



Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations
57 Park Avenue New York, NY, 10016 Tel. (212) 679-4760 Fax. (212) 685-8741
E-Mail: guatemala@un.int

(Check against delivery)

**STATEMENT OF THE DELEGATION OF GUATEMALA DURING THE
INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON UNITED
NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE
(March 30, 2009)**

Distinguished co-chairs,

Thank you for convening this meeting, which, in the framework of system-wide coherence, focuses on the "institutional options to strengthen United Nations work on gender equality and the empowerment of women". We also appreciate the Report presented to us by the Deputy Secretary-General – the fourth Report on this matter – in response to the mandate contained in operative paragraph 5 of Resolution 62/277.

In the first place, we would like to align ourselves with the statement just made in the name of the G-77 and NAM through its Joint Coordinating Committee. However, we would like to go a bit deeper into the specific topic object of today's consultation; namely, gender equity and empowerment of women.

On this matter, I would be somewhat less than frank if I did not share with you, distinguished co-facilitators, our misgivings on this subject. We do so without wishing to put obstacles in the way of our work; rather, our aim is the contrary. But the fact is that, notwithstanding that, in adopting Resolution 62/277 we – i.e., the General Assembly – put in motion the identification of a specific topic, such as strengthening the work of the United Nations regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women as part of our broader on coherence, my delegations finds a certain contradiction in, on the one hand, searching for system-wide coherence, and, on the other, singling out a specific subject such as the one object of our consultations, without being able to evaluate how internal coherence for the specific subjects is made compatible with system-wide coherence.

Allow me to explain myself. One of the ways in which to interpret the term "coherence" is through avoiding of mitigating the enormous instances of overlapping and duplication that exist in the System. In large part, those overlaps and duplications are the result of addressing certain topics in different ways or through separate vantage points. Thus, as the years passed, the programmatic division of the work of the United Nations in its development pillar have been complemented with geographic divisions – national, regional, global, landlocked states, small island developing states – a division by sectors – agriculture, industry, education, health, energy, water – a division by disciplines – economic, social – and, among other aspects, a division by subjects, such as children, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, the elderly, etc. We also integrated into our work cross-cutting issues, such as the environmental concerns, the respect for human rights, and gender equality. With each International Conference, and with important events which gave rise to General Assembly resolutions, new approaches were juxtaposed on previous ones, giving origin to the complex

web of mandates and institutional arrangements which led to the situation that was found by the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence installed in 2006, and whose recommendations form the basis of the Secretary-General's Report A/671/836 of April 3, 2007.

Therefore, our first concern on the direction that our discussion is taking regarding strengthening the work of the United Nations regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women is that far from contributing to greater coherence, any decision that we take in an isolated manner on this particular subject will add to the juxtaposed approaches I have alluded to, worsening rather than improving the existing situation.

I would like to clarify that I am not questioning the importance of the topic, nor the significant achievements obtained, thanks in large part to the United Nations, in making the world aware regarding the objective of reaching gender equality and the empowerment of women. From my own country's perspective, we are fully committed to said objective. But our doubt arises from the different alternatives which have been presented to us in the Note of March 5 of the Deputy Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly, and especially in the fourth alternative – the so-called composite entity – which could contain the risk of converting the matter of gender in a relatively self-contained subject, which would go against our search for greater coherence and also goes against the grain of the somewhat abused phrase of “gender mainstreaming” in all of our activities.

I am aware that this argument, taken to its ultimate consequences, would end up supporting the option of the “status quo”, leaving things as they are simply to avoid potentially making them worse. But that does not reflect our position. What we are suggesting is that in considering the other three options proposed in the Note of the Deputy Secretary-General, we should very much take into account the indirect effects of a partial solution to a problem of duplication or overlapping of functions on our broader goal of introducing greater over-all coherence to the work of the United Nations System.

For example, the option for a composite entity as the system of governance for the topic of gender equity and empowerment of women is the one that could have the largest repercussions on an approach that seeks system-wide coherence, by placing under one sole responsibility all activities – analytical, normative and advocacy typically carried out under the jurisdiction of the Secretariat, and those of an operational nature which tend to be carried out under the jurisdiction of a programme or a specialized agency. This alternative is not without its attractiveness, and we would be willing to study it carefully. But it should be pointed out that under the same logic we should examine whether it is desirable to merge the analytical and normative activities of the Secretariat with the operational activities of the United Nations Development Programme; for example, subordinating UNDP to DESA, or, perhaps, transferring DESA as part of the institutional structure of UNDP.

There has always been considerable overlapping between the work of both entities, since the Secretariat engages in operational activities and UNDP engages in analytical activities and also plays an advocacy role. Hence, the basis for a division of labor is not always clear. Indeed, some years ago it was not uncommon to hear – with some hyperbole, without doubt – of there being two different United Nations promoting development: one, the Secretariat, the other, UNDP. Fortunately, in the intervening years, considerable progress has been made in the coordination and complementarities between the work of the Secretariat and the programmes, including UNDP, a trend that could also be applicable to the topic we are discussing today, with improved coordination between two entities related to the institutional arrangements or the governance of gender equality in the United Nations: one, at the level of the Secretariat, through the merging of OAAGI, DAW and INSTRAW, and the other in UNIFEM, which translates into something close to the third option contained in the Note that I have

referred to repeatedly. That, in fact, would be our preferred option for now, although, as stated, we would be willing to explore the other options, always bearing in mind that any short-term agreements on this matter could jeopardize medium-term agreements on system-wide coherence.

I used the phrase “that would be our preferred option” in a very tentative tone. In the first place, because, in our judgment, the Note of March 5 of the Deputy Secretary-General does not contain too much value added to the proceeding Notes (of August 1, 2007, June 5, 2008 and July 23, 2008), which makes us doubt whether the Note rises to the aspirations contained in Resolution 62/277 of “provide a further, detailed modalities paper” regarding the different options. In the absence of more solid basis to take informed decisions, member countries might reveal certain reluctances to do so, opening the way towards the first option – the “status quo” – not as the result of a deliberate decision, but rather as a function of the lack of agreement on any of the other three alternatives that are on the table. In the second place, the institutional arrangements of governance are only one of the criteria we have to keep in mind. The other refers to the budgetary implications on each of the options, and neither is that part clear to us from reviewing the aforementioned Note.

Finally, under any of the alternatives that should finally be chosen, we see an important role for the Commission on the Status of Women as a point of contact between the Secretariat and the inter-governmental organs.

Distinguished co-chairs,

I trust that the foregoing reflections do not confuse even more an already complex panorama, but we understand that the reason for this informal consultation is precisely to put forth our doubts and concerns, and then to move on, combining our different points of view, to look for sensible and convenient solutions in support of the greater system-wide coherence of the United Nations.

Thank you.