

Open Letter regarding Women's/Gender Equality Architecture at the UN from the NGO LINKAGE CAUCUS taking part in the 51st COMMISSION on the STATUS of WOMEN

TO: UN MEMBER STATES and THE SECRETARY GENERAL

March 8, 2007

Women's groups and allies from around the world welcomed the recommendations on strengthening the gender equality architecture of the UN in the final report released in November 2006 by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence. During the 2006 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, women's groups mobilized through the Linkage Caucus to ensure that gender equality, women's rights and empowerment issues were added to the Panel's mandate. We are pleased with how the Panel addressed these issues and also welcome the statement of support for the Panel's gender equality recommendations made by the Deputy Secretary General at the opening of the 2007 session of the CSW. Women continue to be a vital constituency in support of the UN and to see it as a vibrant space for advocacy toward gender justice.

In particular, we endorse the strengthening of the gender equality architecture of the UN through the establishment of an independent women-specific entity that will combine OSAGI, DAW and UNIFEM, have both normative and operational responsibilities, be ambitiously resourced, and be led by an Under-Secretary General. This upgrading of women's equality work within the UN system is long overdue. It is imperative at this critical juncture that Member States and the UN system take bold action – and provide the leadership and resources required – to make these recommendations a reality.

We call upon UN Member States and the Secretary General to take swift actions to:

- 1) Initiate and support efforts to strengthen the architecture for women's equality in the General Assembly deliberations during its 61st session. Panel members, and some UN member states, have already noted that the recommendations on strengthening the gender equality architecture were one of its main achievements. These must now be addressed by all governments promptly and can be acted upon either alone or as part of the whole report.**
- 2) Commit to significant and sustained funding of the new women's entity and the gender equality and women's rights/empowerment work of the whole UN system, including gender mainstreaming within all UN policies and programs.**
- 3) Provide for meaningful and ongoing civil-society participation, particularly of women's groups, in the consideration and implementation of the Panel's recommendations at the national, regional and global levels. Structures and avenues for such participation should be built into the gender-equality architecture of the UN at all levels to ensure that women's voices, and especially those at the grassroots, are heard and that women's concerns are effectively addressed in sustained ways.**
- 4) Ensure that in the development and implementation of the "One UN" Pilot Country Projects, gender equality and the participation of NGOs, and in particular, women's groups, are integrated into the design, implementation and monitoring of all policies and programming.**
- 5) Establish and adhere to a clear and transparent process and an expeditious time frame through which the strengthening of the gender equality architecture will be considered and implemented, and funding secured.**

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