

CIVIL SOCIETY CALL TO ACTION

Created on July 2, 2010, UN Women is the result of years of advocacy by civil society. The new entity combines the mandates of the four existing UN structures for women into one new, higher level UN organization with both policy and operational functions. The GEAR Campaign, a network of over 300 women's, human rights and social justice groups, is now engaged in working to ensure that UN Women will be a coordinated, strong, and strategic organization that further advances the UN's work on gender equality and women's empowerment. Some organizations are already engaged with the UN transition process at the national and regional levels, and the GEAR Campaign encourages more actors in civil society to get involved in helping UN Women realize its potential as a powerful vehicle for women's rights on the ground. The campaign recommends the following next steps for civil society engagement:

ESTABLISH MEANINGFUL, SYSTEMATIC, AND DIVERSE CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

UN Women represents a valuable political opportunity for GEAR supporters and other civil society groups to re-invigorate or initiate engagement with the UN. Relationships and mechanisms that are developed now can have long-lasting implications for UN Women. In the months leading up to January 1st, 2011, the official date UN Women becomes fully functional, civil society should be part of developing effective policies, practices, and leadership for the entity.

To be effective, UN Women must develop creative ways to engage with a diverse NGO constituency - particularly women's and grassroots organizations. UN country teams are mandated to advance the UN Women's agenda in the field, and as they do so, should draw upon the knowledge and experience of civil society groups and networks who have long worked in this area. Civil society organizations can initiate meetings with NGO networks and UN staff (Resident Coordinators as well as gender focal points and other relevant actors) in national and regional offices to strengthen and build mechanisms for civil society engagement with the UN through the new entity.

DEMAND A DYNAMIC AND RELEVANT AGENDA FOR UN WOMEN

The creation of UN Women provides an opportunity for civil society to offer insights and make the UN's work on women's rights and gender equality more effective. The new entity begins with the mandates and work of UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI, and INSTRAW, but if it is to become more than the sum of its parts, it must go further. Civil society organizations working on various issues such as violence against women, economic and political empowerment, land, housing, and other human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, can analyze and suggest how UN Women can improve the work of the UN both through its own programming and in coordinating with the larger UN system. Funding priorities and partnership must reach grassroots women as well as NGOS.

In some places, NGOs are already working closely with UN agencies like UNIFEM or UNFPA or with UN country teams and can build upon those connections in discussing the agenda for UN Women, while in other countries, civil society still needs to foster these linkages. While UN Women presents a new opportunity, there are many forms of previous civil society engagement that can be built upon. Resources like NGO shadow reports to the

GEAR

gender/equality/architecture/reform

CEDAW or other Human Rights Treaty Body Committees, information on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action or plans for Security Council Resolutions 1325/1880, regional declarations on women's rights, reports from UN Special Rapporteurs, etc. call all be utilized in shaping UN Women's agenda moving forward.

PRESSURE DONORS TO AIM FOR \$1 BILLION IN FUNDING AND MEET THEIR COMMITMENT TO "CORE, MULTI-YEAR, PREDICTABLE, STABLE AND SUSTAINABLE" CONTRIBUTIONS

For UN Women to have a significant global impact, it must have the financial resources that UNIFEM, OSAGI, INSTRAW and DAW consistently lacked. Like UNICEF, UNFPA, and other UN agencies, UN Women's resources will come primarily from Member States' voluntary contributions. The founding resolution for UN Women gives Member States a responsibility to make their contributions predictable and multi-year to best support the viability of its work.

Civil society groups should continue or initiate conversations with governments about setting funding goals for UN Women and demand that targets are met. NGOs across the world can mobilize and insist that governments prioritize the needs of women by contributing to UN Women. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be done on the cheap; governments must keep their promises to women.

SEEK POWERFUL, CAPABLE AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AT EVERY LEVEL

UN Women will largely be defined by its leadership which will have the opportunity to create an innovative and powerful entity. The new Under-Secretary General will be a key player in this process and therefore, must be a true advocate for women's empowerment with the leadership skills and gender equality expertise to bring UN Women to life. The GEAR Campaign criteria are aimed at achieving such leadership. The governing board of UN Women, made up of elected representatives of Member-States will be chosen this fall. To find the most qualified and dynamic leaders for these positions, the voices of women across the globe must be heard in an open and transparent selection processes for both the USG position and the governing board. Civil society should also advocate for effective leaders at the regional and country levels who will have considerable influence over activities on-the-ground and the opportunity to develop innovative agendas for UN Women.

The global women's movement has a rare opportunity to participate in building a new UN agency with the capacity to lead the UN in helping to improve the daily conditions of women's and girls' lives. UN Women must become, at all levels, a strong link between women and the institutions we seek to change. GEAR calls on all civil society groups who support gender equality and women's empowerment to help shape UN Women to play a critical role in the 21st century global women's movement.

Please see the [July 1 GEAR press release](#), [UN Women's Q&A](#), and an [interview with GEAR Campaign leaders](#).