



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

REMARKS TO INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON UN SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCENew York, 30 March 2009

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating Ambassador Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain on their appointment as the Co-facilitators of General Assembly informal consultations on System-wide Coherence. This is timely, as we are looking forward to substantive action during the current session.

I would also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Kavanagh of Ireland and Ambassador Mahiga of Tanzania for their stewardship last year.

They guided the deliberations to a fruitful conclusion -- the unanimous adoption of resolution 62/277, which paved the way for moving the System-wide Coherence process forward.

Before turning to the Gender Architecture paper, I wish to update the Assembly on a few issues raised during your last informal consultations on System-wide Coherence.

First, as stated by the Secretary-General on 13 March, we are finalizing the papers on funding and on governance of operational activities. These papers are being prepared through an extensive inter-agency consultation process. We shall revert to you as soon as they are ready.

Action on these three papers will set us on course to a more coherent UN system. It will also enable us to meet the challenge specifically set out by this Assembly that these three issues be addressed during the current legislative session.

During the informal consultations on System-wide Coherence earlier this month, Member States posed some valid questions to the Secretary-General.

Allow me to touch first on the issue of support provided by the United Nations system to countries that are voluntarily engaging in the Delivering as One process.

The UN system has always supported the development priorities of countries. Although the Delivering as One process is formally carried out by the eight pilot countries, other countries, upon request, can benefit from coordinated support by the UN system.

The Delivering as One pilots themselves are of course being kept under review, in the context of ongoing intergovernmental discussions on System-wide Coherence.

Member States also sought clarification on the difference in the pace of reform at Headquarters, versus the country level; particularly, harmonizing a set of business practices for the Delivering as One initiative.

The Chief Executives Board's High Level Committee on Management has been developing a Plan of Action for the Harmonization of Business practices in the UN system.

The Plan of Action builds on the belief that, within a system structured around a variety of mandates, increased coherence in the working modalities would enhance the Organization's ability to deliver better programmatic results.

Excellencies, Dear friends,

We have been discussing for the past two years the need for a more coherent Gender Architecture. Reforming this Architecture would enable the United Nations to more effectively support Member States to fully mobilize women's creative and productive potential.

Three things have come together to make 2009 a watershed year: an acknowledged need for change, an agenda for change, and a clear opportunity to achieve this change.

More and more, it is recognized that women are central to overcoming the challenges we face today – from the global economic crisis and climate change, to armed conflicts and violations of human rights. We will not meet many of the Millennium Development Goals without a genuine inclusion of women in our efforts.

Indeed much work has been done since the adoption of resolution 62/277. Member States have reached important agreements. Negotiations have achieved a significant degree of consensus on a number of points of substance. But much more needs to be done.

The Secretary-General has already outlined the weaknesses in the present system's capacity to support action on gender, including the lack of a recognized driver and its fragmentation.

I will therefore not repeat these details.

Excellencies, Dear Friends,

Let me turn now to our collective agenda for change. The four papers previously commissioned by this Assembly distilled the essence of intergovernmental and interagency deliberations.

These papers also outlined the gaps and challenges faced by the United Nations system in delivering support to Member States. In addition, they provide institutional options for bridging these gaps.

The latest paper, dated 5 March of this year, contains the further details requested by this Assembly regarding the institutional options for consolidating the four gender focused entities.

Those options include a fund or programme; a department of the Secretariat; or a composite entity, which would combine the features of both a fund and the department. The modalities presented in the paper highlight the key areas of governance, structure, staffing, functions and the relationship with the Commission on the Status of Women.

Resolution 62/277 requested the Secretary-General to focus in particular on the “composite entity” option when compiling this paper.

We met this request. We now have a blueprint that encompasses the Secretary-General’s vision and the functions of a new Gender Architecture.

We also provide Member States with enough details on the other options, in order to facilitate a well-informed assessment and choice on the way forward. That is the balance we set out to achieve in this paper.

We believe the clarifications provided for each option can constitute a basis for your review and decision.

As indicated by the Secretary-General in his introductory statement to you on 13 March, the analysis of the four options within the current paper came to several conclusions.

First, the status quo would perpetuate the current weaknesses. Second, a Department would not provide a robust field presence. Third, a Fund or Programme would not fully eliminate fragmentation. Nor would it link normative and operational work, or exercise the level of authority needed to hold all entities accountable for performance.

The Secretary-General therefore concluded that the composite entity -- which would not lose any of the current four entities’ functions and strengths -- remains the most promising option. In line with this analysis, and further to the mandate in resolution 62/277, allow me to focus on the “composite entity” option.

Two points were borne in mind in designing the institutional options.

First, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that encompasses peace, development, human rights and other areas.

Second, no country can claim to have achieved full equality between women and men.

Thus, the new gender entity would cover both developing and developed countries. It would report to an Executive Board, which in turn would conduct oversight and supervision of all the entity's activities. This will be in accordance with the overall policy guidance provided by both the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

The Commission on the Status of Women would continue to provide policy guidance to all UN entities, including the composite entity. Similarly, CEDAW will maintain its current functions.

There is strong interagency consensus that the composite entity option presents significant advantages. It is the only structure that can bridge the gap between normative functions and operational effectiveness. Thereby it draws on existing expertise and institutional knowledge.

The normative and research functions now carried out by OSAGI, DAW and INSTRAW would be absorbed by a normative pillar of the composite entity. Meanwhile, operational activities, currently performed by UNIFEM, would provide the basis for its operational pillar.

In this regard, the composite entity will sensibly build on proven strategies and best practices used by all operational programmes and funds in the field, including those of UNIFEM.

The composite entity is structured to have a high-level champion at the centre, established at the same level as other UN bodies.

The composite entity's Executive Head would report to the Secretary-General. She, or he, would be a full member of the Chief Executives Board -- a status that not one of the existing gender entities currently enjoys. None is mandated to represent all existing gender entities.

Excellencies, Dear Friends,

The funding needs can only be determined on the basis of the mandates that Member States decide to give to the composite entity. We strongly believe that the entity should carry out catalytic programmes and targeted technical cooperation activities.

The composite entity would have a flexible, pragmatic approach to country programming. It would support the United Nations system's capacity and mechanisms, rather than supplanting sectoral entities with new programmes and systems. This would allow for proportionate, effective and appropriate responses to the gender needs of each partner country or region.

The entity will aim to have universal coverage on gender equality issues world-wide, while maintaining a strategic presence where necessary. Its framework for operating would be host-country-owned, output-oriented and results-based. Outputs will be country-driven and adapted for different national and regional contexts.

Again, let me emphasize that national ownership will be a core element of the success of the new entity's work at the country level.

At the regional and country level, the entity's representatives would be members of the existing United Nations Country Teams. They would provide policy and programming advice. They would ensure leadership and accountability for gender-related programmes and projects.

The composite entity would also develop solid partnerships with women's organizations, the private sector and other actors. This is vital.

We stand ready to work closely with Member States to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women become a reality within the United Nations. Equally, we are ready to advance our work on the financing and governance dimensions of System-wide Coherence.

Excellencies, Dear Friends,

Now is the time for action. Now is the time to move on those issues where we know broad consensus exists.

This Assembly needs to decide on the best institutional option and on the functions for a new gender architecture. We have very little time left to make the much needed leap forward.

Artificial deadlines should be avoided. But, equally, artificial obstacles will not be helpful. They would only reduce the political momentum that has been built up through your collective, good faith efforts on this issue of tremendous importance. We cannot afford to let that happen. Success is within our grasp.

The Secretary-General and I count on you, the Member States, to deliver.

Thank you very much.

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