

**51st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
26 February to 9 March 2007**

**Informal parallel event on UN Reform on Gender Equality
Organized by the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women**

7 March 2007

Moderator's Summary

1. On 7 March 2007, the Commission on the Status of Women held an informal panel event on the theme “United Nations Reform on Gender Equality” to discuss the relevant recommendations by the High-Level Panel on United Nations System-Wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment¹, as well as the response of the United Nations to these recommendations. The session was moderated by H.E. Carmen María Gallardo, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women. Mr. Adnan Amin, the former Executive Director for the High-Level Panel Secretariat, presented the Panel’s proposals and Mr. Paolo Galli, Acting Director of the Office the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, presented the response of the United-Nations Secretary-General.
2. The High-Level Panel had put forward a series of recommendations to overcome fragmentation in the United Nations system so as to enable it to “deliver as one”, in true partnership with and serving the needs of all countries. The recommendations were the result of a nine-month process of consultations carried out by the Panel with different stakeholders in various parts of the world to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations system. The Panel had identified that gender equality was a critical cross-cutting issue, central to the delivery of an effective development outcome. There was common agreement among members of the Panel that the United Nations while entrusted with an important gender equality mandate was not adequately equipped to fulfill this ambitious mandate.
3. Within the United Nations framework, the international community had made strong commitments to women’s empowerment and gender equality, including through the

¹ See Delivering as One. Report of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel, United Nations, New York, November 2006.

adoption of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, the United Nations system's approach to gender equality had been fragmented and insufficient resources had been allocated for its work on gender equality. The Panel had formulated a number of basic guiding principles to strengthen the United Nations' performance on gender equality and women's empowerment. Firstly, a much stronger voice on women's issues within the United Nations was needed to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment were taken seriously throughout the UN system and to ensure that the United Nations worked more effectively with governments and civil society. Secondly, the commitment to gender equality had to remain the mandate of the entire United Nations system. Finally, greater visibility for gender equality policy issues at United Nations Headquarters level needed to be combined with enhanced efforts and compelling results on the ground. Guided by those principles, the Panel recommended strengthening the coherence and impact of the United Nations' institutional gender architecture by consolidating into one gender entity three existing United Nations entities working for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

4. According to the Panel's proposal, the gender equality entity would consolidate the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), under two organizational pillars: a normative, analytical and monitoring pillar and a policy advisory and programming pillar.

5. In order to avoid the problem of "mandate creep" that could hinder cooperation within the United Nations system, the Panel carefully articulated the mandate of the proposed gender equality entity, in particular its responsibilities at the country level. It was specified that the entity would encourage, monitor and evaluate the integration of gender perspectives into the work of the United Nations system, and ensure accountability at the country-level. The gender equality entity would work closely with governments and civil society organizations, strengthening already established networks at global, national and local levels.

6. The need for adequate and stable funding for the effective functioning of the proposed gender equality entity was acknowledged. While a definite funding target for the gender entity had not been included in the Panel's recommendations, the Panel had recommended that the gender entity be fully and ambitiously funded by Member States. It was underscored that there should be new and additional funding for the entity rather than a diversion of resources currently allocated to other areas of the United Nations work on development.

7. Following the publication of the report by the High-Level Panel in November 2006, the former Secretary-General had initiated a consultation process in the context of the Policy Committee. A Task Force on Gender Equality, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and the Chef de Cabinet, reviewed and adapted the proposals from the Panel. In his report to the General Assembly (A/61/590), the former Secretary-General proposed taking immediate action on the establishment of the position of Under-Secretary-General,

for the new gender equality entity. The Under-Secretary-General would work out the details of the basic structure of the new entity and oversee its development, in consultation with the relevant intergovernmental bodies and institutions of the United Nations system.

8. The proposal to establish the new Under-Secretary General post was presented to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly with a strong recommendation for immediate action. The proposal was currently under review.

9. It was highlighted that both the current United Nations Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General were committed to strengthening the United Nations gender equality architecture. They supported the thrust of the Panel's recommendations and planned to move forward as soon as possible. The Secretary-General was preparing a report in response to the whole package of recommendations of the High-Level Panel which was expected to be issued very soon. This would launch the debate at the General Assembly, which would involve high-level discussions among Member States and consultations and discussions between the Secretary-General and the Member States.

10. The creation of the gender equality entity was strongly supported, not only by many Member States, but also by numerous non-governmental organizations. Women's non-governmental organizations from various parts of the world were interested in advancing the proposals. Over 150 women's groups had signed a statement addressed to the Secretary-General to urge the General Assembly to move forward with the entity. Participants emphasized that strengthening the gender equality architecture involved not only consolidating the United Nations work on gender equality but, more importantly, giving the proposed gender equality entity a higher status within the United Nations system and adequate resources to carry out its work at both normative and operational levels. It was noted that the combined budget of OSAGI, DAW and UNIFEM was much lower than that of other United Nations entities and that this was a serious impediment to effective work on gender equality.

11. The well organized and effective contribution of civil society, in particular of women's non-governmental organizations, to the consultation process of the High-level Panel was highly commended. Participants noted the important role of civil society in development and strongly recommended that consultations with women's groups from different regions of the world take place when developing the details of the gender equality entity. Participants also noted the need to ensure that the entity play a key role in strengthening the national machineries for the advancement of women to implement policies and programmes and suggested that the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-second session in 2008, focus on ways and means to finance gender equality at the country level – within its priority theme. The reform process underway was considered to be a unique opportunity that should not to be missed to ensure that gender equality issues were highly visible in the work of the United Nations.