



United Kingdom Mission  
To the United Nations  
New York

One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza  
(885 Second Avenue)  
New York, NY 10017

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 5238  
New York, NY 10150-5238

Telephone: (212) 745-9200  
Facsimile: (212) 745-9316

E-mail: [uk@un.int](mailto:uk@un.int)

General Assembly  
Informal consultations on system-wide coherence;  
gender reform

30<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Statement by the

United Kingdom

Check Against Delivery

Honourable Ambassador of Spain, Honourable Ambassador of Namibia, Mr Secretary General

I would like to thank you for your statement and I am very pleased to have an opportunity to discuss gender reform. The UK fully aligns itself with the EU statement given earlier by the Czech Republic, however I would like to add some comments from a national point of view.

Excellencies,

The PGA has already stated that this year is an historic opportunity to make progress on a new UN entity for women. And making progress is even more crucial in the current climate. The global economic downturn represents new and unprecedented challenges for the world's women. They will struggle to contribute to the economy, and put food on the table in the household. They will be disproportionately affected by cuts to public health services, as a result of tighter fiscal purse-strings affecting maternal and infant mortality directly.

Political upheaval and economic crisis may make it harder for women to get their voices heard in public policy and influence decisions that affect them. And the incidence of conflict is rising –we already know that it is often more dangerous to be a woman in a conflict situation than a soldier. The scale of the task at hand is enormous- but achievable.

Most member states already committed to making gender equality and women's empowerment a reality, including through the Beijing Platform. But we need the UN's support if we are to live up to those commitments in practice. Now is when we need the UN to be at its most effective in delivering for women.

The UK would like to thank the Secretariat and the Working Group for the valuable paper examining options. We especially welcome the efforts at analysing existing models within the UN system, and the consultative manner in which the exercise was conducted. We were encouraged last year by the vocal support from many member states from different regional groupings for these reforms. It is clear what the problems are. Our consultations do not need to look at this again. What we need now is to focus on the solution.

The options to establish a new agency or department (options B & C) have their merits, but, in our view, neither can tackle the problems of duplication nor achieve the vital combination of normative and operational functions, operational flexibility, system-wide reach and authority to ensure gender mainstreaming and accountability, and in-country capacity that is needed. Option A (status quo), in our view, is not acceptable, as it will not lead to an improvement of UN's work.

Based on the analysis contained in the paper, the UK remains firmly in favour of the composite entity option. We believe this represents the best means to address the gaps identified in DSG Migiro's July paper. Option D, by merging the normative and operational functions of the UN system, will ensure a stronger and more coherent policy capacity and support to the field. And by drawing from experience on the ground, the gender entity will be better able to support the deliberations of member states in forums such as CSW and ECOSOC. Better support to the field and stronger regional and country presence will enable the broader UN system to respond to unmet demands by partner governments for support in gender empowerment.

The UK also welcomes the proposal that the entity be led by an Under Secretary General. A strong leader can encourage the rest of the UN system to take women's needs into account in their activities and will hold UN partners accountable to ensure effective gender mainstreaming.

Excellencies,

I can assure you of my government's commitment to participate in a constructive way with other member states in these gender reform discussions. We hope to draw some tangible lessons from the field, building on successes that exist. We will also work with others to demonstrate how these reforms will help accelerate progress towards the MDG's. The UK

stands ready to provide financial resources to the reformed architecture to help it address gaps and challenges most effectively.

The UK also places great importance on the dialogue that is about to start on funding and governance of the UN. We are confident that reforms in these areas will help to make the UN more effective at delivering on the MDG's. We look forward to building on our discussions in the TCPR context. We do hope that when the gender reform discussions become ready for action we do not impose artificial boundaries on ourselves to delay the process. It is evident how urgent and needed reform is in order to allow the UN to better meet the demands of women world wide and move forward in the achievement of the MDGs. We would urge the co-chairs to facilitate further discussion with a view to reaching agreement in the 63<sup>th</sup> session of the GA. We look forward to continued discussions in the coming weeks to agree the main criteria of the new composite gender entity.

Thank you your Excellencies.