

**Statement
on behalf of the European Union
by**

**H.E. Mr. Martin Palouš
Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations**

**at the informal consultations on
system-wide coherence**

New York, 30 March 2009

(Check against delivery)

Ms. / Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union welcomes the Secretary General's paper entitled "Further Details on Institutional Options for Strengthening the Institutional Arrangements for Support of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" in response to the General Assembly resolution on System-wide Coherence (A/RES/62/277), which will assist and promote today's discussion.

As already stated during the informal consultations on system-wide coherence on March 13, 2009, the EU believes that the discussion on the reform of the UN gender system is urgent. Especially in the current economic crisis where women face new and grave challenges, the UN needs to enhance its capacity to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Program of Action and the follow-up processes to the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. To allow the UN to do so, time cannot be wasted and substantive action must be taken during the present session of the GA as envisaged in the consensus resolution in September 2008. At the same time, the EU is fully committed to discussion and substantive action on the other areas of Funding and Governance and looks forward to these being guided by the documents expected in due course.

The Secretary General's paper on Gender offers a way forward. It reflects the desire of the broad UN membership for concrete guidance on how to move forward in order to address the gaps and challenges of the current gender architecture, and it gives further clarification on the various options previously discussed. It identifies the option with the most potential to meet the gaps and challenges of the new UN gender system. It is now time to make decisions.

We welcome the call to choose one of the options presented in the document in order to move to a discussion on its criteria. A strong structure is needed to consolidate parallel functions and create synergies. We believe that a composite entity, for which the Secretariat indicates a comparative advantage, should be the option of reference, in order to fulfill the mandate of the UNGA resolution 62/277. In this regard, we agree with the conclusion of the Secretary General's paper that a composite entity has "the greatest potential to consolidate the strengths and experiences of the four existing gender-specific entities and create synergy between operational work and normative and policy development functions". In this regard, and as we have stated before, the "status quo" is not an option for the European Union.

Now it is crucial to focus on these criteria or functions of a composite entity. In this regard, we look forward to exchange further views with the Inter Agency Working Group on Gender, in order to further define and develop more precisely the outline of a truly integrated future composite entity.

In our view, a composite entity should have a strengthened function at the central level, must build on the strengths of the current structure, deliver better and improve accountability for gender equality in the UN system's policies and practices. It must

work more visibly, more coherently and more influentially, also with respect to other UN entities as far as gender issues are concerned.

It should increase coherence by bringing together the normative and analytical functions of the existing architecture with its technical, policy, programmatic and operational role. A new entity must be better equipped to assist all States to address gaps in the implementation of international commitments on gender wherever they request such assistance. Furthermore it must improve channels to provide essential feedback from operational levels and have the ability and capacity to translate this feedback in policy guidance and operational support at a wider scale. It must also explore institutional arrangements and mechanisms with a view to combining a universal mandate with a lean operational structure.

In our efforts to reform of the gender architecture we have to bear in mind that the new system needs to be comprehensible and manageable for its partners inside the United Nations system, within the international community and in the targeted civil societies.

Effective gender mainstreaming throughout the entire UN system has to be strengthened. While all UN entities bear responsibility for delivering on gender, we also believe that we need a central driver with the authority and ability to coordinate, guide and support the work of the UN system in this area. The appointment of a dedicated high level official, at the USG level, would contribute to achieving this objective. A strong gender entity is necessary to ensure - to the maximum possible - delivery of the goals and commitments set by the international community. It is understood that this entity would not assume sole responsibility for delivering gender equality across the UN system. All parts of the UN system are critical to delivering on gender, especially at the country level and on the ground where results are most necessary.

To sum up: The EU looks forward to the upcoming discussion to reach swift consensus on the concrete criteria of a composite entity with a view to its establishment. This entity should consolidate the strengths and experiences of the four existing gender-specific entities and create true synergy between operational work and normative and policy development functions.

Finally, let me reiterate that it is in our common interest to reach a prompt conclusion on this important issue during this 63rd General Assembly. The clear link between the empowerment of women and the achievement of the MDGs as well as the effective continuation of the Beijing Program of Action and its follow-up processes does not allow for further delay in strengthening the UN in its delivery on gender issues.

Thank you, Ms. / Mr. Chairperson.