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Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-third session

2-13 March 2009

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by African Women’s Development and Communication Network, Amnesty International, Asia Pacific Women’s Watch, Association for Women’s Rights in Development, Baha’i International Community, Center for Women’s Global Leadership, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Human Rights Watch, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Women’s Environment and Development Organization and World Federalist Movement, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2009/1.

Statement*

Building a United Nations that Really Works for All Women

The global campaign for Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR Campaign) welcomes the priority theme for the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women on “the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS” as well as the review theme on “equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels” adopted at the fiftieth session of Commission on the Status of Women.

The GEAR campaign, now comprising over 275 organizations in more than 50 countries, believes that the creation of a new consolidated and stronger United Nations entity for women will greatly advance gender equality, the empowerment of women and women’s human rights throughout the world.

For the past three decades, the United Nations has been a galvanizing force in efforts to define a comprehensive global agenda for peace and security, human rights, poverty eradication and sustainable development. As a result, there have been significant commitments made for the advancement of women towards gender equality and women’s empowerment. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, Security Council resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, and the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals.

However, the United Nations still lacks a strong driver at the leadership level, both at Headquarters and at the country level, as well as a systematic and effective mechanism to deliver on many of the essential commitments made, including those concerning the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men and caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS. The United Nations has several small under-resourced agencies focused exclusively on women’s issues. Other larger agencies make critical contributions to women’s human rights and gender equality, but this is usually a small part of their mandate.

The GEAR campaign therefore welcomes the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General’s paper on “Institutional options to strengthen United Nations work on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women” dated 23 July 2008. We also welcome the step taken by the General Assembly on 15 September 2008, adopting by consensus a resolution that supports the Gender Equality Architecture Reform process.

In this context, the GEAR campaign urges United Nations Member States, with the support of the women’s human rights and social justice movements, to accelerate progress towards the creation of a stronger United Nations entity for women, with the following essential requirements:

- Headed by an Under-Secretary-General to ensure representation and decision-making at the highest level in both policy development and program operations at the global and country

* Issued without formal editing.

levels. The new Under-Secretary-General post would provide higher level leadership in executive decisions, than exists at present, to more effectively drive the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda.

- Universal field presence and a strong policy and programmatic mandate essential to effectively improve the lives of women on the ground and worldwide.
- Substantial and predictable resources to ensure the capacity to meet expectations and deliver results at all levels. It must be funded initially at a minimum level of \$1 billion USD, with increases over time.
- Accountability at both national and international levels, including through meaningful involvement of civil society, particularly women's non-governmental organizations.
- Promotion of gender mainstreaming by the integration of gender equality and women's human rights throughout the United Nations system, and especially in the United Nations Country Pilots and in all United Nations reform processes.
- Systematic and transparent civil society participation in the creation and monitoring of any newly established entity by:
 - Securing direct communication with the relevant United Nations Working Group now developing proposals; and an opportunity to review and contribute to the United Nations Secretariat's relevant studies and papers at all stages of drafting processes;
 - Ensuring timely and direct access to information and documents, with time to share them with GEAR colleagues in all regions;
 - Facilitating an open, inclusive, and transparent process to build legitimacy with stakeholders, particularly women's organizations in countries around the world, in this process.
- Strong commitment and leadership by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General that will allow timely and effective action during the current sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

Strengthening the United Nations' gender equality machinery is a crucial part of developing and implementing gender-responsive policies that adequately address the most pressing problems facing women around the world, including those related to poverty, development, human rights and peace and security as well as the effects of HIV&AIDS. A new, stronger United Nations entity for women will better enable the United Nations system and Governments to deliver on the promises made to advance gender equality and women's human rights at the global and country levels.

Let us build a United Nations that really works for all women!