

Statement by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

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We are excited about the Coherence panel's recommendations on the women's agency and we call on governments to show their commitment to women's rights and gender equality by endorsing the panel's recommendations for a stronger gender equality architecture at the UN.

DAWN welcomes the dual mandate of the women's entity, which will combine both policy and country level operational functions, as it will provide the coherence and clear leadership driving a more explicit synergy between the policy and the programmatic sides. This link is missing in the current UN gender equality machinery.

Yet, we emphasize the importance of a strong operational capacity as a requirement for transforming UN commitments to women's advancement. We all know too well that without a driving force in UN Country Teams—such as senior gender experts who can shape and conduct operational activities, gender equality and women's rights programming issues are an after thought therefore not central to the sustainable development, peace, security and human rights agenda and actions. **Women's rights are not optional** and should not be subject to the will of this or that donor interested only in this or that country. We demand that all UN country teams incorporate senior gender expertise including at the decision making level, with adequate resources **and not just where necessary** as recommended by the Coherence panel.

The successful implementation of all the Panel's promising recommendations depends on getting the details about leadership and funding right. We urge government to consult with women's rights groups and tap into their local, national, regional and global experiences, expertise and aspirations as they develop the structure and the functions of the women's agency.

The gender architecture element of UN reform represents a unique opportunity for governments to establish a strong, independent and well-resourced agency. The time to show support for such an agency is now.