

Comments and proposed recommendations on the “Proposals for a multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women”

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The following comments address UN document E/CN.6/2006/3, “Proposals for a multi-year programme of work of the Commission on that Status of Women.” As a group of NGOs that have participated in many proceedings of the CSW and that have engaged in a number of ways in UN reform processes, we are appreciative of the opportunity to comment on proposals to enhance the methods of work of the Commission. The enhancement of these methods of work is essential in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant UN conference outcome documents, including that of the Millennium Summit.

We acknowledge the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women in preparation for the Commission on the Status of Women’s review of its working methods.

We welcome a number of proposals in the outline noted in the “Proposals for multi-year programme of work”. In particular, we generally support the following ideas, and suggest elaboration in some areas as noted below. We have not addressed below the question of the CSW appointing special rapporteurs, but we encourage continued exploration of this idea as a means to strengthen the Commission.

- 1) First, we support the proposed three-year cycle per theme with a policy development session followed, two years later with a review session. We are supportive of the apparent intention to enhance follow-up on implementation more systematically and effectively. We are, however, concerned that the focus of implementation remains on the “agreed conclusions” rather than on the broader implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant agreements.
- 2) We fully endorse the emphasis on implementation of previous conference agreements, agreed conclusions and outcome documents from various meetings such as the Millennium Summit and the World Summit. We support efforts to avoid re-negotiation of agreed language. In this regard we suggest that the outcome document of the policy session be reframed as “Policy Recommendations”.
- 3) We are supportive of the methods of work allowing examination of emerging issues and are interested in discussing how these are determined and what the outcome of any such examination should be.
- 4) We note that securing funds will be necessary in order to implement a number of the proposals in this outline, including, for instance, NGO involvement in a number of expert group meetings, roundtables and dialogues or in regional commission meetings, or for enhanced communication across UN structures. We are curious about intended efforts to

generate funding to ensure their presence and contributions. The need to secure funds and the commitment to do so should be reflected in the outlined methods of work.

With regard to the “Policy development session” and “Review session” sections of the document:

- 5) We call for systematic integration of non-governmental organizations into all processes related to the CSW including expert groups, high level roundtables, and interactive expert group panels. Given that these interactive events are intended to focus the actions and initiatives needed for implementation, it is essential that there be effective participation by non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, as the themes stated are particularly broad, there needs to be a systematic mechanism to ensure that the other critical areas of concern, including those prioritized by expert group meetings and other interactive sessions, are addressed (as suggested, for example, by paragraph 5 of the Annex).
- 6) We seek integration of NGOs into the high level roundtable (para 21). While we note the integration of non-governmental organization involvement in the proposed interactive expert panel in terms of its discussion on key policy issues (para. 22), we suggest NGO integration into the expert panel itself. Also, in a number of recent UN “interactive discussions”, NGOs have been given space to speak only at the very end of sessions, often when member state representatives have left discussions already. We would like to avoid this practice of slating NGOs at the very end of sessions through a policy that integrates NGO involvement prior to and throughout discussions.
- 7) We support the selection of expert panelists and keynote speakers based on expertise and capacity to present relevant issues in a “thought-provoking and innovative manner” and endorse the idea that experienced moderators be selected to facilitate sessions. For this to be useful, however, it is essential that a realistic timeframe for related decision-making be set out in the methods of work agreed, and that suggestions from regional bodies and regional NGO networks on speakers and facilitators be taken into account.
- 8) We support reference to systematically sharing information about outcomes of work to relevant bodies (para 16) and recommend ensuring a specific commitment to sharing work with the Human Rights Commission and any relevant special procedures; in addition, we urge specific commitment to sharing information with the new Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission, as those bodies are developed and begin to take shape. To further facilitate sharing of expertise, when useful, special procedures such as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women should be invited to participate in CSW proceedings.
- 9) We endorse plans to involve regional commissions in all relevant capacities toward policy development and implementation review (para 17), and suggest ensuring NGO involvement at all relevant levels of regional discussion.
- 10) We urge ensuring that the Beijing Platform for Action is persistently cited as the normative framework for work on women and gender within the UN system (para. 18).