

**NGO Consultation: CSW 52
New York University, 24 February 2008**

**"NGO support to the CSW"
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I take this opportunity to give you a warm advance welcome to the 52st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It is always a pleasure to begin the annual sessions of the Commission at these consultation meetings and feel the excitement that the themes of the Commission has generated around the world.

The Division for the Advancement of Women has had a long tradition of cooperation with the NGO Committee on the Status of Women and the broader NGO community on preparations for the Commission on the Status of Women. I would like to thank the Chairperson of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Ms Vivien Pender, and her Executive Committee and Members at Large, for the excellent collaboration in the preparation for this session of the Commission.

I have been asked to discuss the role of NGOs across three sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women in my presentation - the follow-up to the outcomes of the 51st session; the preparations for, participation in and implementation of the outcomes of the 52nd session; and the preparations for the 53rd session.

Let me start by highlighting the role of the Commission on the Status of Women as an important global forum on gender equality. The Commission continues its efforts to ensure a strong focus on national level implementation, including through the large number of opportunities for interactive dialogue and exchange of experiences and lessons learned on achievements and remaining gaps and challenges, and examples of good practices.

It is extremely encouraging to see how many organizations at international, regional and national levels are guided in their work by the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women. In preparation for this session of the Commission, many organizations included the issue of "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women" in their work programmes, for example, the OECD/DAC Gender Equality Network, UN Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the Commonwealth Meeting of Ministers of Gender Equality, the World Bank and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and BRIDGE, the UK-based information and communication organization. I know that many of your organizations have also had a very strong focus on the Commission's priority theme over the past year, in preparation for this session.

The role of NGOs in the Commission

NGOs have been active in the United Nations work on gender equality since the establishment of the Commission in 1946. NGOs have played a critical role in

highlighting issues for attention on the global agenda; providing critical information and data; supporting implementation on the ground; monitoring government action on global commitments; and supporting governments through partnering on critical issues.

NGOs can take pride in the fact that their effective lobbying has placed the issue of violence against women firmly on the United Nations agenda, resulting in the in-depth study of the Secretary-General, a comprehensive resolution of the General Assembly, and now a multi-year campaign of the Secretary-General which will be launched tomorrow morning at the Commission.

NGOs are very active **during the annual sessions** of the Commission, providing written and oral statements, participating in all interactive events, organizing parallel events and advocating and lobbying on their concerns. We are very encouraged by the huge interest of NGOs in participating in this session, with over 5,000 NGO representatives pre-registered.

What is less well recognized is the increased role of NGOs in promoting the themes of the Commission strategically at all levels, **prior to the Commission**, to generate interest and increase direct involvement, and thereby also increase potential for implementation of outcomes in the longer term.

The role that civil society could play in **ensuring full implementation of policy outcomes of the Commission at national level** also needs further attention. Many organizations take the outcomes of the Commission back to their constituencies at local level and work to ensure that they are well known and used in different contexts. Civil society also works to hold governments responsible and accountable for commitments made in the Commission and to monitor and report on progress.

NGO involvement in the preparatory process for the Commission

The Division disseminates information on the priority theme being considered broadly to promote awareness of the work of the Commission around the world, and encourages the active involvement of as many stakeholders as possible in preparatory discussions.

To access the experience and expertise of researchers, activists and other stakeholders working on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women in support of the preparation of the Commission, the Division organized an Expert Group Meeting on the theme, in Oslo, Norway, in September last year. A number of NGOs participated in the meeting as experts and as observers. The report, which is available on the website, covered a number of critical issues: integrating gender perspectives in the follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development, such as in the areas of macro-economic policies, public finance management (including gender-responsive budgets), debt, trade, and ODA; measuring bilateral assistance to women and gender equality; and the crisis in funding for the women's movement. An overview of the

findings will be presented by the Chairperson of the meeting in the panel on Tuesday 26 February (10am – 1pm).

To reach out to NGOs and other stakeholders, including academics, outside of New York, the Division organized a moderated on-line discussion on the theme, which ran for a month during the summer last year. Approximately 1,300 individuals (mainly NGO representatives) from 145 countries, who were working with or concerned about financing for gender equality and empowerment of women, participated in the discussion. This on-line discussion allowed the Division to bring in the voices of individuals in civil society who would not be able to attend this session of the Commission. A summary report is available on the Division's website.

These two important processes fed into the preparation of the two reports of the Secretary-General which are the formal basis for the discussions in the Commission: the Secretary-General's report on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women (E/CN.6/2008.2) and the Secretary-General's report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme. (E/CN.6/2008/5)

A number of NGOs are undertaking impressive work in preparing for and following up participation in the Commission. The representatives from around the world attending the Commission have gone through a preparatory programme; been briefed and mentored during the session; and encouraged and supported to incorporate the recommendations from the Commission in their day-to-day work following the session. NGOs are also undertaking significant work to ensure that a broad constituency of stakeholders in different regions is aware of the themes of the Commission and engaged in preparatory processes.

Last year, as you will recall, the Division for the Advancement of Women initiated close collaboration with UNICEF and with the Working Group on Girls to ensure that their constituencies in all parts of the world were informed and involved in preparing for the Commission. Efforts were made to engage girls in the preparatory process, and many innovative good practice examples were developed, such as consultation meetings at national or even regional levels and development of specific materials.

I am sure that you have made similar efforts this year which will have a positive impact on the work of the Commission and we look forward to learning about these.

As a result of the preparatory processes you undertake, NGO representatives are better prepared for participation; are clear about the changes they want to advocate for; and better able to follow-up to ensure change on the ground as a result of the work of the Commission.

NGO involvement in follow-up on the outcomes of the Commission

Implementation of policy outcomes can, of course, only be successful at national level if these outcomes are well known and systematically and effectively used. Innovative approaches are needed to ensure that the outcome of the Commission on the priority theme is broadly disseminated and utilized at national level. The Division therefore encourages relevant UN entities and NGOs to engage their constituencies around the world in follow-up activities.

It is our hope that NGOs attending the 52nd session of the Commission will work systematically, effectively and creatively to promote and document active engagement of their constituencies in follow-up to the Commission and ensure that the policy recommendations adopted by the Commission will make a difference on the ground and result in increased resource allocations. The preparations for the follow-up on the Monterrey Consensus in Doha later this year provides a critical opportunity for very concrete utilization of the outcomes. I know that there are very active groups working on the gender perspectives of financing for development. These groups were very effective in the preparations for the Monterrey Conference and I know that they are working hard now on the preparations for the follow-up. It will be important to see that there are strong outcomes of this Commission that can feed directly into the follow-up process. I know that we can count on your strong support in this area.

The fact that the Commission at each session now reviews implementation of the agreed conclusions adopted at a previous session provides a new opportunity for ensuring effective follow-up and implementation, which we should fully utilize. We will have the opportunity to review implementation of the agreed conclusions on "Financing for Gender Equality and empowerment of women", to be adopted at this session, in two to three years. We should already now begin to consider how we can work to facilitate the review process for these agreed conclusions.

I hope you will create opportunities during the Commission to discuss with a broad group of stakeholder, including Member States and UN entities, how the outcome on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women can be used at different levels, and how progress can be most effectively assessed and documented when the Commission will come back to review the implementation of the agreed conclusions.

Follow-up to the agreed conclusions from the 51st session

Last year at the consultation meeting, we discussed the need to actively work to disseminate and support implementation of the agreed conclusions on the girl child and to identify continuing gaps and challenges in preparation for the review process to be held in two to three years. Let me provide some brief information on the follow-up to the agreed conclusions on the girl child.

The Division for the Advancement of Women has discussed with UNICEF ways in which the agreed conclusions can be effectively used in UNICEF's on-going work. To support dissemination and utilization of the agreed conclusions, the Division has, for the first time, published them as a brochure. (At present these are only available in English

but will be made available in all languages in the near future.) The availability of the agreed conclusions in this form will support efforts to disseminate them and facilitate implementation and reporting back. UNICEF will disseminate them broadly through their regional and national offices. I would also encourage you to use these agreed conclusions effectively.

It has been particularly encouraging to see the very active role played over the past year by the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF. They have met frequently since the 51st session and have already produced very concrete results. The Working Group on Girls has translated the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission into “girl-friendly” language so that girls around the world can learn what the Commission discussed and agreed on. The Working Group has also developed indicators to assist different actors in assessing how well they are living up to the agreed recommendations. And I am sure you will hear from them during this Commission on issues concerning financing for the empowerment of girls. We commend this work and recognize it as a good practice in the area of follow-up to the Commission.

NGOs preparing for the 53rd session of the Commission

Finally, let me mention the preparations for the 53rd session of the Commission and the ways in which NGOs can be involved. The 53rd session will consider the priority theme: “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS”.

During this session of the Commission there will be an expert panel discussion on the theme of the next session, to provide information on the critical issues to be addressed. The panel will be on Wednesday 27th during lunch in CR2. I would encourage you to attend this panel and take a copy of the issues paper prepared to guide the discussions. This will facilitate your preparations for the next session.

NGOs will be, as usual, involved in the Expert Group Meeting on the priority theme organized by the Division on the Advancement of Women in September 2008. The Division will also organize an on-line discussion on the priority theme in June/July 2008. I would encourage you to check the DAW website to get information on the on-line discussion and spread information and encourage participation from among your constituencies.

Conclusion

It is my hope that our work together in the context of this session of the Commission on the Status of Women can make a significant difference in the lives of women and girls around the world – by increasing resources, strengthening attention to gender perspectives in climate change, and enhancing participation of women in all conflict resolution and peace-building efforts.