

**52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women  
New York, February 25 - March 7, 2008**

## **I – Introduction**

The 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place from February 25 to March 7, governments and civil society gathered at the United Nations to discuss “Financing for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”. The CSW took place in the lead-up to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Qatar from 29 November to 2 December 2008 <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/index.htm>.

This year’s CSW registered the highest number of NGO participants in several years with over 5,000 women’s rights activists.

The Commission considered and adopted the following thematic resolutions besides the Agreed Conclusions on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women - E/CN.6/2008/L.8:

- Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts – E/CN.6/2008/L.1;
- Ending female genital mutilation – E/CN.6/2008/L.2/Rev.1;
- Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women – E/CN.6/2008/L.3;
- Strengthening of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women – E/CN.6/2008/L.4;
- Women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS - E/CN.6/2008/L.5/Rev.1.

## **II – “GEAR UP” during CSW**

The advocacy strategy of the GEAR campaign was to take advantage of the large presence of women around the world as well as Ministers of Women’s Affairs during the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the CSW to pressure their Governments to take up discussion of the creation of a stronger UN gender equality entity, both through their national or regional statements during the general debate of the Commission, and by supporting inclusion of language on GEA in the outcome document of the Commission, i.e. the Agreed conclusions.

The GEAR campaign highlighted the under-resourcing of the women’s entities in the UN system and the need for a stronger, consolidated, higher status women’s entity. It is well-demonstrated that the lack of a strong, well-resourced women’s entity with normative and operational responsibilities, and an effective presence at country level, led

by an Under Secretary General, has impeded the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

## 2.1. – Campaign launch

During the first week of CSW (02.26.08) and in order to mobilize further, the official launch of the GEAR campaign took place. The launching event, which drew a very large group of attendees, focused on both global strategy and regional developments in order to broaden the outreach scope and to encourage more organizations to join the campaign and the lobbying efforts. Representatives of the global focal points' organizations - Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and of regional focal point's organizations - African's Women Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW), SAATHI, WIDE - Globalising Gender Equality and Social Justice, all participated. The turn out was standing room only and because of the high interest, a second overview GEAR event was held in the second week of the CSW on March the 3rd.

At 1<sup>st</sup> launch, 87 organizations signed onto the campaign, over 170 additional organizations joined the list of signatories during the CSW. There are currently 266 organizations that have signed onto the campaign.

As a result of these activities and continuous lobbying by women from around the world, 43 countries specifically expressed their support for a stronger GEA, either through their national or regional statements (EU, Mercosur) or by including reference in the text of the agreed conclusions.

## 2.2. – Other important GEAR related events

Other related GEAR events took place during the 2 weeks of the CSW in order to strategize further and keep momentum:

- Linkage caucuses discussed GEAR on February the 27, 29, March 3 and March 5. The main accomplishments were (a) a widespread understanding of the GEAR goals and rationale; (b) more organizations signed onto the campaign; (c) the advocacy scope was broadened to more effectively include financing issues, and "the road to Doha"; (d) participation by the UN women's entities (OSAGI, DAW, UNIFEM) and their support for a stronger GEA; (e) communications were enhanced amongst organizations leading to more effective lobbying and stronger language on GEA included in the text of the Agreed conclusions;
- Each week, an update on GEAR was given at the NGO morning briefing sessions;

- The statement submitted on behalf of the global campaign for Gender Equality Architecture Reform in the United Nations was delivered on Monday, March 3, 2008 By Bandana Rana (GEAR Pacific focal point) being one of the 18 NGO interventions that took place during the Debate;
- A number of other events such as the CWGL 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and GCAP Feminist Task Force included the GEAR campaign in their demands – expanding the information through other venues as well.

### 2.3. – Ministerial breakfast

WEDO and CWGL organized a Ministerial Breakfast to take the opportunity to explore with Heads of Delegations, Ambassadors and other government representatives attending the CSW and leaders of the GEAR Campaign, ways that the United Nations may be better organized to address the needs of women around the world. The Breakfast, took place on February 29 at the UN delegates dining room, was Presided by the Minister of National Women's Service of Chile (H.E. Ms. Laura Alborno), cosponsored by the Governments of Liberia, Norway, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea and Spain and generously funded by Oxfam International. The event had 63 participants, from which 45 were Government representatives, mainly at Ministerial or senior level. Other international GEAR supporters including AWID, DAWN, IPPF and Amnesty International, the Bahá'í International Community, Human Rights Watch participated.

### 2.4. – CSW outcome: Agreed conclusions

The Agreed Conclusions from the CSW, which were finalized in the early morning hours of Saturday March 8<sup>th</sup>, incorporated several of the key demands of the GEAR Campaign. The Conclusions noted “under-resourcing in the area of gender equality in the UN system” .... and stressed “the need for more effective tracking of resources... spent on enhancing gender equality...” (paragraph 19). In addition, the Agreed Conclusions called for strengthening the UN system both through more effective gender mainstreaming, and for “enhancing its capacity to effectively assist States upon request... on gender equality and women's empowerment...and to make adequate and reliable human and financial resources available” (paragraph kk).

We noted with appreciation that countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Canada took the lead in advocating for stronger institutional mechanisms. Clearly, support for a stronger women's entity is widespread. Women around the world will continue to advocate for this with their government representatives at home and at the UN General Assembly.

The formal adoption of the text of the Agreed Conclusions - **E/CN.6/2008/L. 8** - took place on Thursday, March the 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 where the Chair thanked NGOs for their constructive participation during CSW.

### **III – Conclusion: advocacy strategy beyond CSW**

The next steps in terms of the GEAR campaign will be to convey to the General Assembly, and particularly the Co-chairs of the process on the follow up on the recommendations of the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence, the broad support from governments and civil society for moving forward on a stronger institutional mechanism for women that can deliver real improvements in women's daily lives.

The advocacy roadmap for the GA process is as follows:

- Meeting with Co-chairs  
The NY lobbying group met with the Co-chairs on February 13, 2008 to press them to include the gender perspective into consideration in their Pilot countries review session so as to achieve concrete action on the GEA by June 2008, when they will present their report on the deliberations to the members of the General Assembly. During the CSW, WEDO and CWGL urged regional focal points and other key members of the campaign to mobilize the civil society at country level during the visit of the Co-chairs in Pilot countries (Cape Verde, Mozambique, Tanzania and Vietnam);
- Facilitators report back on visit to pilot countries on March 28, April 7 and April 17, 2008  
The NY Lobbying group met on March 18, 2008 in order to touch base after CSW to (a) evaluate results from advocacy and outreach efforts during CSW and (b) strategize further during the GA deliberations on system-wide coherence until June 2008, especially by continuing outreach to and participation of women's organizations in other Pilot countries (Albania, Pakistan, Rwanda and Uruguay);
- Other important parallel activities with UN Secretariat and on the ground  
The NY Lobbying group will meet with the UN Secretariat – DSG, OSAGI, and others to gain further clarity on structure and process of moving forward.