced coordinated body to be a driver for these goals at the highest levels of leadership, both at Headquarters and in the field. The Secretary General's proposal provides a framework for moving forward on this goal and the ball is now in the court of the member states. The time to act on realizing this possibility is now.