



NORWAY

General Assembly
Sixty-third session

2nd meeting of the informal consultations of the plenary on system-wide coherence. Focus on gender.

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

By

H.E. Mr Morten Wetland
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Permanent Representative
On behalf of the Nordic countries
(Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway)

New York, 30 March 2009

Co-facilitators,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries; Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden – and Norway. We all greatly appreciate the way the two of you have vitalized the work on System Wide Coherence, providing the membership with confidence that agreement can be reached and decisions made as soon as possible.

While all three dimensions of this process are equally important, we do recognize that the work on reforming the gender architecture has recently taken a great leap forward, not least thanks to the Secretary General's paper presented earlier this month, in response to General Assembly Resolution A/RES/62/277.

I would like to thank in particular the Deputy Secretary General, present here today, for her valuable guidance and contribution to this process.

The Nordic countries welcome the Secretary General's paper. It presents the pros and cons of the various four alternatives.

While the paper is somewhat short on detail, we are convinced that outstanding issues - inter alia with regard to governance, funding, location and autonomy - can and should be ironed out through consultations in the weeks to come.

Meanwhile we appreciate that the Secretary General's paper does indeed provide a clear direction with regard to the ultimate objective and result of this reform process:

- A single UN gender entity, combining the normative, the analytical and the operational functions of the UN system in an integrated fashion.
- Such a new gender entity should be headed by an Under-Secretary General with mandate to coordinate gender issues throughout the system.
- Among the four alternatives discussed, the paper leaves no doubt that the so-called "composite entity" is the option that best can meet these objectives.

The new entity must be a centre of excellence and catalyst for gender mainstreaming within the entire UN system and must not be seen as a replacement for the gender work which falls within the mandate of other parts of the UN system. All actors in the UN system should be accountable to the new entity for gender results within their respective area.

The main focus of the new entity must be to support Member States in their endeavour to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This is a question of justice and human rights – but also vitally important for economic growth and development. No country can reach its full potential unless it provides equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

The entity must thus be *universal* in its normative work and underpinnings, relevant to all Member States. However, its operational activities should give priority to meeting the needs of developing countries.

Dear colleagues,

The Nordic countries are strong supporters of United Nations development efforts, in all their dimensions. This also includes gender.

In fact, the Nordic countries combined provide substantial financial contributions annually to UN's work on gender equality and women's empowerment through relevant funds and programmes such as UNIFEM, UNFPA and UNDP. Regarding UNIFEM, the Nordics provided more than 40 percent of the fund's core budget last year.

Against this background, let me underscore the following: The Nordic countries do not consider UN reform, neither the overall reform, nor reform of the gender architecture, to be a cost-saving exercise.

On the contrary, we believe that a new, consolidated and more effective gender entity – as envisaged by the Secretary General and supported by the President of the General Assembly – will be worthy of increased financial resources.

Co-facilitators,

As pointed out by the President of the General Assembly in his excellent statement to the Commission on the Status of Women earlier this month, “no issue needs or deserves the leadership of the General Assembly more than the pursuit of gender equality”.

The President has committed himself to preside over the establishment of a new UN gender entity.

The Nordic countries share this ambition, and we know it is do-able. We would thus encourage colleagues to join us in making sure a decision is taken during this session of the General Assembly - on the watch of His Excellency Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann.

To this end, we look forward to seeing a draft resolution as soon as possible.

Thank you.