



UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE

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UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women

United Nations, New York, 2 July 2010 — In an historic move, the United Nations General Assembly voted unanimously today to create a new entity to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide.

The establishment of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women — to be known as UN Women — is a result of years of negotiations between UN Member States and advocacy by the global women’s movement. It is part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact.

“I am grateful to Member States for having taken this major step forward for the world’s women and girls,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a statement welcoming the decision. “UN Women will significantly boost UN efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunity, and tackle discrimination around the globe.”

UN Women merges and will build on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system which focus exclusively on gender equality and women’s empowerment:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW, established in 1946)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW, established in 1976)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI, established in 1997)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, established in 1976)

“I commend the leadership and staff of DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI and UNIFEM for their commitment to the cause of gender equality; I will count on their support as we enter a new era in the UN’s work for women,” said Secretary-General Ban. “I have made gender equality and the empowerment of women one of my top priorities — from working to end the scourge of violence against women, to appointing more women to senior positions, to efforts to reduce maternal mortality rates,” he noted.

Over many decades, the UN has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth.

Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination, and are under-represented in decision-making processes. High rates of maternal mortality continue to be a cause for global shame. For many years, the UN has faced

serious challenges in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding and no single recognized driver to direct UN activities on gender equality issues.

UN Women — which will be operational by January 2011 — has been created by the General Assembly to address such challenges. It will be a dynamic and strong champion for women and girls, providing them with a powerful voice at the global, regional and local levels. It will enhance, not replace, efforts by other parts of the UN system (such as UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA) that continue to have responsibility to work for gender equality and women's empowerment in their areas of expertise.

UN Women will have two key roles: It will support inter-governmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms, and it will help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, as well as forging effective partnerships with civil society. It will also help the UN system to be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

Secretary-General Ban will appoint an Under-Secretary-General to head the new body and is inviting suggestions from Member States and civil society partners. The Under-Secretary-General will be a member of all senior UN decision-making bodies and will report to the Secretary-General.

The operations of UN Women will be funded from voluntary contributions, while the regular UN budget will support its normative work. At least US\$500 million — double the current combined budget of DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI, and UNIFEM — has been recognized by Member States as the minimum investment needed for UN Women.

“UN Women will give women and girls the strong, unified voice they deserve on the world stage. I look forward to seeing this new entity up and running so that we — women and men — can move forward together in our endeavour to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace for all women and girls, everywhere,” said Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro.

The General Assembly resolution creating UN Women also covers broader issues related to UN system-wide coherence, laying out a new approach to the funding of UN development operations, streamlining the work of UN bodies, and improving methods of evaluating reform efforts.

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For more on UN Women, visit: www.unwomen.org