

SOUTHEAST ASIA GEAR CAMPAIGN

SOUTHEAST ASIA GENDER EQUALITY ARCHITECTURE CAMPAIGN

LED BY THE ASIA PACIFIC WOMEN'S WATCH (APWW)

25 August 2009

Dear Member-States:

Warmest greetings!

On behalf of the women of Southeast Asia, we are grateful for the hard work that you have been doing to push the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). While we are aware, that it is not easy to move the GEAR forward given its complexities, we trust that member-states will stay fully committed in making the UN a stronger institution for women all over the world.

Indeed, the Southeast Asia GEAR Campaign has been receiving very encouraging response from women's rights groups in the region. In the well-attended consultations that we held last year in Southeast Asia, GEAR drew staunch support from grassroots women leaders. The consensus we received from the women is that GEAR is a vital and urgent reform measure if the UN is to remain relevant and efficient for women at the global, national and local levels. This has all the more inspired us to continue moving our advocacy forward. We intend to do more consultation in the region within the rest of the year.

At this point we know that the resolution on GEAR will be debated and negotiated on the floor before the closing of the 63rd General Assembly. We appeal to you to express strong support for this very important and historic measure. Allow me to provide you with specific details on what we strongly believe should be vital components of the GEAR. In particular, we want the proposed entity to be ambitiously funded with stable and predictable resources. We believe that Member States should pledge and secure a minimum of US\$ 1 billion in funding for the new gender entity in the first phase of development, as well as substantial annual increases built into the process to expand to more countries over time. Public commitments by states pledging to fund it are needed now. This must include significant programmatic as well as staff funding to ensure a strong operational presence of the entity. While funding for the new entity will come from both voluntary and assessed contributions, the expansion of field presence will require significant increases in voluntary contributions.

Moreover, we believe that it is critical that it should have meaningful, systematic and diverse civil society participation. The Executive Board should include one civil society representative from each region, following the HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board model. Civil Society Advisory bodies could be created at the global, regional and national levels and should be comprised of representatives from diverse NGOs, and especially women's organizations and local women at country level.

May we emphasize that it is imperative for GEAR to be resolved soon as we have received reports that programs on gender at the UN are already being stalled as agencies are expectedly adopting a wait-and-see attitude. Rest assured that we shall continue to monitor developments at the UNGA here in Southeast Asia. The UN has always been an instrumental and meaningful institution in furthering the cause of gender equality at the global level Your continued and meaningful support of the GEAR will ensure that this noble goal is further realized for the next generation.

Yours truly,

PATRICIA LICUANAN, Ph.D.

Focal Point for the GEAR Campaign in Southeast Asia
Asia Pacific Women Watch (APWW)