

UN REFORM

What's in it for Women?



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S TRIBUNE
CENTRE

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The International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) is a women's international non-governmental organization established in 1976 following the United Nations International Women's Year (IWY) World Conference and IWY Tribune in Mexico City. With a commitment to empowering people and building communities, IWTC provides communication, information, education, and organizing support services to women's organizations and community groups working to improve the lives of women, particularly rural and low-income women, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia. IWTC's work is grounded on the premise that access to information and the ability to communicate are basic to the process of women's empowerment and their ability to re-define development paradigms, participate in the public policy arena and be involved in the building of democratic societies. IWTC's work is currently focused on four major programme areas:

- Women's Human Rights, Human Security and Peace Building
- Information and Communication Technologies and Women's Work in the Informal Economy
- Global Policy, Local Action
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Introduction and Overview

Relevance of the UN Reform Debate for Women

The demands for - as well as the efforts to achieve - reform of the United Nations are not new. Its very nature as an intergovernmental institution founded on principles including the sovereign equality of States and collective security and equitable geographic distribution makes the UN an easy target of criticism, and more so when it seeks to implement the idealistic agenda provided in the UN Charter. Overlapping and redundant programmes, inefficient management, extensive hierarchy, heavy bureaucracy and reports of corruption are issues that have been talked about for many years. The UN and its Member States are fully aware of these - more than enough reason to perennially aspire for reforms in this important body.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, with whom the current reform efforts are most identified, could well be referred to as the 'reform Secretary-General'. Since he assumed the position in 1997, his goals have been "to transform the conception, quality and delivery of the services we provide".¹ Annan's first reform initiatives focused on making internal management systems efficient, reducing the high cost of non-programme expenditures, discontinuing inessential reports, curtailing the frequency of other reports and reducing unnecessary documentation.² At the beginning of his second term in 2002, Annan announced further reforms. These second reform efforts included "enhanced coordination of the organizations in the UN system and greater focus on the UN's work."

Now, some 60 years after its founding, the UN is undergoing what is probably the most significant and comprehensive review and reorganization of its mandate, structures, budget, governance and management in a renewed effort to adapt its mission and programmes to the challenges of the 21st century. This time, interest in UN reform has expanded across a much broader range of stakeholders beyond the usual international elite posse composed of diplomats, officials and professional staff of international and intergovernmental organizations, representatives of UN-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics and UN media bureaus. With the support and outreach efforts of the international NGO community as well as some UN agencies, more women's groups and civil society organizations at the regional and country level are taking part in the UN Reform discussion. Some of the outcomes of this latest effort to reform the UN are already in place: the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council, the Ethics Committee and the Democracy Fund, among others.

One key component of the current UN Reform efforts is the establishment of more coherence among its programmes on sustainable development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. This is the task of the High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence, created by the Secretary-General in February 2006 and touted to be the highest-level panel ever formed in the UN - with three sitting prime ministers serving as co-chairs and including two former presidents and other high-level government and bilateral agency officials. It must be noted, however, that of the 15 members of the Panel, only three are women - a fact that many women's groups have criticized.

Within its mandate, the Panel will review the gender architecture in the UN system. It will present its recommendations in August 2006 in time for the 61st General Assembly Session in September 2006. The UN's effort to achieve coherence between its international standard-setting function and its country operations is also meant to support Member States in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

And while the UN has been a champion in many ways for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality, particularly in setting global norms and standards in these areas, the programmes addressing women's specific

1 Statement to the Special Meeting of the General Assembly on Reform, 16 July 1997. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/reform/track2/sgm6284r.htm> on 19 July 2006.

2 UN 21: Accelerating Managerial Reform for Results, UN publication sales no. E.97.1.10, April 1997 as cited in B. Rivlin, The UN Reform Conundrum, American Foreign Policy Interests, NCAFP, 2005.

needs and interests remain largely sidelined and under-funded in the wider UN context. For example, the women's components of various UN agencies, including the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) receive only US\$66.5 million out of the organization's US\$18 billion budget.³ Moreover, none of the heads of the four women's agencies in the UN - UNIFEM, DAW, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) - holds the position of Under-Secretary General. The Director of UNIFEM, the largest of the four in terms of staffing and operational functions, is not even equivalent to the rank of an Assistant Secretary-General.

This gross under-funding and sidelining of women's issues and concern in the UN persists despite the stark reality that

- over half of the world's poor are women;
- up to 600,000 women die yearly in childbirth;
- up to 3 million women die each year as a result of gender-based violence or neglect;
- women account for almost half of all HIV/AIDS cases worldwide and up to 70 percent of cases in sub-Saharan Africa;
- as many as 4 million girls and women a year are sold into prostitution;
- women are educationally short changed, with two thirds of the world's 876 million illiterates being female; and
- women are more insecure in the working world - generally unemployed longer and more frequently than men and employed for lower wages.⁴

Given the current debate on gender architecture within the UN system, women activists who consider the UN as an important site of struggle are concerned that the political gains at the global level with respect to social justice, women's rights and gender equality are eroding. At present a number of proposals on how to address this problem are being hotly debated. One of them is the creation of a new women's agency that, as some advocates from outside and within the UN system have suggested, would cost about US\$1 billion and would have to employ several thousand staff members.⁵ Women's groups across the world have made it clear that they would support the proposal that has the greatest potential to bring about coherence and positive systemic change. This requires one that allows for the establishment of a well-resourced independent entity with a stronger mandate and with normative, operational and oversight capacity and universal country presence.

As major stakeholders in the UN system, women believe that such an encompassing reform effort is bound to have a profound effect on whether and how the UN promotes and strengthens women's human rights in the immediate future. More women's groups and gender equality advocates at the regional and country levels therefore need to be informed about and engaged in the ongoing debate on UN Reform. While we have earlier mentioned that participants in the current UN Reform discussion include others beyond the usual international elite posse, this was only a recent development partly because of the field visits and consultations organized by the High-Level Coherence Panel and partly due to the outreach of international women's organizations. Moreover, women and gender advocates who actively engage with the UN want to know how this current process differs from prior UN reform initiatives.

³ "Give women's issues stronger UN profile", Editorial in the Toronto Star online version (www.thestar.com), 9 July 2006; available at: http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_PrintFriendly&c=Article&cid=1152309010421&call_pageid=968256290204

⁴ Olivia Ward, "World's women have an advocate. More than half of the globe's people need their own UN agency: Stephen Lewis", Toronto Star online version (www.thestar.com), 1 July 2006; available at: http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_PrintFriendly&c=Article&cid=1151705447619&call_pageid=968332188492

⁵ Olivia Ward, 2006.

Old vs. New UN Reform

While an ongoing, low-profile reform of various functions, management structures, institutions and mandates has accompanied the UN since its founding in 1945, the current set of reform actions is qualitatively new for comprehensiveness as well as visionary rigour. Its major blueprint can be found in the report by the UN Secretary-General “In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All”, which he presented in March 2005 in preparation for the 2005 World Summit.⁶ Annan’s vision for reform was endorsed at the actual World Summit in September 2005 where some 150 world leaders gathered to review progress in achieving the MDGs. The aim for the comprehensive reform package is to adapt the UN to the new challenges facing the world and prepare the organization for the number and complexity of issues that the world asks it to take on. The Secretary-General outlined some of these reform proposals in more detail in an April 2006 report called “Investing in the United Nations: for a Stronger Organization Worldwide”, designed to make the organization and the UN budget process more efficient.

Budget - Pitting Rich Countries Against Poor Countries

A strong impetus for the current UN Reform debate came from the failure of the Security Council to achieve consensus over Iraq’s breach of the Council resolutions detailing its disarmament obligations and the resulting US-UK led military action against Iraq.

The major country demanding UN reforms is the United States, but the majority of the other industrialized countries also support this - particularly the European Union and Japan that, with the US, account for roughly 80 per cent of current UN funding.

The US was also the major force late last year during the biannual UN budget discussions in tying the funding for UN operations to the delivery of major reform steps in the organization’s management and operations through the imposition of a six-month budget cap. This move, unprecedented in the 60-year history of the UN, was resented by many Member States from the South. They felt it was an assault on the principle of every Member State having an equal say in UN decision-making. South Africa’s UN Ambassador and G 77 Chair Dumisani Kumalo accused the industrialized countries of trying to “force others to accept their vision of the reform by resorting to coercive measures”.

Largely because of the votes of developing country States, further consideration of many of the Secretary-General’s proposals for management reforms were significantly delayed. While the budget crisis was resolved at the end of June through an abolition of the budget cap, it can be expected that industrialized donor countries will play their trump card of withholding or reducing funding again in the ongoing UN Reform process, particularly since it may take some time for many of the proposed reform steps to be fully implemented.

Main Components of the UN Reform Package - an Update

Since the world leaders agreed in September 2005 to embark on a comprehensive UN Reform package, some progress has been made regarding various reform efforts, mainly in the following areas:

- **Peacebuilding Commission:** The Peacebuilding Commission was established in December 2005 to assist countries emerging from armed conflicts in their reconstruction efforts.
- **Human Rights Council:** As proposed by the Secretary-General - and long demanded by the US - the UN replaced the Human Rights Commission with a smaller Human Rights Council that will meet throughout the year and review all members’ human rights records.
- **Ethics Office:** In December 2005, the UN created a new Ethics Office and established whistleblower and financial disclosure policies in an effort to increase accountability (again, as mainly demanded by the US.) The Office is already overseeing several new policies, including an expanded sexual harassment policy that aims to

⁶ The report itself and information on the report is available at: <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom>

tackle and prevent instances of sexual abuse and exploitation by UN peacekeepers. In terms of peacekeeping abuse, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations has adopted a new zero tolerance policy.

- **Democracy Fund:** At the suggestion of the US, the UN created a fund to help promote the spread of democracy around the world. This will be financed by individual country pledges and will start dispersing grants in summer 2006.
- **New UN Oversight Mechanisms:** The UN has upgraded mechanisms and created a number of new ones to improve UN oversight, including by increasing the resources for the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on audit and investigations and by recruiting the management firm Price Waterhouse Coppers to recommend broader reform.
- **Management Performance Review:** The Secretary-General has put forward a plan to create one international civil service for the entire UN system. This would include the abolition of positions considered redundant or unnecessary through a one-time staff buyout, as well as a more mobile workforce with more field personnel and a streamlined contracts process. The proposal has faced major opposition from UN staff and many developing country members.
- **Mandate Review:** A major mandate review is currently underway with the goal of identifying opportunities for programmatic shifts for setting new priorities for future UN activities as well as identifying current missions, mandates and activities that are deemed unnecessary and could be eliminated. Under existing budget provisions, up to 3,000 activities could be slated for elimination during the ongoing two-year 2006-2007 budget cycle. This could have major implications for the existing and future gender architecture at the UN.

Setbacks and Gaps

However, a resolution passed by the UN General Assembly on 7 July 2006 approved only limited management reforms and put off for future action improvements in governance, oversight, accountability and procurement. This is widely considered as a setback for the US as well as the EU, Canada, Japan and Australia that have been pushing for an accelerated pace of reforms.

An issue that has not received much attention in the official debate about UN Reform is the question of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) reform and economic competency of the UN. ECOSOC is supposed to be the principal policy dialogue and coordination organ on issues of economic and social development. This includes the interlinkages of development, peace and security and human rights and how they impact on women. However, in recent years the UN's official development vision seems to have bought into the model promoted by other organizations of global economic governance (namely the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization). This model dictates that trade, investment and aid are the best paths to development and that these can only happen after developing countries themselves have brought their own economic house in order ("good governance"). This leaves no room at the UN for a systematic critique of neo-liberalism or for an alternative development concept that is centred on human and women's rights. Moreover, in the current UN Reform efforts, the UN could very well stand to lose even more of its economic competency.

This Publication: Genesis, Structure and Contributions

As a contribution to efforts in broadening the UN Reform debate, particularly in creating spaces for more women's voices to be heard, the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation organized a panel discussion on the implications of the UN reform process for women and women's advocacy worldwide during the 2006 session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The panel discussion highlighted a glaring need to provide more information about the ongoing reform steps and - more importantly - provide a space for dialogue on the promise that this process holds for women. Women wanted to understand the impact of the different elements of the UN Reform process at the country level and also wanted practical ideas on how they could influence the process without having to go to UN headquarters in New York, Vienna or Geneva.

This publication seeks to address these needs. We are proud to have a formidable line up of contributors who examine the UN reform agenda and its relevance for women from many different angles and experiences. They take

a detailed look at various components of the UN reform package and make analysis and recommendations on how women could engage these emerging structures. In the next section, Peg Snyder provides a historical analysis of how women's spaces have been institutionalized in the United Nations. June Zeitlin and Doris Mpoumou discuss the roles and functions of the High Level Coherence Panel and review women's efforts to ensure that gender is made a cross-cutting concern in the Panel's work. Vina Nadjibullah explains the newly set up Peacebuilding Commission and the opportunities as well as challenges for women as the Commission sets out to implement its programme in Burundi. In their article on the new Human Rights Council, Cynthia Rothschild and Charlotte Bunch argue that new does not necessarily mean better and that the old Commission on Human Rights it replaces had several features that from a women's advocacy perspective are well worth preserving and continuing. Katherine McDonald expounds on the strengths and weaknesses of the special procedures in the Human Rights Council and presents recommendations on how the effectiveness of these procedures could be enhanced. This section of the publication also provides a short overview of the other UN reform components: the Secretariat and Management Reform and the Ethics Office.

While an analysis of the components of the UN Reform process and its meaning for women worldwide is imperative, it is equally, if not more important to examine the implications of the UN reform process in the day-to-day lives of people at the regional and country level. The next section of the publication features women from the different regions speaking about their thoughts, fears and hopes for what a reformed UN can be - or might fail to be - for women's rights and women's empowerment. L. Muthoni Wanyeki articulates the imperative for not just reform in the UN but transformation of the multilateral system, a view shared by her colleagues in the African women's movement. Gigi Francisco raises questions on how much influence women's engagement will have in the gender architecture in the UN, but at the same time she recognizes that an Asia-wide discussion on the UN Reform process becomes all the more significant in light of it being that region's turn to nominate the next UN Secretary-General. From Latin America, Alexandra Scampini stresses that the UN remains an important multilateral institution for the establishment of rules and the construction of consensus, but it has to continuously work jointly with women's groups and feminist movements from around the world to retain this element.

Speaking from the perspective of women from the Middle East, Rola Hamed underscores their desire to work with "a reformed UN that stops paying lip service to gender equality and puts into action its conflict-resolution and peace-building actions and mandates". Franziska Brantner warns that women in Europe cannot feel secure in their achievements since a turn toward conservative politics seeks to undermine gains in women's rights and makes it imperative for them to engage in the UN Reform debate. Katherine McDonald expresses concern about the newly elected Conservative government in Canada and stresses that Canadian women need to hold their government to account at both the international and national level for real change to happen. Finally, Rosalind Harris highlights the importance of engaging the UN at the national and regional levels. She explains how women's lobbying and advocacy work in UN headquarters and at the regional level affect national implementation and, conversely, how monitoring implementation at national level influences regional and global policy-making.

All these contributions point to an important truth: Women activists and gender equality advocates must engage the UN constructively in its current reform efforts to become even more accountable and stay a stalwart ally in the global promotion of women's rights. But the ongoing reform efforts are far from being enough. In the final section of the publication, several contributors speak to campaigns to strengthen efforts in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Why not have a woman become the new Secretary-General of the UN after Kofi Annan retires at the end of this year? Antonia Kirkland and Jacqueline Hunt of Equality Now details their campaign to make this happen. Women in South Asia likewise are not just waiting for the UN to help them make gender equality a reality but are pushing for it in an ambitious campaign that Bandana Rana describes. Lastly, Devaki Jain outlines her vision for a Women's Commission on UN Reform that would guarantee women's participation and representation and their consideration in the ongoing reform package.

The magnitude and complexity of the issues that touch on the broad range of socio-political and economic aspects of global governance and the elaborate international infrastructure involved make UN reform no easy feat. But since many of us believe that it is still the only international body we have that will put women's human rights and gender equality on the global map, we need to do our part in re-establishing its legitimacy, in holding Member States accountable to all the international agreements they have signed and in monitoring and demanding coherence between global policies and what the UN does on the ground. At a time when the UN is undergoing the most extensive and ambitious reform process by far, we need to stay engaged; we need to be in the middle of the discourse. This publication is an effort to broker and sustain women's discussion on UN Reform.

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, *International Women's Tribune Centre*
Liane Schalatek, *Heinrich Böll Foundation*



Beijing Platform For Action: What do the UN Reforms Mean for the Critical Areas of Concern?

The United Nations seems so far-removed from most of our daily lives that the reform process that is underway may strike us as irrelevant. In fact, however, the UN works on many issues of critical importance for women. For many of us, the gateway to the UN has been through the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). The 1995 Beijing Conference is the UN Conference that drew by far the greatest participation (between 30, 000 and 40,000 women in the actual conference and more in related national and regional meetings. This is how most of us were initiated into the intimidating multinational system of governance known as the UN and how it impacts on our everyday personal, political and professional lives. Various agencies of the UN have played a major role in trying to achieve the Critical Areas of Concern outlined in the BPFA. Many of these organizations will be affected by reforms, which are focused on streamlining and efficiency. This chart presents the twelve Critical Areas of Concern along with the corresponding UN agencies that work in those fields and the reform proposals that may affect them.

Critical Areas of Concern	UN Agencies that Work in this Area	Proposed Reforms
POVERTY	UN Development Programme (UNDP) UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) UN Volunteers (UNV) UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) <i>Also ECA, FAO, IFAD, INSTRAW, UNRISD, UNFPA, WFP, World Bank</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNIFEM, UNCDF, UNV and UNDP into a single organization. • The Netherlands has similarly proposed merging these organizations, but all under the UNDP umbrella. They argue that the UNDP is a key player in UN niche areas, such as the status of women. • The G77 has reaffirmed the importance of ECOSOC.
EDUCATION	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) <i>Also UNICEF, Commission on Science & Technology for Development, ITU, UNFPA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The G77 'Paris Consensus' called on UNESCO and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to cooperate to promote rural education. • Many actors are calling to dismantle INSTRAW or merge it with UNDP.
HEALTH	World Health Organization (WHO) UN Population Fund (UNFPA) UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) UNIFEM <i>Also INSTRAW, UNICEF, UNRISD</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 2 June 2006 a High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS met and adopted GA Resolution 60/262 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (5 years after the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS). It states that the signatories "remain deeply concerned...by the overall expansion and feminization of the pandemic and the fact that women now represent 50 per cent of people living with HIV worldwide...and in this regard recognize that gender inequalities and all forms of violence against women and girls increase

VIOLENCE

UN Human Rights Council
 UNIFEM
 UN Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW)
Also DPKO, IMO, INSTRAW, UNAIDS, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC (GPAT), UNV

ARMED CONFLICT

Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)
 UNIFEM
 INSTRAW
 Security Council
Also DAW, DPA, DPKO, INSTRAW, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNIDIR, UNITAR, UN Special Representative for the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

- their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.” The Declaration requests that the Secretary-General of the UN include in his/her annual report the progress achieved in realizing the commitments set forth in the Declaration.
- Stephen Lewis’ position on the creation of a new women’s mega-agency was prompted largely by the devastation caused to women by the HIV/AIDS epidemic (see Institutional Mechanisms)
- The UN Human Rights Council was created in March 2006 to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights (see Human Rights below). Within its first year of operation, the Council will review its mandates including the special procedures, one of which is the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. These procedures have been criticized by some Member States, with proposals to restrict their role, function and working methods.
- Established in December 2005, the creation of the PBC was the first reform to take effect (see Glossary).
- The reform of the Security Council (SC) will likely be the most contentious of all. There are many proposals on the table, most of which call for a larger membership and increased transparency.
- Germany, Brazil and India have proposed that there be 10 new members to the SC -6 new permanent without veto and 4 new non-permanent.
- The African Union has proposed adding an additional 11 members to the SC - 6 new permanent countries with veto power and 5 non-permanent.
- A proposal has been introduced by Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Jordan, Costa Rica and Singapore on reforming the SC’s working methods.

Critical Areas of Concern

UN Agencies that Work in this Area

Proposed Reforms

ECONOMY

UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
ECOSOC
World Trade Organization (WTO)
International Labor Organization (ILO)
Also ECA, ESCWA, ECE, ECLAC, IMF, ILO, ITU, INSTRAW, UNCTAD, UNFPA, UNDP, UNIDO, WIPO, World Bank Group, WTO

- The European Union would like to see UNCTAD merged into the WTO or into an enlarged Development Agency together with UNDP.
- The G77 has reaffirmed the importance of UNCTAD and does not want the reform process to dilute its mandate.
- The G77 has also reaffirmed the importance of ECOSOC.
- Mongolia supports the creation of an International Finance Facility.
- Turkey argues that “ECOSOC definitely needs to be revitalized...A more focused ECOSOC should provide strategic guidance, promote coherence and coordination and evaluate performances without interfering in the work of other financial and trade organizations” (Turkey - General Statements on UN Reform, 6 April 2005).

POWER & DECISION MAKING

UNIFEM
Also DAW, INSTRAW

The 2005 World Summit pledged to promote the “increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process.”

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

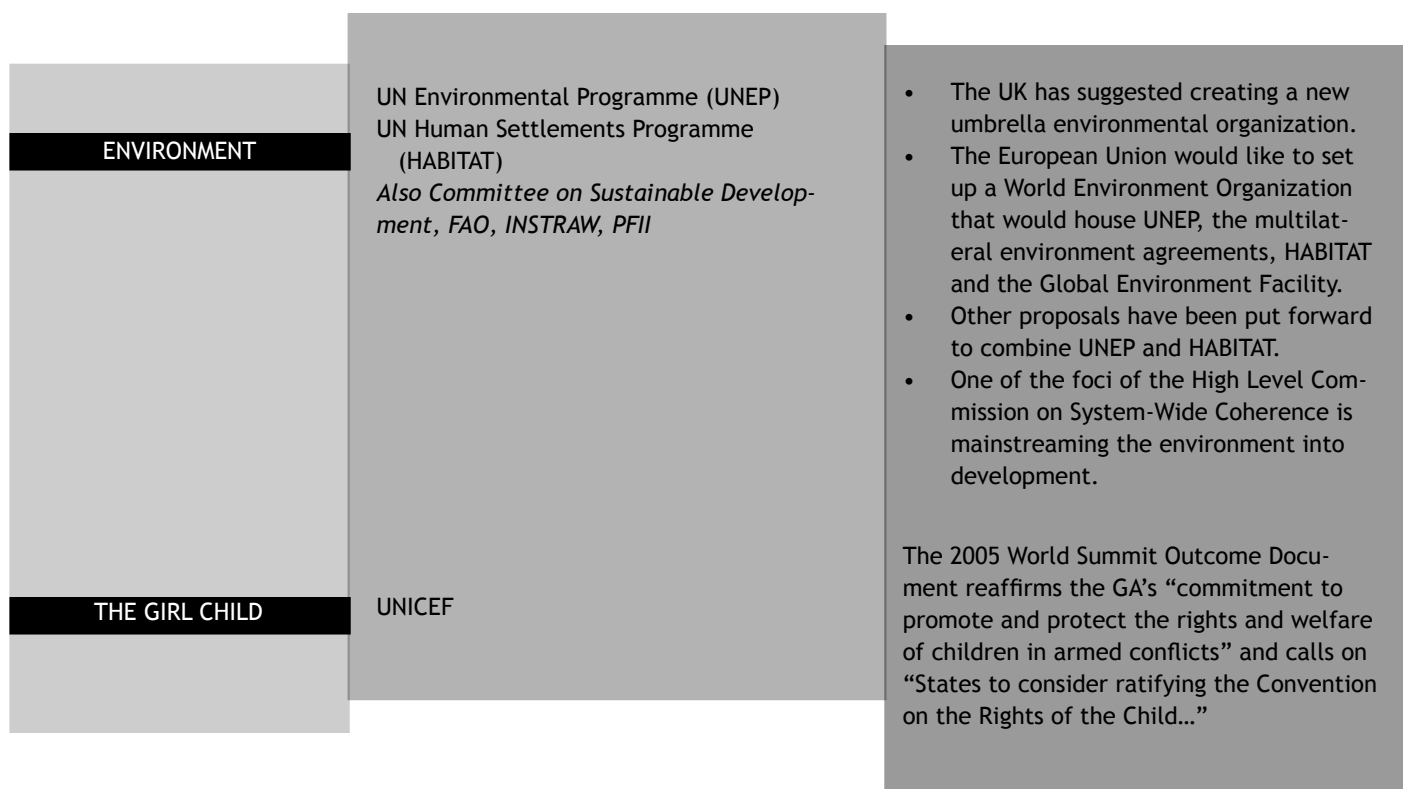
UNDP
UNIFEM
Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues & the Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
Also UN Statistics Division, DAW, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, FAO, Human Rights Council, ILO, World Bank Group, UNFPA

- The G77 argues that the mandate of UNIFEM “should be strengthened so that it can be even more active in its role of catalyzing and mainstreaming gender concerns in the UN system”.
- Stephen Lewis, the former UN Representative for AIDS in Africa, has proposed the creation of a ‘mega’ woman’s agency.
- Switzerland has proposed the creation of a Parliamentary Assembly at the UN.
- Proposals are being considered to merge UNIFEM, INSTRAW, DAW and OSAGI into one or two agencies, one of which would be operational while the other would focus on policymaking.
- See also proposed reforms to UNDP and UNIFEM under Poverty.

MEDIA

UNESCO
Also INSTRAW, ITU

The 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document states, “We recognize that science and technology, including information and communication technology, are vital for the achievement of the [Millennium] development goals...”



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Researched and compiled by: Katherine Martinelli



The United Nations System

Principal Organs

Trusteeship Council

Security Council

General Assembly

Economic and Social Council

International Court of Justice

Secretariat

Subsidiary Bodies

Military Staff Committee
Standing Committee and ad hoc bodies
International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (Iraq)
United Nations Compensation Commission
Peacekeeping Operations and Missions

Subsidiary Bodies

Main committees
Other sessional committees
Standing committees and ad hoc bodies
Other subsidiary organs

Programmes and Funds

UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
ITC International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO)
UNDCP¹ United Nations Drug Control Programme
UNEP United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNWV United Nations Volunteer
UNCDF United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund

Research and Training Institutes

UNICRI United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNITAR United Nations Institute for Training and Research

UNRISD United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNIDIR² United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Other UN Entities

OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services
UNU United Nations University
UNSSC United Nations System Staff College

UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

NOTES: Solid lines from a Principal Organ indicate a direct reporting relationship, dashes indicate a nonsubsidiary relationship. ¹ The UN Drug Control Programme is part of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. ² UNRWA and UNIDIR report on y to the GA. ³ The World Trade Organization and World Tourism Organization use the same acronym. ⁴ IAEA reports to the Security Council and the General Assembly (GA). ⁵ The CTBTO Prep Com and OPCW report to the GA. ⁶ Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations working with the UN and each other through the coordinating machinery of the ECOSOC at the intergovernmental level, and through the Chief Executives Board for coordination (CEB) at the inter-secretariat level.

Functional Commissions

Commissions on:
Human Rights
Narcotic Drugs
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Science and Technology for Development
Sustainable Development
Status of Women
Population and Development
Commission for Social Development
Statistical Commission

Regional Commissions

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Other Bodies

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII)
United Nations Forum on Forests
Sessional and standing committees
Expert, ad hoc and related bodies

Related Organizations

WTO³ World Trade Organization
IAEA⁴ International Atomic Energy Agency
CTBTO PREP COM PrepCom for the Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty Organization
OPCW⁵ Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Specialized Agencies

ILO International Labour Organization
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO World Health Organization

WORLD BANK GROUP

IBRD International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA International Development
MIGA Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
ICSID International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

IMF International Monetary Fund
ICAO International Civil Aviation Organization

IMO International Maritime Organization

ITU International Telecommunication Union

UPU Universal Postal Union

WMO World Meteorological Organization

WIPO World Intellectual Property Organization

IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development

UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization

WTO³ World Tourism Organization

Departments and Offices

OSG Office of the Secretary-General
OIOS Office of Internal Oversight Services
OLA Office of Legal Affairs
DPA Department of Political Affairs
DDA Department for Disarmament Affairs
DPKO Department of Peacekeeping Operations
OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DGACM Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
DPI Department of Public Information
DM Department of Management
OHRLS Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
UNSECOORD Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator
UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOG UN Office at Geneva
UNOV UN Office at Vienna
UNON UN Office at Nairobi

Acronyms

BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action	OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women
CLADEM	Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights	PFII	Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
CSDHA	Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, now called Division for Social Policy and Development	SAPs	Structural adjustment policies
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women	Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	SG	Secretary-General
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women	TNC	Transnational corporations
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era	UFDW	Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
DPA	Department of Political Affairs	UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
ECA	The Economic Commission for Africa	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe	UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council	UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Programme	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
GA	General Assembly	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs	UNIDIR	United Nations Research Institute for Disarmament Research
G77	Group of 77	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme	UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
ICC	International Criminal Court	UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
ICJ	International Court of Justice	UNOCD	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNV	United Nations Volunteers
IMF	International Monetary Fund	USG	Under Secretary-General
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women	WFP	World Food Programme
ITU	International Telecommunications Union	WHO	World Health Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals	WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
NAM	Non-aligned Movement	WTO	World Trade Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization		
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development		

From Suffrage to World Summits: A Historical Timeline of Women and the UN

1893 New Zealand is the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote.

1906 Finland is the first country in Europe to grant women the right to vote as well as the right to run for office. Nineteen women elected to Parliament in 1907.

1918 Canada is the first country in North America to grant women the right to vote. (Quebec 1940)

1928 Ecuador is the first country in Latin America to grant women the right to vote.

1931 Sri Lanka is the first country in Asia to grant to grant women the right to vote.

1945 Senegal is the first country in Africa to grant women the right to vote.

The UN Charter is signed on 26 June in San Francisco at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, and comes into force on 24 October 1945. The Statute of the International Court of Justice is an integral part of the Charter. (<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>)

50 members out of 51 take part in the San Francisco Conference. (Poland joined later.)

Women have the right to vote in 25 out of the 51 states. Note that in Australia Aboriginal women did not get the vote until 1962, and in South Africa Black women in 1994.

1946 CSW - Commission on the Status of Women is established by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). Its secretariat, then known as the Section on the Status of Women, is placed within the Human Rights Division. The Section is upgraded in 1972 and again in 1988 when it becomes known as the Division for the Advancement of Women.

1947 ESCAPE - The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Far East with headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand is established. The name is changed to The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) in 1974. No standing committee on gender. (<http://www.unescap.org/about/index.asp>)

UNECE - The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland is founded. ECE Gender Focal Point serves under the Office of the Executive Secretary and is responsible for all gender activities; Ewa Ruminska-Zimny. No standing committee on gender. (<http://www.unece.org/programs/programs.htm>).

- 1948 CONGO - Non-governmental organizations, which had been granted status with UN ECOSOC in accordance with article 71 of the UN charter, stating that “the Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence” establish the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative status (<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>).
- ECLA - The Economic Commission for Latin America with headquarters in Santiago, Chile is established by ECOSOC and is redesigned as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, in 1984. Gender Focal Point; Ms. Nieve Rico. Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo, unit on gender, operates as the Technical Secretariat of the government of the region through the Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean. (<http://www.eclac.cl/default.asp?idioma=IN>).
- 1953 Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (India) is the first woman to be elected President of the General Assembly. (Jain, 2005)
- 1958 UNECA - The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa is established. See 1975 for ACGD; gender division. (<http://www.uneca.org/overview.htm>)
- 1967 The Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women is adopted by the General Assembly.
- 1972 The Secretariat for the CSW is upgraded to become the Branch for the Promotion of Equality for Men and Women, headed by Helvi Sipilä (Finland), the first woman to serve as a UN Assistant Secretary-General. The Branch is charged with responsibility for preparing for the UN World Conference on Women for International Women’s Year (see 1975).
- The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment takes place in Stockholm, Sweden. (<http://www.unep.org/>)
- 1973 ECWA - the Economic Commission for Western Asia is set up as a successor to the United Nations Economic and Social Office at Beirut (UNESOB). In 1985 the commission is renamed ESCWA - the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. ECW (The ESCWA Centre for Women), headed by Ms. Suheir Azzouni, addresses gender dimensions of poverty. (<http://www.escwa.org.lb/>)
- 1974 World Population Conference takes place in Bucharest, Romania.
- 1975 1975 designated as International Women’s Year.
- The First World Conference on Women is held in Mexico City, resulting in a World Plan of Action and Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace. UN Assistant Secretary-General Helvi Sipilä serves as secretary-general of the conference. More than 1,000 delegates from 133 member states attend, and the International Women’s Tribune, the parallel NGO forum, draws 6,000 participants. (NCRW, 2006)
- The General Assembly proclaims the first United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985), which officially paves the way for various actions to improve women’s status. (The Advancement of

Women: Notes for Speakers, 1995)

ACGD - The African Centre for Gender and Development, a division within the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) is established. ACGD is the sole regional Women in Development (WID) structure within the United Nations system. It services national, regional and sub-regional bodies involved in development issues related to gender and the advancement of women and is headed by Ms. Josephine Ouedraogo.

1976 INSTRAW - the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, based in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and UNIFEM - The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women, based in New York, are established following a call from women's organizations attending the 1975 UN First World Conference on Women in Mexico City. (The Advancement of Women: Notes for Speakers, 1995)

First United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT) is held in Vancouver, British Columbia.

1977 Kofi Annan assumes office as Secretary General of the United Nations with stated goals to bring "a culture of reform to the United Nations" and "to transform the conception, quality, and delivery of services we provide."

1979 CEDAW - the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women is adopted by the UN General Assembly to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women. It defines discrimination against women and highlights actions on legal, political, civil, and cultural levels that need to be taken.

1980 The Second World Conference on Women, World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace is held in Copenhagen, Denmark to review progress made in the first half of the Decade on Women. The Conference adopts a Programme of Action and a special ceremony takes place July 17th where 64 states sign CEDAW. 1,326 delegates from 145 states attend and an additional 8,000 women participate in the NGO Forum. (NCRW, 2006) <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>>)

1981 CEDAW enters into force on 3 September, 30 days after the twentieth member state has ratified it, - faster than any previous human rights convention - thus bringing to a climax United Nations efforts to comprehensively codify international legal standards for women. As of 2 March 2006, 183 countries - over ninety percent of the members of the United Nations - are party to the Convention.

1984 International Conference on Population (second) takes place in Mexico City.

1985 The Third World Conference on Women, World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development, and Peace, is held in Nairobi, Kenya. The Conference adopts the Forward-Looking strategies for the Advancement of Women, calling for an increased participation of women as equal partners with men in all political, social and economic fields, including their full access to education and training. 1,400 delegates from 157 countries attend. The parallel NGO Forum draws 14,000 women. (NCRW, 2006)

1988 DAW - the Division for the Advancement of Women is the new name for the Branch for the Promotion of Equality for Men and Women, reflecting the last upgrade of the CSW.

1992 Earth Summit
The UN Conference on Environment and Development is held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, gathering of over 30,000

participants, including NGOs and representatives of 178 nations. This is the first of the six world conferences convened by the UN in the 1990s to develop agenda for the new millennium.

1993 At the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria women lobby to get violence against women and other women's human rights issues integrated into overall UN human-rights work. The Commission on Human Rights appoints a special rapporteur on violence against women. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is adopted by the General Assembly. (NCRW, 2006)

1994 International Conference on Population and Development takes place in Cairo, Egypt. Reproductive rights are clarified and endorsed internationally in the Cairo Consensus that emerges from conference. (<http://www.unfpa.org/rights/rights.htm>)

1995 The Fourth UN World Conference on Women, Action for Equality, Development and Peace is held in Beijing, China. The largest of all international conferences ever it gathers delegations from 189 countries while 30,000 women participate in the parallel NGO Forum. The Beijing Platform for Action, identifying twelve critical areas of concern for women, is adopted. (NCRW, 2006)

The World Summit for Social Development is held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Governments reach a new consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development. (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd/>)

1996 Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II) takes place in Istanbul, Turkey.

1997 OSAGI - the office of Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women is created. Angela King is appointed Special Adviser. As of August 2004 the post is held by Rachel M. Mayanja of Uganda.

1998 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the treaty which establishes the court is opened for signature on July 17, 1998 and enters into force on July 1, 2002.

The statute includes sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity as "crimes against humanity" (article 7) and as "war crimes" (article 8) (<http://www.un.org/law/icc/statute/romefra.htm>)

2000 The 23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly, Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century (Beijing+5) reviews the progress of Beijing Platform for Action. The UN General Assembly adopts a Political Declaration in which member states of the Assembly agree to further assess implementation of the Platform, with a view to full review in 2005.

The UN General Assembly adopts the Millennium Declaration establishing Eight Millennium Development Goals, one of which is to "promote gender equality and empower women," to work toward the implementation of the Declaration.

Resolution 1325 is adopted by the UN Security Council, urging member states to involve women in all aspects of securing sustainable peace, from conflict-prevention to post-conflict democracy-

building efforts.

Social Summit + 5; The United Nations General Assembly convene a special session in Geneva in June-July to assess the achievements made at the Social Summit in Copenhagen and to discuss new initiatives.

2005 The 2005 World Summit is held to discuss the progress made since 2001 and the next steps for attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Women see the summit as a step forward because of the insertion of 1325. As part of the UN- reform and based on a recommendation coming out of the 2005 World Summit, the General Assembly in December passes a resolution establishing a new Peacebuilding Commission to help countries emerging from conflict from falling back into war.

2006 Also reflecting forward momentum in the reform process The Human Rights Council replaces the Commission for Human Rights. The HRC retains special procedures, including special rapporteurs on violence against women. A High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence is established by the Secretary-General to explore how the United Nations system could work more coherently and effectively across the world in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. The panel is appointed in February and is expected to present its report in August.

Gender is made a cross-cutting issue in the work of the panel; Ruth Jacoby, Director General for Development Cooperation, Sweden and Robert Greenhill, Deputy Minister for Development, Canada are in charge of gender equality issues.

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A Closer Look: A Magnified Timeline of the Current UN Reform Process

2004

December

The UN releases the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (created by Kofi Annan in September 2003), called “A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility”

2005

March

Secretary-General Kofi Annan releases his report *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights For All*.

September

2005 World Summit is held at United Nations headquarters in NY to review the progress made since the Millennium Declaration of 2000.

December

The Peacebuilding Commission is established by the General Assembly.

2006

February

Secretary General Kofi Annan announces the creation of a High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, Environment.

Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa proposes the creation of a new international multilateral agency for women headed by an Under Secretary-General.

March

The issue of UN-reform generates interest at the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

The Human Rights Council is established by the General Assembly.

May

An independent consultant is assigned to prepare a paper on the gender architecture of the UN to inform the work of the coherence panel.

Gender is considered cross-cutting. Ruth Jacoby, Director General for Development Cooperation, Sweden and Robert Greenhill, Deputy Minister for Development, Canada are named gender focal points of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence.

NY based women's NGOs use various media channels to encourage women's groups to participate in the reform process.

June

Accelerated talks take place among women's groups world-wide regarding UN-reform, which result in the formulation of a paper calling for a 10-point reform process.

Inaugural session of the Human Rights Council

First Organizational Committee meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission

July

High -Level Panel consultation with civil society in Geneva, attended by approximately 60 NGOs.

August

High-level coherence panel will conclude its work with a report to be presented to the General Assembly in September.

Women's Concerns and Spaces in the United Nations: What Does History Tell Us?

Margaret Snyder, Founding Director, UNIFEM

As the UN Reform process proceeds, poverty is growing rather than lessening in much of the developing world, and as AIDS spreads, it is becoming a 'women's disease'. These and many other pressing global issues are women's concerns. In this context, women need more, not less, space in the UN as well as greater influence. What 'architecture' must be designed or reinforced within the complex system that is the UN if we are to reach our agreed goal of both institutional and individual space to effectively promote women's opportunities worldwide for greater freedom and well-being, side by side with men?

Some Lessons from History

Today we stand on the shoulders of women who have asked - and answered - that question time and again over the UN's six decades. First, they selected a space in the UN where they thought their presence would be most effective and found ways to move into that space; second, they stood back to assess the instrument they had created and measure its impact; and, third, they strengthened it. The following are just three examples:

- In the early days of the UN, women thought that the Commission on Human Rights would give them the space and support that they needed, but they got only a sub-commission, so they called for a full-fledged Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Its secretariat office was renamed and upgraded in 1972 and again in 1988 to meet new needs; it is now called the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).
- The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which was designed by CSW to improve women's lives in every country of the world, was adopted by the General Assembly in 1967. Nine years later women added clout to that issue through successful advocacy for a legally binding convention (CEDAW). In 1996 an Optional Protocol strengthened this again to allow individual victims of injustices to submit reports to its monitoring Committee.
- The General Assembly created the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women, now called UNIFEM, in 1976 to help countries implement their national plans and programmes for the advancement of women. Eight years later it recognized an urgent need to expand the Fund's "crucial role" as a specialized resource for development. Having found that the initial arrangements for the fund in the UN Secretariat - within the Branch (now Division) for Women - proved cumbersome at best (because the Secretariat was not set up for financial and technical co-operation), it gave greater autonomy to the new fund, UNIFEM, as a "separate and identifiable entity in autonomous association with UNDP." UNIFEM is not now and never was a department of UNDP. The intention was that, once well financed, UNIFEM would be given complete autonomy - a step not yet taken.

Those examples are part of a larger picture of how women have sought to make the UN more democratic and effective as it becomes more responsive to half of the world's people. Women also pressured the UN system to "integrate women in development," an idea that received new life as 'mainstreaming'. They have achieved a great deal over the decades, with only minimal resources.

Discussions on the New Gender Architecture

Assessments of progress toward the Millennium Development Goals reveal that intensified support for women's

empowerment is needed if poverty and disease are to be overcome and peace brought within reach. The time has come to shake up the status quo. To that end, most of us agree that the 'gender architecture' in the UN should include both a strong women's department in the UN Secretariat itself, where General Assembly and Security Council matters are considered, and a strong women's fund that is an innovator and catalyst in the other part of the UN, its development co-operation system. Most of us also agree that two approaches are needed: a women-specific approach that is and has been the font of ideas and a source of our collective strength, and an integrated or mainstream approach that anticipates our final goal.

After these agreements comes the hard part - specific proposals. Today as the UN Reform process heats up, there are proposals to merge DAW and UNIFEM with an Under-Secretary-General over them, which would be a step back to the original unworkable situation noted above; or to consolidate UNIFEM and UNFPA, although UNFPA's major concerns are reproductive health and safe motherhood; or to absorb UNIFEM in UNDP; or to fold UNIFEM into something new. UNIFEM appears as a pawn in each of these scenarios, whose effects are to eliminate it rather than making it, at last, what women meant it to be when they created it - a full fledged fund for women, like UNICEF is for children, and UNFPA is for population.

Questions arise: Will a 'new fund' actually bring more money for women, or simply the appearance of more money because of consolidation? Is big necessarily better, or can the UN be viewed as governments are, i.e. with many ministries dealing with specialized services to the same citizens? The UN offers many specialized supports to women through UNICEF, UNFPA, UNIFEM, FAO, ILO, etc. but only UNIFEM has a broad operational mandate as regards women: "To play an innovative and catalytic role in relation to the UN overall system of development co-operation" (A/RES/39/125).

An unparalleled institutional model for such UN agency, bilateral and NGO coordination on women's concerns is found in another history - that of the African Centre for Women of the UN's Economic Commission for Africa. It has been called "the only genuinely inter-agency partnership programme in the UN system." To strengthen the Centre's work, UNFPA financed FAO staff and operational funds; UNICEF sponsored technology-related staff and operational funds; Swedish Sida financed ILO staff and funds for small business promotion; USAID financed staff and operations for national machinery seminars; etc. The Centre thus capitalized on the expertise of each of the involved organizations. Inter-agency coordination was built in, and the Centre gained immeasurable strength of resources for the women of the region. Another but non-operational inter-agency organization exists today as UNAIDS.

Why UNIFEM?

Drawing on women's UN history we ask: Can UNIFEM be the "independent women-specific agency with adequate structure, resources and operational capacity" that NGOs propose? It is already the UN's only women-specific fund, and it has a broad mandate, but it would need to be moved the final step from its current autonomous association with UNDP to its own full autonomy. Its structure and operational capacity can be strengthened in part through a new inter-agency partnership based on the African Centre model, and in part from an overall increase in financial support.

Underlying that option is UNIFEM's proud 30-year history of service to women. As a catalyst in the UN system, it initiated community-owned revolving loan funds for women's groups before micro-finance was a buzz-word and assisted NGOs directly, both transformations initially resisted by traditionalist officials but finally adopted. As an innovator, UNIFEM popularized technologies, gave the very first large grant to the Green Belt Movement tree planters whose leader recently received the Nobel Peace Prize, and strengthened women's peace-making activities. It is a major actor in the global campaign to eliminate violence against women and it finances engendering national and local budgets so that women and the poor are justly considered. In the age of globalization, it is concerned with fair trade and the export of products from women's agricultural work and enterprises. It can move quickly to support women-identified needs and bring them to the world's attention - and the attention of other funds in the UN system. An enlarged capacity for all this work is urgently needed. UNIFEM must be sufficiently resourced to have high level leadership, senior level country presence, bargaining power and clout.

The Double-benefit Model

In conclusion, the most promising gender architecture, from the perspective of women's history with the UN system, is a double-benefit model: to add value and strength to both the UN itself through DAW and to its development co-operation system through UNIFEM, as an operational fund like UNICEF and UNFPA. Both need high level leadership, both must have resources. Let us grow these two major institutions.

Excerpt from the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (Resolution 60/1)

The 2005 World Summit held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in September 2005 to review the progress made since the Millennium Declaration of 2000, resulted in a number of decisions to take action on a range of global challenges.

Relevant Paragraphs on gender equality and empowerment of women:

Paragraph 58:

We remain convinced that progress for women is progress for all. [...]

and we resolve to promote gender equality and eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by:

- Eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by the earliest possible date and at all educational levels by 2015;
- Guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own and inherit property and ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women;
- Ensuring equal access to reproductive rights
- Promoting women's equal access to labor markets, sustainable employment and adequate labor protection;
- Ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology;
- Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and the girl child, during and after armed conflicts in accordance with the obligations of States under international humanitarian law and international human rights law;
- Promoting increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process.

Paragraph 59

We recognize the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality. To that end, we undertake to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, and further undertake to strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender.

Relevant Paragraph on prevention and resolution of conflicts:

Paragraph 116

We stress the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. We reaffirm our commitment to the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security. We also underline the importance of integrating a gender perspective and of women having the opportunity for equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security, as well as the need to increase their role in decision-making at all levels. We strongly condemn all violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and the use of sexual exploitation, violence and abuse, and we commit ourselves to elaborating and implementing strategies to report on, prevent and punish gender-based violence.

Excerpts from Stephen Lewis' Remarks to the High-Level Panel on UN Reform

This excerpt derives from a speech made by Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa to the High-Level Panel on UN Reform consultation with civil society on 2 July 2006 in Geneva. In a preceding speech made on 26 February 2006 on UN Reform and Human Rights at Harvard Law School, Lewis stressed the pressing need to create a new UN agency for women. This initial speech triggered the discussion on UN Reform and its impact on women. The message echoed in both speeches is powerful and clear: current women's agencies at the UN do not have the operational capacity, experience or financial resources to effectively meet the needs of women across the globe. In his Geneva speech, Lewis emphatically rejected other alternatives that have been suggested, such as to merge women's agencies at the UN or transform UNIFEM into a stronger, more autonomous agency. He called the suggestion to strengthen UNIFEM within UNDP "absurd" and described UNDP's record on gender as "awful." The following text is lifted from the Geneva speech:

"There is a crying need for an international agency for women. Every stitch of evidence we have, right across the entire spectrum of gender inequality suggests the urgent need for a multilateral agency. The great dreams of the international conferences in Vienna, Cairo and Beijing have never come to pass. It matters not the issue: whether it's levels of sexual violence, or HIV/AIDS, or maternal mortality, or armed conflict, or economic empowerment, or parliamentary representation, women are in terrible trouble. And things are getting no better.

"This Panel can create such an agency and show fundamental courage by doing so, or it can tinker at the edges of 'gender architecture' and consign the world of women, yet again, to perpetual second-rate status.

"... what we need is a full-fledged agency with real operational capacity on the ground to build partnerships with governments, to engage in public policy, to design and finance programmatic interventions for women, to give NGOs and community-based women's groups the support their voices and ideas have never had, to extract money from bilateral donors, to whip the UN family into shape, to bring substance and know-how to the business of gender mainstreaming, to involve women in every facet of life from development to trade to culture to peace and security, to lobby vociferously and indefatigably for every aspect of gender equality, to have sufficient staff and resources to make everyone sit up and take notice. That's exactly what UNICEF does for children. Why can't we have the same for more than half of humankind?

"...Everyone argues that there's no money to be had and no patience for large additional sums. I've said publicly that the new agency should be launched at the level of UNICEF's funding, currently \$2 billion a year. If that paralyzes governments, then let's start at \$1 billion a year, build systematically, and with increases of ten per cent a year, for five years, we will have exceeded the \$2 billion mark...." "...When it comes to women, western governments cry poverty whenever large sums are discussed. It's just unconscionable. As recently as one week ago, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom asserted, in an op-ed for 'The Independent', co-authored by his Chancellor of the Exchequer (a member of this panel!) and his Minister of Development Cooperation, that world foreign aid jumped by 25% in 2005 over 2004, reaching over \$100 billion annually, well on the way to \$130 billion as promised for 2010.

"So I ask: is more than half the world's population not entitled to one per cent of the total? What's happened to our sense of international values? How dare the leaders of the G8 crow about progress on aid and debt (albeit not trade) while continuing to watch the economic, social, physical and psychological decimation of so many of the world's women? How in heaven's name can they be sanguine about the catastrophic loss of so much human potential?

“...If this Panel merely concocts a solution that is no solution at all --- sounds good on paper, but like so many other UN documents collapses in practice --- then the rationale for contemporary multilateralism really has to be questioned. We’re not talking here of some minor intervention; we’re talking of several billion people.

“For me, everything I’ve ever known of gender inequality has been sharpened by witnessing the AIDS pandemic. And I can say, without fear of contradiction, that where the women of Africa are concerned, the UN has been a colossal failure. Confirmation of that can be seen in the work of the UN Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS at country level. I’ve watched them now for five years; try as they might, they can never get their act fully together to reduce the impact of the virus on women. For the young women in particular, there is a palpable sense of betrayal.

“I want to change that view. I want the world to understand that if we had an international organization for women, with force and dollars and staff, we could save, liberate and enhance hundreds of millions of lives. I make that argument because this women’s agency can be built on the foundation constructed over the years by the kaleidoscope of women’s groups that have operated outside the UN, partly because there’s been so little to affiliate with on the inside.

“Time and time again over the last two years Kofi Annan has called for a ‘deep social revolution ... to transform relationships between men and women at all levels of society.’ He means, by that, women’s empowerment and gender equality. Gender equality is not achieved in hesitant, tentative, disingenuous increments. It’s achieved by bold and dramatic reform of the architecture of the United Nations.”

Excerpts from Aruna Rao's paper on *Gender Equality Architecture and UN Reforms**

In a paper submitted to the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence, Aruna Rao articulated the need "to take gender equality from the realm of rhetoric to the practice of reality" in the ongoing UN Reform. She recounted that "Evaluation after evaluation shows that countries, bi-lateral donors and the multilateral system consistently fail to prioritize, and significantly under-fund, women's rights and equality work". While she acknowledged the advances made by gender activists since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA), she also pointed to the "staggering failures" that have accompanied these gains. The following extracts from Rao's paper offer an overview of her message:

"The UN system is replete with examples of structures and personnel mandated to do gender equality work that are under-resourced and under-prioritized. They constantly must fight an uphill battle as a result of their low place in organizational hierarchies, small size, limited mandate, and the lack of autonomy and connection to key constituencies. Currently, there are several under-resourced agencies focused exclusively on women's issues (United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)). For example, UNIFEM, the only unit with a (limited) field presence, is a fund, not an independent operational agency, that reports to the UNDP administrator, which means that it doesn't have a seat at high-level decision making tables. Gender units - from OSAGI to those in the specialized agencies - have limited ability to provide critical feedback or speak out on gender equality performance; too often these special advisor or gender focal points in the UN are used to defend the status quo rather than change it. Their limited budgets, their limited access to decision-making, and their limited terms of reference do not position them as critical players in their own entities."

"...Funding for gender equality work within both mainstream agencies and women's specific mechanisms such as UNIFEM is grossly inadequate for the task at hand. In 2002, UNIFEM's resources totalled \$36 million. In comparison, UNFPA's budget for the same year was \$373 million; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' budget was \$64 million and UNAIDS' budget was \$92 million. UNICEF's budget in the same year totalled \$1,454 million. The message is clear: investment in women is of the lowest order."

"...We believe that the current system is no longer acceptable. Therefore, we have focused on the approaches that have the greatest potential to bring about coherence and positive systemic change. Our preferred approach would be the creation of a well-resourced independent entity with normative, operational and oversight capacity, a universal country presence and led by an Under-Secretary General. An alternative approach would be the creation of a specialized coordinating body with similar functions, drawing on the UNAIDS model."

"...Whatever approach is taken, the principal functions and characteristics that we believe are essential to an effective gender equality machinery are described below. Such an entity must be a strong, women-specific entity mandated to work across the whole UN system - one that has the capacity to lead, monitor and to act as a driving force, or catalyst, for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights, at both the global and country level.

"This system-wide women-specific entity must perform three critical functions. It must have policy-setting responsibilities on substantive issues of gender equality and women's rights. It must have the capacity to monitor,

* This paper was prepared by Aruna Rao, Founder-Director, Gender at Work, and edited by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). It was submitted to the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence and highlights from it were presented at the Coherence Panel's consultation with civil society in Geneva on 2 July 2006.

with the authority to ensure accountability, on gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system. Finally, it must have a field presence to conduct and shape UN operational activities to ensure that gender equality and women's rights programming are carried out effectively. This universal country presence is essential to bridge the biggest gap between commitments to women's human rights norms and the realities of implementation.

"In order to function effectively, this entity must be backed up with several critical components or characteristics. It must have autonomy; it must be adequately and sufficiently resourced (financially and in terms of personnel with high levels of substantive expertise); and it must have the authority and clout necessary for the entity to function as a substantive and political leader for gender equality at the global and national level."

"...Without a lead entity, gender equality continues to be everybody's and nobody's responsibility. Gender mainstreaming will work best only when it co-exists alongside a strong women's agency that can demonstrate leadership and advocate at the highest levels and hold the system accountable."

"...Despite the arguments of some critics, having a strong women-specific entity will not 'ghettoize' women's issues. Just as other issues have clear leadership (e.g., ILO for labour, UNICEF for children, and UNHCR for refugees), gender equality issues also need a driving force. This is not a contradiction. The ILO does not ghettoize issues of labour. Just because UNICEF focuses on children doesn't mean that World Food Programme should not distribute food to children or that ILO cannot deal with child labour. At the same time, making it the mandate of every agency should not preclude resourcing a specific entity with a mandate to lead, catalyse and monitor the work. Every agenda needs a political driver to lead it and the gender equality agenda is no exception."



Different Components of the UN Reform Process

The Coherence Panel in the UN Reform Process: What Have Women's Rights and Gender Equality Got to Do With It?

Doris Mpoumou and June Zeitlin, Women's Environment and Development Organization

For the past three decades, women have seen the UN as a galvanizing force for our efforts to define a comprehensive global agenda for peace and security, human rights, gender equality, women's empowerment, poverty eradication and sustainable development. Some important advances have been made for women, although the failure overall to implement the commitments to women's rights (in CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and other government agreements) is well documented. The UN Reform process is important to women because we need the organizational structures, high-level leadership and resources to enable governments and the UN system to significantly increase their efforts to fulfil their promises on women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Background to the Panel

In February 2006 the Secretary-General established a High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence aimed at laying the groundwork for a "fundamental restructuring of the UN's operational work" in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

Unlike other high-level panels, which have mainly consisted of ex-presidents or former government officials, an important aspect of the Coherence Panel is that it is led by active Heads of Governments. The panel is co-chaired by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Mozambique's Prime Minister Luisa Dias Diogo and Norway's Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. Canada's Deputy Minister for Development Robert Greenhill and Sweden's Director-General for Development Cooperation Ruth Jacoby are the focal points for gender equality issues.

It is hoped that these high-level government officials will own the process and thus be more likely to move it forward and convince other Member States to go along with the outcomes.

Other panel members are UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, former Chilean President Ricardo Lagos Escobar, former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, European Commissioner for Development Louis Michel, France's Development Agency Director-General Jean-Michel Severino, US Under Secretary of State Josette Shiner, Japan's former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Keizo Takemi and former CEO of the Global Environment Facility Mohamed El-Ashry. Of the 15 members of the panel, only three are women.

The panel addresses paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which invited the Secretary General to "launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities" and mentioned proposals for "more tightly managed entities" in environment, humanitarian assistance and development. According to its terms of reference, the panel will examine both organizational and funding issues, ranging from the duplication and overlap of work across UN agencies, funds and programmes to prospects for joint, multi-year funding and programming arrangements. It will make recommendations about how the UN should be structured, including at the national, regional and global levels; address new challenges, many of which were delineated in the 2005 UN World Summit; and discuss how the UN system can meet the various internationally agreed goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

During the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting in March 2006, women's groups released an Open Letter to the Secretary General and UN Member States deploring the lack of gender balance on the Panel and the absence of gender equality concerns in the initial mandate, both in terms of gender mainstreaming and women's machineries of the UN system.¹ Due in part to the criticism from women's rights groups, the Secretary General in his Mandate Review Report of 30 March expanded the mandate of the Coherence Panel to include both the 'gender equality architecture' of the UN and gender mainstreaming and made gender equality a cross-cutting issue for all three themes. Other cross-cutting themes are human rights and sustainable development.

The Panel is working very rapidly because its recommendations are expected by the end of August 2006 in order to go to the General Assembly in September. The Panel held its first meeting on 4-6 April 2006 in New York and its second and third in Geneva on 2-3 June and 3-4 July. In May the Panel visited Maputo, Mozambique (8-9 May) and Islamabad, Pakistan (22-24 May) to conduct consultations primarily with UN staff and a few others knowledgeable about the UN system. Field visits to other regions will follow in July in Barbados and Tirana possibly in August.

On 2 July, the Panel held a consultation in Geneva to exchange views with civil society representatives on the cross-cutting themes of gender, sustainable development and human rights, and to enhance understanding of the opportunities and challenges of improving UN system-wide coherence in the context of UN reform. The Panel also solicited suggestions as to the type of proposals they could put forward that would be ambitious and bold yet realizable. Representatives of women's organizations from across the world participated in the consultation and reiterated their call for strengthening of the gender architecture in the UN system and the creation of a strong women-specific lead entity. WEDO and CWGL presented the structure, principal functions and characteristics of effective gender equality machinery for the UN system.

Context for Women's Rights and Gender Equality

It is well documented that gender mainstreaming within the UN has not been achieved or implemented systematically and effectively² for reasons including lack of understanding of basic concepts, poor knowledge of intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming, lack of knowledge on the linkages between gender and the areas of work of the different departments and lack of capacity to incorporate gender perspectives. In addition, gender-mainstreaming processes have never been adequately resourced, leadership has not been held accountable and those charged with mainstreaming often have not had proper training or sufficient authority to implement the policies.

Furthermore, a critical element has been lacking: an independent, women-specific agency with adequate stature, resources and operational capacity and a mandate to drive this agenda. A lead agency is needed along with well-resourced, effective mainstreaming efforts. Currently, there are four under-resourced agencies focused on women's issues: the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). Other larger agencies, including UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, the High Commissioners for human rights and refugees and others, sometimes do important work on gender equality, but it is only a part of their mandate and often receives low priority.

Proposal³

Currently, a variety of proposals to strengthen the gender architecture of the UN are circulating, which include the following:

- Merge UNIFEM into UNDP (Netherlands proposal).
- Merge UNIFEM/INSTRAW/DAW/OSAGI into one or possibly two agencies, one operational and the other policy-making.
- Create a new independent women's agency with a broad mandate, led by a director with Under-

1 See: www.wedo.org/library.aspx?ResourceID=106.

2 UNIFEM Assessment: A/60/62 - E2005/10; UNDP Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming, at www.undp.org/eo/documents/EO_GenderMainstreaming.pdf.

3 This section is adapted from the paper submitted to the Coherence Panel by CWGL and WEDO, "Gender Equality Architecture and UN Reforms" [provide link]

Secretary-General status and with greatly enhanced resources (Stephen Lewis' proposal, see p.23). This agency could be a significantly scaled up UNIFEM, combine UNIFEM and UNFPA field and headquarters staff, or be an entirely new independent agency.

Women's groups reject the first two proposals. We see the absorption of UNIFEM into a larger agency such as UNDP as a backward step, and the other proposal to simply combine the current mandates, activities and budgets of UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW as one that would merely bring cosmetic change.

Women's groups have focused on the approaches, such as the third one, that have the greatest potential to bring about coherence and positive systemic change. Our preferred approach would be the creation of a well-resourced independent entity with normative, operational and oversight capacity, a universal country presence and led by an Under-Secretary General. An alternative approach would be the creation of a specialized coordinating body with similar functions, drawing on the UNAIDS model.

Whatever approach is taken, the framework must be a strong women-specific entity mandated to work across the whole UN system, with the capacity to lead, monitor and act as a catalyst for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights at the global, regional and local level. This driving entity would provide a more explicit and synergistic relationship between normative and operational work. System-wide responsibility would ensure the strengthened commitment of existing agencies towards gender equality goals. Gender mainstreaming will work best only when it co-exists alongside a strong women's entity that can demonstrate this leadership, advocate at the highest levels and hold the system accountable.

As such, this entity would need to perform three critical functions. It would need to have the responsibility to create and set coherent global policy for gender equality across the UN system, and advocate for the necessary changes at both policy and institutional levels. It is critical that it has a field presence to conduct and shape UN operational activities to ensure that gender equality and women's rights programming are carried out effectively. It should provide high quality substantive expertise on the gender dimensions of a range of issues as well as implement programs, facilitate innovation, share lessons learned and enable institutional learning. This universal country presence is essential to bridge the biggest gap between commitments to women's human rights norms and the realities of implementation. Finally, this entity must have the capacity to monitor with the authority to ensure accountability on gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system.

In order to function effectively, this entity must be backed up with several critical components or characteristics. It must have autonomy: it cannot be subsumed under another agency and must have its own governance structure. It must have high level leadership to affect change and upscale power, authority and resources: an Under-Secretary General to guarantee organizational stature and a voice for women at the high-level UN decision-making table and other bodies that this requires. Finally the entity needs to have substantial, regularized and predictable resources that are adequate to implement its mandate (financially and in terms of personnel with high levels of expertise).

Actions You Can Take To Influence The Outcomes Of The Coherence Panel

To influence the Panel's recommendations, due in September 2006, it is essential that women:

- *Speak with Panel members* from their country/region, the gender focal points and the Secretariat for the Panel to begin conversations with national government officials so they understand that the gender equality architecture is under review. Ensure that they report back to women's rights groups after each country visit or thematic meeting.
- *Provide the Panel with information* about women's experiences in engaging with UN agencies at national, regional and global levels by writing to Koen Davidse, the Panel's Research Director, at koendavidse@hotmail.com. Wherever possible, include concrete examples of and data on both failures to deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment and successes on the ground and what made them work.
- *Consider addressing some of the following questions in your discussions and submissions:* (1) Do you see women's rights issues as effectively integrated into UN agencies? Why or why not? (2) What is needed at the country level for enhanced and more effective gender mainstreaming? (3) Have you found UN staff to be adequately resourced?

Adequately trained in gender? Willing to fund or participate in projects related to women's human rights? (4) What good models for gender mainstreaming have you experienced? (5) What would have made your experiences working with the UN more effective?

What Can Women's Rights Advocates Expect from the Coherence Panel?

It seems likely that the Panel will recommend some changes in gender equality architecture. The question that remains is just how bold and transformative these recommendations will be. Streamlining for "more tightly managed entities" to avoid overlap and duplication across the UN system and to maximize resources and minimize overhead and administrative costs seems to be the mantra in the UN Reform process. This might lead to resistance from some Member States to creating a new independent women's entity at this time. Some have suggested that it may be more realistic to advocate for the strengthening of existing structures and ensure that they can deliver on gender equality. This would, for example, include the appointment of an Under-Secretary-General with a dedicated team that would allow participation at the highest levels of decision-making, ensure independence and greater attention to action on the gender equality agenda within the UN system and ensure the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming at all levels. The drawback of such an approach is that it focuses primarily on the policy level and does not adequately address the gap in implementation at the country level.

It is important to note that UN Reform will be a long drawn-out process and will not end when the Coherence Panel submits its recommendations to the Secretary-General in September. As the terms of reference stipulate, change is envisaged in short-, medium- and long-term phases with first initial proposals for rationalization of the system without structural modifications; then proposals for preliminary restructuring of the current system to minimize duplication and overlap; and finally recommendations for comprehensive revitalization and restructuring of operational roles. Member States will gather at the 61st session of the General Assembly in September to negotiate and adopt recommendations on the ways to move the UN Reform agenda forward. Women have to make sure that their recommendations for stronger gender equality architecture to achieve women's rights are reflected in the Panel's recommendations, the Secretary-General's proposals and finally acted upon by Member States.

Panel Members' Profiles

Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister, Pakistan; Co-chair

Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz was Finance Minister. As Finance Minister, he set out to revitalize the economy. His Responsibilities included planning the country's finance, economic affairs, statistics and development. Shaukat also chaired a variety of committees and councils on economic affairs.

James Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, United Kingdom

James Gordon Brown is the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom and a prominent Scottish Labor Party politician. He has been a Member of Parliament since 1983. Brown has headed HM Treasury which is responsible for developing and executing the United Kingdom Government's financial and economic policy since May 1997. Brown is the longest continuously serving Chancellor since Nicholas Vansittart (1812-1823). He is regarded as the second most powerful member of the present British government and is widely expected to assume the leadership of the Labour Party, and become Prime Minister.

Luisa Dias Diogo, Prime Minister, Mozambique; Co-chair

Luisa Dias Diogo has served in Mozambique's Finance Ministry in various capacities. Over the years she has worked with various international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB). In May 2003, Diogo signed the World Bank's Multi-Sector HIV/Aids Response Project (MAP) and the Public Sector Reform Project (PSRP). It

was the first time that projects were signed in the country, and this was considered a historic moment for Mozambique. In February 2004, she became Mozambique's first woman Prime Minister.

Mohamed El-Ashry, Former CEO of the Global Environment Facility

Mohamed El-Ashry is the former Chairman and CEO of the Global Environmental Facility, which he led from 1991 to 2002. Under his leadership, GEF grew from a pilot program with less than 30 members to the largest single source of funding for the global environment with 173 member countries. Before he came to the GEF, Mr. El-Ashry worked at the World Bank, where he was the Chief Environmental Advisor to the President and Director of the Environment Department. Prior to joining the World Bank, he served as Senior Vice President of the World Resources Institute (WRI) and as Director of Environmental Quality with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Ricardo Froilán Lagos Escobar, Former President of Chile

Ricardo Lagos Escobar served as Chile's delegate to the United Nations with rank of ambassador at the 26th UN General Assembly in 1971 and various other UN-related post after that. In 1990, Lagos was named Minister of Education by President Patricio Aylwin. In this position, he initiated reform aimed at increasing equality in access and improving education levels. In 1994, Lagos was appointed Minister of Public Works. In this role, he developed an innovating system of road concessions, integrated the private sector in the construction of works and its later operation. In 1999, Lagos resigned as minister in order to begin his presidential campaign. He was Chile's president from 2000 to March 2006.

Robert Greenhill, President of the Canadian International Development Agency

Robert Greenhill pursued a career in international business with a commitment to international public policy. He started his career with the international consulting firm, McKinsey & Company. Greenhill shifted his attention to international public policy and joined the International Development Research Centre as Senior Visiting Executive in 2004. He was appointed President of the Canadian International Development Agency in May 2005. Greenhill also serves as Alternate Governor for Canada on the Board of Governors of the World Bank Group and sits on the Board of Governors of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). He is one of the two focal points on gender in the High-level Panel.

Ruth Jacoby, Director General for Development Cooperation, Sweden; Gender Equality Issues

Prior to her current post, Ruth Jacoby worked in the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, including the Trade Department, the Department for International Development Cooperation, as Head of the Secretariat for Cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe and as Head of the Department for Global Cooperation. Between 1989 and 1990 she was Deputy Assistant Under-Secretary at the Swedish Ministry of Finance with responsibility for debt negotiations and the Paris Club. Ruth Jacoby was also Executive Director in the World Bank representing Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden in the Boards of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). During this period she was also Chairman of the World Bank Board Committee on Development Effectiveness. She is one of the two focal points on gender in the High-level Panel.

Benjamin Mkapa, Former President of Tanzania

Benjamin Mkapa has held a succession of important government posts since the late 1970s and 1980s. He was appointed to parliament in 1977, and subsequently elected to represent the Masasi District in 1985. Having joined the ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), Mr. Mpaka was elected to its central committee in 1987. He received the party's nomination for president in July 1995 and in October 1995; Mkapa began his term as President in Tanzania's first multiparty elections. As President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa worked with the World Bank and IMF to implement broad economic reforms, secure financial aid and debt relief as Tanzania continued to open its economy.

Louis Michel, Commissioner for the Development and Humanitarian Aid, EU

Louis Michel has held several ministerial posts for foreign affairs and institutional reform. He was appointed to the Belgian seat on the European Commission to serve as the European Commissioner for Science and Research and now serves as the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Development. On World Population Day, Louis Michel made a statement highlighting the work of the Commission in regard to gender equality. He stated that the Commission continues to champion solutions for sexual and reproductive health problems and promote better access for girls in its education programmes. He also explained that the Commission is supporting a variety of projects worldwide such as actions to increase property rights and security for women in Afghanistan, and the promotion of women holding parliamentary seats in South Africa and Mozambique.

Josette Shiner, Under Secretary of State, United States

Josette Sheeran Shiner serves as Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs. She is responsible for spearheading the Administration's economic diplomacy efforts and advancing the interests of American businesses, farmers and workers at home and abroad through global policies spanning trade, investment, finance, development, energy, telecommunications and transportation. She represents the United States at a wide variety of high-level bilateral and multilateral meetings including serving as Alternative Governor for the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the African Development Bank; the Asian Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Prior to her appointment, Under Secretary Sheeran Shiner served as Deputy United States Trade Representative in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Jean-Michel Severino

Jean-Michel Severino is Chief Executive Officer of the Agence Française de Développement in France. Mr. Severino joined the World Bank in 1996 as Director of Country Department II in Europe and Central Asia region, responsible for Bosnia. In 1997, he was appointed Vice President of East Asia and the Pacific region, where he was responsible for an annual \$6 billion lending program of at least 40 development projects in more than 20 countries including China and a \$30 billion portfolio spread across several hundred projects. Before joining the World Bank, Mr. Severino served as Director of Development in the French Ministry of Cooperation and Development, reporting directly to the Minister.

Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister, Norway; Co-chair

Jens Stoltenberg has served his country in various capacities. He was Minister of Finance (1996-1997) Minister of Trade and Energy (1993-1996) and state secretary at the Ministry of the Environment (1990-1991). Stoltenberg was also a member of the board of the Global Vaccine Fund between 2001 and 2005 and a member of the Norwegian Defence Commission in 1990 to 1992. In addition, Stoltenberg has served as the leader of the Workers' Youth league between 1985 and 1989 and since 2002 he has been leader of the Norwegian labor party and Prime Minister of Norway.

Keizo Takemi, Former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Japan

Keizo Takemi has been a visiting scholar at Harvard University and a professor at the Strategic Peace and International Affairs Institute, at Tôkai University, Japan. He was elected a member of the House of Councillors in 1995, and is now serving his second term. Mr. Takemi has also served as parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs between 1998 and 1999.

Ex-officio members:**Lennart Båge, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development**

Lennart Båge is serving a second term as elected President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Båge joined IFAD with nearly 25 years of experience in international development, and longstanding and active involvement in the United Nations system and multilateral finance institutions. Prior to IFAD, he served as Head of the Department for International Development Co-operation in Sweden's Ministry for Foreign Affairs in charge of Budget and Policy Development for Sweden's USD 1.6 billion International Cooperation Program as well as responsibility for European Union Affairs and international financial institutions.

Kemal Derviş, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Kemal Derviş became head of the UN Development Program in August 2005. Prior to his current post, Derviş was a senior official at the World Bank for over 20 years. He also served as Turkey's minister of Economic Affairs from 2001 to 2002 where he set out to reform the country's economy. His efforts put Turkey on a path towards sustained growth and enabled Turkey to be eligible for membership in the European Union.

Gender and the Peacebuilding Commission

Vina Nadjibulla, UNIFEM

One of the key outcomes of the 2005 World Summit was a decision to establish a Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to help countries emerging from armed conflict. The Commission will be responsible for addressing a critical gap within the UN by providing a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peace-building. The work of this inter-governmental advisory body will be assisted by a Peacebuilding Support Office and a multi-year standing Peacebuilding Fund to support initiatives on post-conflict stabilization and capacity building.

The Work of the PBC

The PBC will work at the intersection of politics, peacekeeping, development, humanitarian work and human rights. In principle, it will provide a more coherent approach to post-conflict work, thereby resolving the institutional gap in the UN system. The role of the PBC will not be to come up with solutions for every country-specific situation, but rather to provide the space for strategy formulation and sharing of best practices, and to mobilize resources to assist local actors in post-conflict peace-building.

Many women's groups welcomed the creation of the PBC, recognizing that the UN needs to do much more in order to prevent the resurgence of violence in many fragile societies. In the lead up to the World Summit, women's groups joined many other civil society organizations to advocate for:

- The mandate of the PBC to include the entire spectrum of conflict rather than just post-conflict situations.
- The PBC to consult with and draw on the expertise of civil society and especially women's groups working on peace and security issues.
- Predictable and adequate financial and human resources for the PBC, Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office.

Due to pressure from many women's groups and gender equality advocates, some of these concerns have been addressed. The concurrently adopted Security Council and General Assembly resolution on the PBC reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building and the need to increase their participation in decision-making with regard to issues of peace and security.

The resolution also "calls on the Commission to integrate a gender perspective into all its work" and encourages it to consult with civil society organizations, including women's organizations, engaged in peace-building activities. This is a significant achievement and a strengthening of the commitment made by the world leaders at the World Summit.

UN Member States mandated the full participation of women in all aspects of peace-building in Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000). The creation of the PBC provides an opportunity for Member States to fulfil this commitment and implement the resolution in the Commission's design, mandate and activities. Women's rights advocates need to ensure that gender equality issues are addressed when the PBC considers security sector reform, transitional justice and reconciliation, land reform and other peace-building activities in the context of its country-specific work.

Recently the Organizational Committee of the PBC - consisting of 31 member States and chaired by Angola - adopted provisional rules of procedure for the Commission. These state that the PBC Chair shall consult on a regular basis "with representatives of civil society, non-governmental organizations including women's organizations, and the private sector engaged in peace-building activities, as appropriate," and that this consultation shall be

ensured through the development of specific modalities. More advocacy efforts are also needed to ensure that the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund adequately address gender concerns and promote the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

The Security Council has formally requested advice from the PBC on Burundi and Sierra Leone. Women's groups in these countries need to be aware of the Commission, and its potential impact in terms of strategies and advice for peace consolidation, and of additional funding that may be available through the Peacebuilding Fund.

Burundi: The First Country on PBC's Agenda

Burundi has experienced decades of violence and extreme poverty. The relatively successful, free and fair elections that took place in 2005 are a promising sign on the road to full recovery and sustainable peace. However, much more needs to be done to consolidate peace in Burundi and build a truly democratic society.

The participation of women in the Arusha peace agreement, the 2005 national elections and other processes since then have resulted in significant gains for gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's groups have been outstanding in crossing ethnic divides and bringing various groups together both formally and informally. Women now account for 30.5 per cent of the lower house of the legislature (36 parliamentarians out of 118). Seven of the 20 new ministers in President Pierre Nkurunziza's cabinet are women, including some of the most senior posts such as justice, commerce and industry, and external relations and international cooperation, as well as one of the two vice-presidents. In June 2005, women were elected as chiefs of communes and/or collines in numbers previously unseen in Burundi.

It is crucial that the gains made by women during the peace negotiations and first elections are not lost in the post-conflict transition period, when ethnic and political issues tend to take precedence over issues of gender equality. Moreover, critical challenges remain and should be seriously considered in the framework of the PBC and Peacebuilding Fund. Only 5 per cent of Burundian girls are enrolled in secondary school because of discrimination and harassment. Due partly to the uncontrolled amount of small arms in private hands, sexual violence continues unabated and the national judicial system is not equipped to deal appropriately with the alleged perpetrators of these crimes. Large-scale repatriation is leaving returning women vulnerable to sexual exploitation at the hands of the militaries that are mandated to protect them, mostly in exchange for food and other necessities.

Despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing gender equality, Burundian women continue to face discriminatory practices in family law, property and inheritance law, and criminal law. Widows, in particular, are still unable to inherit property. The creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to probe into ethnically based violence since 1962 is still pending. If the decision to establish a TRC is adopted, women's groups will need to develop a strategy to ensure that it adequately considers gender issues.

Despite impressive representation of women in national decision-making structures, more work needs to be done to encourage women's participation in local (bashingantahe) councils.

All of these elements need to be adequately addressed and represented in the strategies developed by the PBC and in its advice to the Security Council and other actors. Programmes addressing these remaining challenges need to be given special attention for funding by the Peacebuilding Fund.

In order for this effort to be successful, special attention needs to be given to the critical role of civil society and especially women's groups in peace consolidation in Burundi. The PBC should ensure that women's groups are consulted and actively contribute to the formulation of peace-building strategies and the identification of best practices. A gender-neutral approach to peace-building would dangerously overlook the unique contributions of women's groups to conflict transformation, societal healing and post-conflict reconstruction. For women's groups to effectively contribute to the work of the PBC, submit proposals for funding to the Fund and lobby the Support Office, they need capacity development and training. Women's organizations and women peace

activists tend to have inadequate access to information and resources. Many women's groups work at the grassroots level, where they develop distinct and context-specific approaches, but are often distant and disconnected from developments and processes under way at regional and international levels. Donors and institutions that support women's groups often support individual projects and rarely integrate them into their mainstream programmes on peace-building and reconstruction. UNIFEM is in the process of developing a programme for capacity-building to create awareness of the PBC's likely work in Burundi and holding consultations to identify women's minimum agenda for peace-building. Post-conflict transitional periods offer a window of opportunity that must be seized to improve the status of women and achieve greater gender equality.

Human Rights Council: Women Monitor Advances and Note Concerns

Charlotte Bunch and Cynthia Rothschild, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University (USA)

On 15 March 2006, member States of the UN General Assembly (GA) adopted a resolution that created a new Human Rights Council within the UN system.¹ The Council replaces the Commission on Human Rights, the body that for 60 years set and advanced human rights standards within the UN system. The creation of the new Council is intended to raise the level of attention to human rights, as it will function at a higher level within the UN's structure and meet more frequently. In May, 47 States were elected to membership of the Council by the GA according to a set allocation of seats for each region.² The Council's first session was held 19-30 June in Geneva against a backdrop of enthusiastic optimism and equally strong scepticism.

While many UN processes are marked by political manoeuvring and delays, the path linking the demise of the Commission to the creation of the Council was a particularly rocky and complicated one. Within less than a year, a primary human rights institution of the UN was publicly derided, disbanded and its successor born amidst a series of state negotiations that seemed at various stages to be on the verge of breakdown.

Creation of the Council

In his March 2005 report entitled 'In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All', UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan outlined a plan for reform of the UN that named human rights as a pillar of the organization. The report also noted the "declining credibility and professionalism" of the Commission and called for its replacement with a new Human Rights Council to strengthen the human rights system. Annan and others argued that the Commission's reputation was tarnished, as it had been seen as too 'politicized' and abused by countries seeking to use it for political purposes or to shield themselves from scrutiny.

The language of the "discredited Commission" was repeated again and again, not only by member States but also by the media and some human rights advocates. But the attack on the Commission did a disservice to its history of creating mechanisms for advancing human rights, including its work on gender. In its last 15 years, the Commission was an important arena for women's human rights advocacy and advances in human rights standards, including in areas of great concern to women such as violence against women, rights to development, health, education and other economic and social rights, sexual rights and access to treatment for HIV/AIDS.

The UN World Summit in September 2005, a meeting that reviewed progress on the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), also took up the issue of next stages of 'UN Reform'. After months of not coming to consensus on details, agreement to create the Council in principle was made in the last hours of the Summit in a vaguely worded compromise put forward to save the process after arduous negotiations, led by the President of the GA and by facilitators from Panama and South Africa. Almost six months passed before the March 2006 GA resolution on the Council was approved by member States with more detailed language, just as the Commission was about to begin what was assumed to be its final session. The Commission opened on 13 March, suspended its session until governments came to final agreement on Council negotiations in New York, and subsequently held its final meeting on 27 March.

The last minute decision-making, confusion and inability to agree on a way forward were indicative of the geo-political climate in the UN marked by intransigence and stalemates, particularly because of US interventions.

¹ The resolution was adopted by a vote of 170 countries in favour; 4 against (United States, Israel, Marshall Islands and Palau); and 3 abstentions (Venezuela, Belarus and Iran).

² See the full list of members at <http://www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc/>. In campaigning for Council membership, States made pledges about their human rights commitments, a number of which pertained to women and discrimination. See, in particular, Albania, France, Indonesia, Korea, Morocco, Switzerland and Zambia at <http://www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc/>

Further, the most extensive reform process the UN has undergone since its inception in 1948 is unfolding alongside an ongoing and sometimes subtle attack on human rights. States are building a new human rights body as some simultaneously seek to weaken the human rights paradigm itself in a wide range of areas from torture to women's human rights, where gains won in the 1990s have been threatened in recent years.

Commission to Council

As the Council develops its own terms of reference and working methods, differences and similarities between its roles and functions and those of the Commission will become more evident, but some critical differences already exist. In the UN 'organizational chart', the Commission fell under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), while the Council is a subsidiary organ of the GA - an 'upscaling' of the status of human rights. Advocates of the Council, including the Secretary-General, hope that within five years it will rise further to become a principal organ of the UN alongside, among other bodies, the GA, ECOSOC and the Security Council.

The Commission on Human Rights was one of the functional commissions of the UN, with a status parallel to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Social Development. It was mandated to examine, monitor and publicly report on human rights situations in specific countries or on themes, such as internally displaced people, violence against women, etc. The Council will be similarly charged. The Commission adopted resolutions, decisions and Chair statements. It had as its main subsidiary body the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. Over the years, the Commission and its Sub-Commission adopted a creative set of working methods called 'special procedures' that included working groups and independent experts (primarily called special rapporteurs) focused on countries and themes (*Please see Katherine McDonald's article on page 41*). The Council is expected to maintain the resolution's processes and will at least temporarily continue the mandates of the special procedures. The Sub-Commission will be retained, although its future is subject to decisions made by the Council regarding its working methods.

The new Human Rights Council will meet in Geneva at least three times a year (including an annual main session) for a total of at least 10 weeks. It will also have the capacity to convene extra sessions as needed to address "gross and systematic violations" of human rights more quickly than the Commission could, since it only met annually for one six-week session. After the first Council session in June 2006, additional sessions are planned for September 2006, November-December 2006, and March-April 2007. Mexico has been elected as the first Chair, and a regional rotation of chairs has been put in place.

The agenda of the first session was largely procedural but the September meeting is expected to be more substantial. The first session did address a proposed Convention on Enforced Disappearances, a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and an Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The session on "pressing human rights issues" was controversial, including a push by the Organization of the Islamic Conference to discuss "religious defamation" under this category. This issue is of concern to women around the world since policies, laws and practices that protect or promote women's rights are sometimes decried by conservative extremists as 'affronts' to religion.

The Council will conduct "universal periodic review" of the human rights records of all UN member States,

Members of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the end year of their term of office

- African States: Algeria (2007), Cameroon (2009), Djibouti (2009), Gabon (2008), Ghana (2008), Mali (2008), Mauritius (2009), Morocco (2007), Nigeria (2009), Senegal (2009), South Africa (2007), Tunisia (2007) and Zambia (2008)
- Asian States: Bahrain (2007), Bangladesh (2009), China (2009), India (2007), Indonesia (2007), Japan (2008), Jordan (2009), Malaysia (2009), Pakistan (2008), Philippines (2007), Republic of Korea (2008), Saudi Arabia (2009) and Sri Lanka (2008)
- Eastern European States: Azerbaijan (2009), Czech Republic (2007), Poland (2007), Romania (2008), Russian Federation (2009) and Ukraine (2008)
- Latin American & Caribbean States: Argentina (2007), Brazil (2008), Cuba (2009), Ecuador (2007), Guatemala (2008), Mexico (2009), Peru (2008) and Uruguay (2009)
- Western European & Other States: Canada (2009), Finland (2007), France (2008), Germany (2009), Netherlands (2007), Switzerland (2009) and United Kingdom (2008)

including, and notably first, those who are members of the Council. Establishing the process for universal review has been gruelling, in no small part because governments do not like being under scrutiny and criticized for failures to protect, promote and fulfil human rights. Although this holds true for States in both the global North and South, developing countries argue that they are susceptible to greater scrutiny than wealthier or more powerful States. More attention to violations under the current climate of state security and anti-terrorism interventions could help to balance the scales.

As was true with the Commission, the Council will address human rights themes related to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In addition, it will promote mainstreaming of human rights within the UN system.

In its efforts, the Council, like the Commission, is serviced by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva. It is important to note that the High Commissioner (Louise Arbour) retains her independent reporting relationship directly to the Secretary-General and that recent reform processes led to the decision to double the budget of the OHCHR over the next few years, which will allow expansion of its field presence and creation of a women's human rights unit. An important issue for women is how best to continue to press for greater gender integration into the work of the Council in all its deliberations and into the work of the OHCHR.

Challenges and Risks

The inaugural year of the Human Rights Council presents great challenges if this new body is to gain a stronger reputation than that of its predecessor. Critical questions remain: Since the Commission was maligned for political reasons, why won't the Council be plagued by the same politicization? As an inherently political body that will judge its members and seek to foster innovative thinking about human rights, how can the Council avoid the same problems?

One area of risk of particular interest to human rights advocates, including women, is the ongoing retention of the system of special procedures by the Council. Many of the special rapporteurs have been courageous in the face of state attacks on their work. Along with working groups, they have fostered innovative thinking about traditional and emerging human rights issues and contributed to new standard setting. Some of them have done pioneering work on women's human rights (such as the rapporteur on violence against women) and on integrating gender into their mandates (such as the rapporteurs on housing, internally displaced persons and health). They are also often the voices of defence for the rights and experiences of marginalized groups.

The GA resolution notes that the Council "will assume, review, and where necessary improve and rationalize, all mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities" of the Commission within its first year.³ The expectation is that it will carry forward special procedures and office holders whose terms are expiring beyond the initial year. But when States review the mandates, advocates must ensure that this vital work of the Council is not weakened in the process. Already, the reports that special rapporteurs had prepared for the Commission's session in 2006 have been delayed and are expected to be taken up during the September 2006 Council session.

Another key concern of human rights advocates is maintaining NGO access to and participation in the meetings of the Council at least at the levels of the Commission, which were historically quite significant. While the GA resolution that created the Council stipulates that NGO participation will follow the arrangements of the Commission, it also notes "while ensuring the most effective contribution of these entities".⁴ A review is expected, and some are worried that the trend within the UN system to limit civil society participation in many arenas will lead to limitations on NGOs' involvement in the Council. The fact that the Council sits as a subsidiary organ of the GA feeds this concern, as the levels of NGO participation are lower in the GA than under ECOSOC processes, which guided participation for the Commission.

Other challenges the Council must address have to do with its periodic peer review function and membership criteria. Membership criteria was a key feature in negotiations for the new body, and as governments announced their candidacies, they issued written pledges to indicate their 'good' human rights records. While all governments

³ A/60/L.48, paragraph 6.

⁴ A/60/L.48 paragraph 11

violate human rights in some ways, most of the more egregious violators were not elected in this first round. However, the test of what its members will do when faced with poor human rights records and significant violations perpetrated by its own membership is yet to come. A process was approved in the GA resolution that can suspend membership by a two-thirds vote, but States will engage in this with trepidation.

Another issue involves establishing the Council's relationship to the seven existing UN treaty bodies (such as CEDAW, the Committee that monitors compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Committee that monitors compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination), especially as they undergo their own reform process. As UN systems try to figure out how not to duplicate one another's mandates, the Council and the committees that review compliance with human rights treaties will need to sort through potential conflicts and how to enhance each other's work.

While treaty body reform is not a function of the Council directly, it is a related concern for advocates of women's human rights. The OHCHR has recommended that the seven treaty bodies merge into one 'supra-body' to which governments can make one report on all areas of compliance. There has been ongoing discussion for some time in the UN about streamlining government reporting to treaty bodies. While this proposal is under debate and has been rejected by many of the treaty bodies, including CEDAW, there is a danger that 'streamlining' will diminish the specificity of reporting, especially on more marginalized issues like women, children and minority rights, in the name of efficiency and more focus on "gross fundamental violations" of human rights.

Conclusion

The Human Rights Council faces many challenges to prove that it will be a bolder body that benefits all human rights issues, including women's human rights. As a starting point, the Council must preserve what the Commission began in terms of gender integration and greater attention to women-specific violations such as gender-based violence. It will face many challenges important to women in standard setting, especially in emerging areas of non-discrimination and sexual rights. It must not shy away from naming the groups most at risk of abuses, including sex workers, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, Roma, Dalit and indigenous peoples, and others who are often targets of abuse. And it must be bold in acknowledging human rights realities and violations in all areas and regions, which necessarily entails critiquing governments as well as non-state actors. Women's human rights activists must also be bold in ensuring that our voices and perspectives are present as this process unfolds.

Post Script

August, 2006: The inaugural session of the Human Rights Council adopted two landmark new draft human rights mechanisms: a new treaty, the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Both drafts will go to the General Assembly for final adoption. A working group was set up to further Council work on universal periodic review of UN member States; their recommendations will go to the Council for further discussion in the September 2006 session. Special procedures' mandates were extended for one year, as was the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. A working group was set up to begin reviewing mandates and mechanisms inherited from the Commission. Reports of Special procedures will be taken up at the September session. NGO participation was guided by procedures from the Commission, and NGOs were present in all segments of the session, including in the interactive dialogues and informal consultations. An official synopsis of the meeting can be found on the Council's official website: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/press/hrc/HRCOutcomesFINAL.pdf>

UN Reform, Human Rights and Women

Katherine McDonald

Reform of the UN system is well under way following the historic World Summit in September 2005 where world leaders recognized peace and security, development and human rights as the pillars of the UN system and foundations for collective security and well-being. Among the measures agreed on were to strengthen the human rights machinery and to mainstream human rights within the UN system; adopt a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as soon as possible; recognize the human rights of women and children, with a commitment to bring a gender and child protection perspective into the human rights agenda; and reach an agreement on a convention on the rights of people with disabilities, measures on refugee protection and assistance, the rule of law, the promotion of democracy and a commitment to respect and ensure the rights of children.

The negotiations on all these issues have been long and protracted, and many of them affect women's rights, including measures under consideration by the newly formed Human Rights Council.

The Human Rights Council and 'Special Procedures'?

'Special procedures' is a term used to describe collectively the more than 40 special rapporteurs/representatives, independent experts and working groups established primarily by the Commission on Human Rights. (The Secretary General has also appointed special representatives from time to time - e.g., his special representatives on HIV/AIDS.) The special procedures' mandates can vary, but usually they are to examine, investigate, monitor, advise and publicly report on human rights situations in specific countries or territories, known as country or geographic mandates (of which there are currently 13), or on major violations of human rights on a global level, known as thematic mandates (of which there are currently 28). Most mandates created since 1995 focus on economic, social and cultural rights.

These rapporteurs, experts and working groups respond to urgent calls for action when there is an allegation that a human rights violation is about to occur or has already happened, undertake fact-finding missions, examine a global phenomenon such as violence against women or the right to health, clarify the legal framework to address a particular violation, and make reports and recommendations to the Commission. One third also report to the General Assembly. They undertake country visits, either at their own request or in response to an invitation by a government. Fifty-two governments have issued standing invitations to all of the thematic special procedures. They report to the Commission on Human Rights, and now to the Human Rights Council. A crucial component of the system is the independence of the mandate holders, who are not paid for their work and are not employees of the UN. Another key aspect is the universal jurisdiction accorded to the special procedures, as there is no requirement that a government be a party to a human rights treaty before being subjected to investigation.

Gender and the Special Procedures

In the early 1990s the Commission on Human Rights invited the special procedures to regularly and systematically take a gender perspective into account in their work and to report on the human rights of women and girls. They were also encouraged to cooperate and to coordinate their work in order to strengthen their recommendations and reports. More than 18 special rapporteurs and working groups included numerous recommendations on the human rights of women and girls in over 44 reports between 2002 and 2005.¹

In an analysis of four reports from 2005 on the extent to which the special procedures examined violations of sexual and reproductive rights, there were some interesting findings. The reports on Violence against Women, the Right to Health, Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, and Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child

¹ Gender and Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights website: www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hr/special/gender.htm.

Pornography, reported a total of 136 direct communications with governments concerning violations of sexual and reproductive rights, including sexual orientation and gender identity. Mandate holders may communicate directly with governments on matters concerning an individual case or on general matters, including draft or existing legislation that they deem inconsistent with human rights standards. The vast majority of communications are jointly made with another of the special procedures.

The special procedures are flexible and independent and can raise human rights concerns that governments are often reluctant to address. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the Special Rapporteur on the right to health, and others, have raised lack of access to abortion and maternal mortality as violations of a woman's right to life, even though some governments do not support abortion rights. When the UN reviews and "rationalizes" the mandates of the special procedures, the remaining gaps in protection, especially with respect to women's rights, should be examined and reduced.

"Rationalization" of the special procedures should incorporate an analysis of which human rights are not being addressed by the UN human rights machinery.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Special Procedures System

There have been three reviews of the special procedures since 1997, including a review by an intergovernmental working group of the Commission on Human Rights, another concurrent review by the Bureau of the 54th session of the Commission, and one by the Secretary-General in his 2002 report "Strengthening the United Nations: an Agenda for Further Change."²

Within its first year of operation the new Human Rights Council will review, and where necessary, "improve and rationalize all mandates in order to maintain a system of special procedures, expert advice and a complaint procedure."

This does not mean that all will go smoothly, however. Special procedures have been criticized by some Member States, with proposals to restrict the role, function and working methods of the special procedures in several aspects. These include restricting media contact, suggesting that special procedures disclose confidential information on human rights violations to the concerned government and recommending that regional groups select the special procedures. A proposal was made to exclude nominations from government post holders, and from NGO employees or members of the governing bodies of NGOs working in the area of the mandate. One very troubling proposal was suggested that individuals must exhaust domestic remedies before the special procedures could investigate the situation.

On the other hand, many stakeholders consider the special procedures to be extremely vibrant, innovative, flexible and at the very core of the human rights machinery. For example, a group of Latin American governments at an Open-ended Seminar on "Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Special Procedures System," 12-14 October 2005, stated that: "...the work of the special procedures has contributed probably more than any other component of the international UN system for the promotion and protection of human rights to the improvement of the concrete human rights situation of thousands of individuals in different regions and countries of the world." And at the same seminar Canada and New Zealand said: "The Special Procedures created by the Commission on Human Rights are one of the most important features of international action to promote and protect human rights. We believe that Human Rights Council must retain the Special Procedures system as a key strength from the Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations system."

Recommendations

Some key recommendations from the Open-ended Seminar on "Enhancing the effectiveness of the Special Procedures System" include:

² Report of the Secretary General to the General Assembly: Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change, UN Doc. A/57/387 (2002), www.un.org/apps/docs/ws.asp?m=A/57/387.

- **Appointment and selection of mandate holders**
The independence and impartiality of the mandate holders must be ensured, and this is not compatible with the appointment of individuals who hold posts in the legislative or executive branches of their governments. While overall geographic diversity is desirable, it would be inappropriate to link a region and a particular mandate, as proposed by the Asian group. Gender should be a priority concern to redress the current gender imbalance among the mandate holders (only 16 out of 55 of whom are women). A roster of potential mandate holders should be developed with the advice of States, civil society and others, with appointments made by the Chair of the Council, with input by the High Commissioner.
- **Relations with the Human Rights Council**
The practice of the Commission on Human Rights was to hold an “interactive dialogue” where the mandate holder was given minimal time to present the annual report and answer questions. Romania proposed a special three-day segment to allow appropriate time to consider and respond to the reports of the special procedures. The work of the special procedures should be integrated throughout the debates and should be taken into account by the Human Rights Council when making decisions.
- **Relationship with States**
Full access to States is hindered by the fact that only 55 States have issued standing invitations to the special procedures and, as of October 2005, 89 States have outstanding requests for visits. Making such an invitation a requirement of States would be an important innovation.
- **Relationship with civil society**
The role played by NGOs is vital to the work of the special procedures. In an improved special segment for interactive dialogue, NGOs could also play an important role.
- **Relationship with the UN system**
Improved relations and coordination with the UN country teams and specialized agencies and other UN bodies would enhance the effectiveness of the special procedures.
- **Peer review**
The report of the special procedures should be incorporated fully into the proposed peer review system of the Human Rights Council, together with other important elements such as the reports of the treaty bodies.
- **Early warning function**
The Human Rights Council, although not a standing body, will meet no less than three times each year, for not less than ten weeks, and will be able to convene a special session with the support of one third of Member States. The use of the special procedures knowledge of human rights violations can be used to alert the Council of potential situations of urgent concern.
- **Accountability**
The Council should respond to the recommendations of the special procedures, and the Bureau of the Council should play a role in follow-up to recommendations.
- **Follow-up**
Implementing the recommendations of the special procedures is a crucial aspect of human rights machinery. In some cases governments ignore requests for visits, refuse to allow a visit or, when a visit has occurred, ignore the recommendations that have been made. In some cases, obstacles prevent the full implementation of the recommendations. The range of partners to be considered when making recommendations includes many stakeholders in addition to the government in question: the OHCHR, the UN system, (including the UN country teams), national human rights machinery, NGOs, the private sector, civil society and intergovernmental organizations, such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, as well as donors. This is especially true where technical cooperation is a key aspect of the recommendations. Recommendations should be concrete and

realistic, indicate priorities, acknowledge budget implications and indicate clearly whether partners should be involved and whether technical cooperation is required.

- Reports on follow-up should be compiled and presented annually to the Council, and the OHCHR should prepare an overall statistical report on the responses to country visits and responses to communications. The High Commissioner could use country visits as an opportunity to promote follow-up.
- Enhanced profile and communications strategy
Reports should be posted on the Internet and widely disseminated through other means, and the use of press statements and briefings enhanced. An annual procedures report would enhance public awareness of the work of the special procedures.

Conclusion

The moment for change is now, while the UN is undergoing the most far-reaching reform in its history. Decisions will be made over the coming months on how and if the system of special procedures will be strengthened and enhanced. It will be crucial for women's organizations to urge their governments to take this opportunity to strengthen the mechanisms that can advance women's rights and resist the efforts of some governments to dismantle the special procedures.

Please see Charlotte Bunch and Cynthia Rothschild's article on page 37 for further discussion of the Human Right's Council and its relevance to women's human rights issues.

Secretariat and Management Reform

In an effort to instill a culture of accountability, transparency and productivity in the internal operations of the United Nations, the UN Secretary General proposed a sweeping set of secretariat and management reforms on March 7, 2006. Contained in a report entitled Investing in the United Nations: For a Stronger Operation Worldwide, the UN reform package has ignited tensions between developing and developed countries who are anxious to ensure their continued relevance in UN processes.

The UN reform package details 23 radical recommendations in the areas of people, leadership, information and communication technology, delivering services, budget and finance and governance. Within these areas the report highlighted a number of objectives, including: “enhancing the Secretariat’s ability to manage complex operations; delegating management tasks to the Deputy Secretary-General while building middle and senior management capacity; exploring new ways of delivering services such as relocation and outsourcing; shortening the cycle for reviewing and adopting the budget with consolidation of budget appropriations; giving the SG expanded authority to redeploy posts and use available savings; putting in place a stronger results-oriented budget monitoring and evaluation framework; and enhancing transparency and accountability of the budget and decision-making processes.”¹

At present, the process is focused on reforming the entire structure and culture of the UN Secretariat. Progress has been made on management and secretariat reform on the following fronts:

- Creation of an Ethics Office (January 2006)
- Agreement to establish an independent audit advisory committee
- Preparation of a policy to protect staff who report misconduct or corruption within the UN or cooperate with investigations
- Formation of a comprehensive financial disclosure policy
- Arrangement of the terms of reference for an independent external evaluation of the UN’s oversight system.
- Establishment of a working group to develop proposals on budgetary, financial and human resources policy.
- Creation of a Management Performance Board

Ethics Office

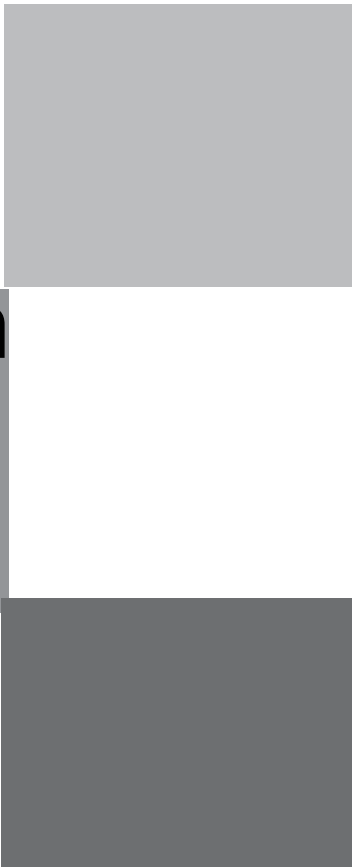
Born out of the UN Reform process effort to evolve mechanisms that enable transparency and accountability within the UN, the Ethics Office has been charged with administering financial disclosure policies, protecting staff who report mismanagement and setting ethical standards that will govern the UN’s internal workings. The office reports directly to the Secretary General and began functioning on January 1, 2006.

Among its initial tasks, the Ethics Office has established a hotline where UN staff can find answers to ethical dilemmas that may confront them in their work and obtain assistance in identifying conflicts of interest, their obligations and their protections. The office will also develop standard, training and education on ethics issues, in coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management, and will ensure annual ethics training for all staff.

The office is also consulting with other UN bodies to jumpstart a referral system for staff with varied problems and complaints. It will also maintain confidential records about UN staff complaints and investigate retaliation for reporting misconduct and corruption. Any credible complaints will be forwarded on to the Office of Internal Oversight which will decide whether or not a case can be established. If the retaliation is proven true, the Ethics Office will be responsible for recommending measures to correct the situation, whether via transfer or reinstatement.

Beyond its support to and protection of UN personnel, the office will also administer the filing and acceptance of financial disclosure forms. It is expected that there will a much larger volume of these forms as, under the new financial disclosure rules emerging from the UN Reform process, a broader spectrum of officials must file reports with the office and the value of gifts that must be reported has fallen from \$10,000 to \$250.

¹ Progress report on UN reform, June 6, 2006. Downloaded on July 7, 2006 from <http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/issues/1734?theme=alt4>



Regional Reflections on the UN Reform Process and Suggestions on How to Work with the UN

An African Perspective on the UN Reform Process

*L. Muthoni Wanyeki, FEMNET**

These comments are based on debates and discussions I and my colleagues within FEMNET have had with those members of the African women's movement who engage with one aspect or another of the multilateral system, as well as with African and other colleagues who are increasingly concerned with how best to democratize global governance across the board. They focus on the background to and imperative for not just reform but transformation of the multilateral system. And from that statement alone, you should be able to infer, right off the bat, that I and my colleagues within FEMNET consider the specific UN Reform proposals currently under discussion to be minimalist, at best.

Background

The draft outcome document for the Millennium Summit was, of course, prefaced by the UN Secretary-General's more comprehensive report, *In Larger Freedom*. That report was itself the result of several UN processes: the report credited to economist Jeffrey Sachs on implementation of the Millennium Declaration and movement towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with its recommendations for accelerated actions to achieve 'quick wins'; and the reports of two high-level panels on security in the new millennium and civil society respectively. Obviously, in the movement from compiling the comprehensive and yet sometimes contentious and contradictory range of information and opinions that informed those three reports to receiving and negotiating feedback on them to editing them down to the draft outcome document, many of the UN Reform proposals received were dropped and, of those that remain, many have lost critical nuances and subtleties.

That said, maybe it is not surprising that the draft outcome document now contains what can only be referred to as a minimal reform agenda. But, the devil is indeed in the detail, and I think it is worth our while to remind ourselves of both the context in which those three original reports were commissioned as well as some of the recommendations that did not make the final cut.

What is to be Reformed and Why?

The first question that presents itself is: What is to be reformed and why? Alternatively, what is broken that needs to be fixed? For we probably all accept that the 1990s were the decade of multilateral standard-setting on almost every aspect of development and human rights, including women's human rights - the achievements of Beijing, Cairo and Vienna in establishing at least international policy commitments if not international legal commitments around women's human rights cannot be gainsaid. But the 1990s were also the decade following the death of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and witness to the birth of the World Trade Organization (WTO), providing new international legal commitments that the Bretton Woods Institutions could use to back up re-packaged demands for liberalization and privatization at the national level.

Then came the so-called Asian crisis and 9/11. In the aftermath, it became clear that the multilateral system had to do something about unregulated short-term capital flows for speculative purposes as well as about the transnational corporations (TNCs) that effect such flows. It became equally clear that the UN's inability to function as per its Charter only fuelled the trend towards American unilateralism.

What was less clear - or rather, less accepted, although articulated by civil society, including the African and other

* Based on a presentation at the East/Southern African conference on UN reform convened by ActionAid International - African regional office in September 2005 and a subsequent interview by Tina Johnson.

women's movements - were a number of observations about the multilateral system:

- that the weakness of the UN's decision-making vis-à-vis development and human rights, including women's human rights, relative to the strength of the WTO's decision-making had to be addressed;
- that the fundamentalist economic logic underscoring the WTO and the Bretton Wood Institutions also had to be addressed - alternatives do exist;
- that while human insecurity became a priority after 9/11, this was in the wrong way - militarism is not a sufficient answer to terrorism; and
- that human injustices have to be better dealt with than they currently can be by the multilateral justice system - the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Criminal Tribunals - due to their incapacitation and, more importantly, the confusing, overlapping international law jurisdictions in which human rights, including women's rights, certainly do not reign supreme.

In short, the Asian crisis and 9/11 starkly revealed the multilateral system's contradictions, inconsistencies, inequalities and hierarchies. Bearing in mind that the multilateral system does not cover all global decision-making - much of which takes place outside of the usual suspects, either in the private sphere or through bi/multilateral relations conducted below the radar of executive/cabinet levels - the imperative for a comprehensive, consolidated approach to the transformation of the multilateral system was established.

What to Do?

The second question that presents itself is: What to do? Three options naturally present themselves: reject the multilateral system; resist the multilateral system; or begin the lengthy, necessarily nit-picking, tedious process of trying to either reform or transform it.

There are already several schools of thought - and action - around these three options (ignoring those that hold that nothing should happen). The *rejectionists* are, of course, the real anti-globalizers - those who have retreated into (relative) self-sufficiency, to the extent that that is possible, away from today's production and consumption patterns. The *resisters* are what are termed anti-globalizers - those who protest, often rightfully angrily so, but do no more than that. The *reformers* are those who not only engage in the minimal UN reform agenda before us but also actually believe (or hope) that that agenda is and will be sufficient. And the *transformers* are a motley crew, including those who believe in anarchy's post-production promise, the die-hards who are still holding out, despite all odds, for the left's post-capitalism promise and, of course, the feminists working tirelessly to achieve the post-patriarchy promise.

I am not being cynical or sarcastic. Being an African feminist of a leftist persuasion, I believe there is value not only in our re-visiting the three reports I referred to earlier but also in understanding the theoretical basis of the choices we are making. If we opt for reform as a route to transformation, then we view genuine multilateralism as the ultimate aim and our interdependence as an opportunity. And we view the impediments to genuine multilateralism as being much more than the impediments that the minimal UN Reform agenda will be able to address.

These impediments include everything that can be and is read into the phrase 'the democratic deficit', namely:

- the increasing gap between citizens and the institutions that govern them globally;
- the lack of accountability of these institutions;
- the increasing gap between social movements representing citizens' interests, including African and other women's movement and substantive decision-making on the issues raised by these social issues;
- and the apparent lack of will and/or capacity to address these social issues.

The reform to transformation agenda should thus necessarily address the governance of the global political economy (and the domination by the Group of 8 of all the institutions involved or responsible); the financial and

monetary environment for development (including international liquidity, official and private financial flows, lending and debt and trade, particularly in commodities); and the reclaiming of global public policy by the global public.

Notions of Global Citizenship and Democracy

We are all global citizens, and global governance - based as it is on nation-states - requires democratic practice at all levels within those nation-states. Indeed, the legitimacy of decisions taken at the global level can only derive from the democratic nature of institutions at the local level. The globalized world means that there are certain universal public goods (peace, food, water, shelter and so on) that require decisions to be taken beyond the nation-state. And such decisions have impact beyond the national executives (governments) of nation-states. National parliaments and local governments, for example, are both increasingly constrained from decision-making, traditionally their domain, while becoming increasingly responsible for implementing decisions made by national executives in international arenas. Global governance therefore requires engagement by all democratic institutions within nation-states, beyond engagement by national executives.

National delegations to global governance arenas are thus more often providing (however effectively or not) for participation by relevant parliamentarians and relevant local government representatives. Increasing the effectiveness of such participation is important, as is recognition by the General Assembly (GA) itself of the importance of such participation. One suggestion is to directly elect global governance representatives - at best a long-term proposal. In the short-term, though, parliamentary committees on foreign affairs, international cooperation and so on can and must be brought to bear on decisions of those line ministries within national executives represented at global governance arenas. In Ghana, for example, all bi/multilateral loan agreements (for development financing) that the national executive wants to enter into are vetted by parliament.

Participation mechanisms vary across the multilateral system, leading to different outcomes in terms of substantive input and outcomes. On the one hand, global conferences are important for standard setting but are attended primarily by an 'international nobility'. On the other hand, a democratic deficit also exists with regard to commitments set at the international level but never realized. There should be a focus on country-level implementation of such commitments. This means the allocation of resources to civil society funds for these purposes, especially in developing and transition countries. The democratic deficit in foreign affairs and international cooperation also needs to be addressed by expanding parliamentary oversight of the executive's traditional role in international cooperation (getting UN documents, parliamentary debates and national standing committees). The devolution of participation in global governance is needed not only because the responsibilities for effecting global governance decisions are also increasingly devolved, but also because openness and transparency are values in and of themselves.

Returning power to the local level would involve recognizing the importance of involving parliaments and local governments in multilateral decision-making when and where such decision-making involves commitments that local governments have to deliver on. The provincial government of Quebec recently made an argument to this effect to the federal Government of Canada, pushing for greater involvement in decision-making around foreign affairs and international cooperation than has been the case in the past. Quebec, for this reason, already has representation distinct from Canada's to the Francophonie and an observer mission at the UN.

The panel on UN-civil society relations (Cardoso Panel) was set up with the mandate to consider UN relations not only with NGOs but also with "other civil society actors" - including parliamentarians and the private sector. This echoes the increasing tendency of (some) UN agencies to convene not only governments but also civil society and the private sector around policy-oriented discussions. However, the mechanisms/ processes for this differ from agency to agency and policy fora to policy fora, and thus results also differ (regarding the effectiveness of participation in such tripartite arrangements).

Moreover, the panel's report, which recommended poorly defined "multi-constituency dialogues", raised the

concerns of NGOs that the proposed changes would weaken their ability to have any real, substantial influence. On the contrary, the role of non-state actors needs to be more formally recognized and there should be more civil society engagement sectorally. Reform is needed in the GA and Security Council to enable civil society participation. This would involve a new accreditation system. There could be a new Under-Secretary-General on partnerships and a coordination mechanism to ensure that all agencies promote participation.

An important reform would be an end to the ability of a small group of post-WWII 'powers' to determine what can, should and will happen within the Security Council. A move away from New York is also proposed to address the ever-increasing difficulty of non-Northern/ Western civil society actors, in particular, to access the US to attend policy negotiations at the UN's headquarters, due not only to the cost of travel and accommodation but also to the difficulty of obtaining US visas in a post-9/11 world.

The UN that the transformers would like to see emerge from the current reforms would privilege development and human rights; assure multilateral democracy, coherence, compliance and accountability; assure that its principles were based on current rather than post-1945 realities; and address historical and structural discrimination and exclusion.

They're fixing the people's UN and disciplining women's spaces in it!

An Asian woman's perspective on UN reform

Gigi Francisco, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era and International Gender and Trade Network

Most women's groups in Asia, including those whose members are more familiar with how the UN is organized and functions, remain largely uninformed about and unaware of the UN Reform process. Although there are concerns being raised about how this will generally impact existing UN programmes for women's rights and gender mainstreaming, discussions have been seriously limited by the lack of information and by confusion on where the UN now stands in the process. In Asia - and I suspect in other regions as well - the general thinking is that the matter of UN reform is a "bureaucratic matter that is better left to UN insiders." The issue is quite alienating for many women's networks whose lobbying in the UN has largely been around language debates relating to rights and development and less on technocratic language on UN organizational capacities.

Exclusion of Women and NGOs

The situation is telling for all those with a stake in the UN. For one, the organization itself is not publicizing the issue among civil society groups as much as it should; rather it has begun the UN Reform process in the most managerialist manner, keeping information mostly confined within the circle of governments and their official delegations as well as UN agencies and offices. Why is it that the UN strongly and persistently sought civil society input to and support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but did not do the same for the UN Reform initiative? Why are NGOs not funded enough to attend and intervene at ongoing UN Reform talks? Secondly, governments are also keeping mum, with talks held in strict confidence among their small circle of officials and diplomats. Talks about UN Reform are already complex to begin with, but these have become all the more difficult amidst a political climate in which Member States prioritize organizational streamlining rather than programmatic strengthening and transforming the UN into an able new global organization for the millennium.

Women's organizations have for the most part been left out of the process, including from whatever few NGO consultations were held in the initial phase of the current UN Reform process. There were some of us, DAWN for instance, that supported the campaign for a People's United Nations that would bring in civil society organizations more firmly as co-equal stakeholders with government. The idea, however, seemed to have been totally ignored by the UN. As the UN went about its business of moving forward the internal reform, some women's organizations had raised their voices from time to time but only to call for women's representation and the need for strong leadership and adequate resources for gender equality. And up to this time, women's networks have not engaged in discussions on the more specific questions about the structural locations, substantive roles and inter-linkages among UNIFEM, INSTRAW, DAW, the CSW and the CEDAW Committee. Are women's groups feeling ill-prepared to intervene, even just to ask the hard questions? Haven't our engagements with the UN throughout its existence given us enough familiarity with the organization to enable some of us, at least, to interject certain demands? Or is that our "wait and see" attitude is precisely a response learned from many years of dealing with the powers that be in the UN or from our recognition of the fragmentation and overall disempowerment of the women's rights agenda and mechanisms within it? For truly this is not the best of times for women's rights everywhere, including

within the UN, where States that were once in the forefront of supporting women's rights have now either completely back-tracked from their commitment or shifted to calls for women's rights / gender equality as cross-cutting issues without the needed clarity on the agenda of this new strategy and how to go about it.

A recent briefing paper that was issued by some international women's networks on the state of the reform process and how this impacts the UN gender architecture was distressing. It announced that an independent and strong women's agency is not going to happen. Instead, the new UN architecture will ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed in the work of larger agencies such as UNFPA, FAO, UNDP, etc. This single strategy approach to gender equality is certainly worrying, given the difficulties experienced in gender mainstreaming by women's movements and networks in the Asian region and elsewhere. Gender equality focal points at the national, regional and global levels have complained of lack of information, inadequate resources to consult with women's groups, ineffective location, weak influence over broad policies and policy direction, and being overburdened by simultaneous demands for technical gender inputs. An independent women's agency could have provided the necessary organizational strength and political substance to the gender focal points. Left on their own, and without clear trans-agency mechanisms linking them to a higher positioned office that functions as a gender oversight or enough resources to consult with women's organizations, gender focal points will have extreme difficulties challenging gender blindness and sexism within their own base agencies.

Step Forward?

International networks have called for women's groups to actively engage with the consultations on UN Reform that will take place between now and September when the Coherence Panel is expected to submit its recommendations to the Secretary-General on the UN architecture. Once again, we are in a situation of being caught between the devil and the deep blue sea and will launch another heroic attempt to 'save' women's equality from being tossed about. Our political imagination was for a People's United Nations or if not, a strong women's agency. Now we find ourselves having to limit the frame of our efforts to what governments are willing to commit to, in this case gender mainstreaming. I am not too optimistic that our engagement could still lead to a dramatic shift in the direction of the gender architecture that is being constructed in the UN. As we engage we also recognize that we do so with very little options and from a position of relative weakness that has emerged from our history of partnership with governments and the UN.

In Asia a region-wide consultation on gender mainstreaming could be carried out. The region is home to strong networks of women who were in the forefront of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and Cairo Programme of Action, as well as of CEDAW. Some of these women also worked for the adoption of a Resolution on Gender Mainstreaming at the Expanded CSW Meeting in March 2005. These networks may cooperate in calling on other women's organizations and networks to come together - physically or virtually - not just for information sharing but more strategically to discuss experiences in gender mainstreaming and to provide regional women's movements' input into the ongoing consultative process. More strategically, such conversation will be important for women's groups in understanding and negotiating through the current geopolitical environment that has spared no one, including the UN, which for a long time was the most important multilateral organization on the planet. Finally for the region, a discussion on the UN Reform process becomes all the more significant in light of it being Asia's turn to nominate the next UN Secretary-General.

Since this piece was written, representatives from Asia participated in the Consultation with Civil Society Organizations of the High Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence held on July 2, 2006.

Latin America and the Caribbean: An Appeal to Reclaim the UN and UN Reform

Alejandra Scampini, ACTION AID International Americas

There are many ways in which we could look at the UN and UN processes and what they mean for and in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the present time, however, these reflections are permeated by feelings of frustration, uncertainty and challenge, and disturbed by a myriad of questions around the validity and efficacy of our practices, actions and political discourses as women and feminist activists in the region. Some of those self-critical questions include asking ourselves what we have invested over the past 20 years; how many of our objectives or gains we have achieved; what limitations and obstacles we have come up against; and questions about the efficacy and efficiency of gender mainstreaming, gender mechanisms, women's offices, gender bureaus, women in politics, etc.

The Regional Context

These questions are, of course, embedded in a complex geopolitical global and regional scenario. Therefore, any valid reflection needs to take stock of some of the important changes that have taken place in our region.

Two main ones stand out: As Virginia Vargas commented on a panel at the World Social Forum in Caracas 2006, today there is a "new democratic wave" in the region, albeit a wave bringing in very heterogeneous democracies ranging from one focused on a struggle against the neo-liberal model and the Bush administration (Venezuela) to more moderated versions (Chile, Brazil). Evo Morales' triumph in Bolivia has meant that indigenous peoples have assumed political power for the first time and been given a chance to recover their culture, while Michelle Bachelet's presidency in Chile contributes significantly to this new democratic wave with a component that has been absent or weakly expressed in our societies: women are political subjects, with proposals for and clear demands of democracy.

The second important change relates to social movements, which are key players in providing opportunities for women's rights activism and advocacy in the region and at the global level. While these movements today remain strong and dynamic, in spite of attempts at cooptation and repression, almost every movement is having deep debates about its strategies. Something new is emerging, although we are not yet sure about its nature. One positive force is growth in the movements' self-esteem: they are prepared for a long-term struggle and their strategies seem to be ready to modify - once again - the regional scenario.

The Latin American and Caribbean women's movement has emerged as a powerful political constituency and become an increasingly important part of the social movement for global justice. Despite a period of positive policy outcomes, the struggle to achieve gender equality and women's human rights continues. Every time administrations change, laws are reconsidered, and quite often the fight for gender equality has to start again almost from scratch. Yet women in the region - as all over the world - are still stubbornly sustaining their advocacy and monitoring work. Real changes certainly would not have occurred if women's organizations had not invested in advocacy, monitoring and sometimes more radical forms of pressure.

Is the UN Still Relevant?

The UN Conferences of the 1990s enabled women to gain knowledge and learn from each other's experiences. They facilitated the organization of joint projects and collaborative efforts. They gave birth to issue-based networks, which in turn provided the research and analytic capacity that served to empower women's advocacy. It was also

through this cycle of conferences that we gradually started including voices of women from different backgrounds - rural, indigenous, black, lesbian and young women - in national, regional and international processes.

However, the UN seemed to open up more to social movements at the very time that it started to lose political power and that national governments - especially the US - began to withdraw their support. This erosion of the policy-making, rights-setting role and significance of the UN also has implications for national level advocacy, which is confronted with an evident decline in governments' political commitment to implement or continue to defend in international arenas agreements they have already signed and committed to.

Recent geopolitical realignments have transformed what was a complex, but essentially effective, space for women's rights advocacy into a "new chaotic space of contestation" that has prompted discussions about its continuing validity. Many feminist activists are asking themselves whether we are advancing or simply legitimating a process and staying put in the same place. There are some reservations about how much of their energies women's movements should direct at the global level of interaction with the UN. Getting more gender language into flawed documents may not be a victory.

Activists from Latin America in particular have highlighted the adverse implications of the very meaning given to politics today, which is related both to the broader world order and to region-specific developments. They see politics as "not about seeking to satisfy the needs of the people, of the majority of the population, but rather it is basically conditioned by private interests, especially those interests linked to capital or to political interests beyond national borders". This has led to a discrediting of institutional politics in general.

Other voices from the region have stressed the fact that, despite the constraints imposed by political and economic globalization, regional and national contexts may currently offer more 'breathing space' for women's rights advocacy than global ones. One example is the rise of progressive governments in a number of Latin American countries mentioned earlier, which raises the prospect of greater regional integration and heightens social movements' expectations with respect to the fight against poverty and the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights. There is also a growing number of gender-aware women in positions of power who may be able to facilitate advocacy on behalf of women (though some Latin American activists complain that the efforts of feminist movements in providing support, training and leadership capacity-building for such women has not really paid off).

How Should Women Engage with the UN?

While regional political and social contexts have pushed other issues to the forefront of women's movements' advocacy agendas in Latin America and the Caribbean, many of these issues could be successfully linked to the UN Reform debate. Maybe we as women advocates need to refocus on what the regional opportunities are to 're-link' our advocacy to the UN and promote the recasting of the women's rights discourse in the UN.

However, a discussion around UN Reform - specifically what reform, why and which agencies, programmes and strategies to reform - cannot take place for women in the region, as well as globally, if we do not first review our advocacy strategies for engaging the organization. There is no point in buying into a new global agenda if there is no assessment on what we did wrong, what was successful and why. Secondly, UN Reform debates cannot take place in isolation from what is happening in the global and regional contexts. Thirdly, there is both a political and a technical debate about UN Reform, but the divide between these debates, which are dealt with separately, is enormous.

A group of women from the women's global movement is following the conversations on UN Reform as they link to the issues of Security Council reform, reform of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), NGO participation and other aspects of the broader UN Reform package; yet, they have not so far found the language to indicate to women's activists on the ground what all that broad and theoretical global discourse means for those of us working at the regional and local levels. Creative new efforts are needed to 'translate' these debates to recapture the attention of women working at these levels and to include them in these processes as early and as comprehensively

as possible. It would be very detrimental to the movement if we do not tackle this challenge and allow ourselves to be divided, with experts and lawyers on one side of the political debate around UN Reform and activists on the other.

At the same time, my personal sense is that there is a heavy political debate that needs to be waged first in a regional context before it can transfer to and happen at the global level. Spaces for this debate need to be created. Women activists and feminists need time to stop and assess, to have a “Pause for Thought”.¹ If we enter into the UN Reform debate without listening to and linking it to these reflection processes, we will be fragmenting ourselves and seeing only one part of the scenario.

So, in this context of change, what role should feminist strategies assign to international, multilateral spaces - such as the UN and national spaces, represented the States, respectively? The unfocused advocacy strategies of the 1990s were successful owing in large part to the fact that structures for participation and for seizing opportunities had opened up simultaneously at the UN and in countries with a commitment to democracy. Their success also owed much to feminist movements’ capacity to organize and formulate proposals.

However, that structure to seize opportunities no longer exists. The closed process leading up to the Millennium Review Summit in 2005 was a clear reminder of the difficulties and exclusionary practices at the UN. Today, women have to critically assess that any advocacy practice or negotiation strategy has its limits in this era of neo-liberal hegemony, insolent and arbitrary US primacy, and growing conservative and fundamentalist trends. They need to consider the impact that all this has had in terms of undermining the UN and making it almost obsolete as a space from which to promote change.

Is it possible to advocate successfully for women’s rights within an institution vis-à-vis which the only valid demand is that it has to be not reformed, but re-founded, rebuilt from scratch? Is it possible to build a more equal and diverse world based on freedoms, social justice and respect for other human beings? Are we women capable of putting forward comprehensive proposals for the whole of society with a gender perspective? These are just a few examples of the questions that we have to confront if we want to address the UN and its value and validity in women’s advocacy strategies.

Neo-liberalism, which is behind the re-orientation of States within UN processes so as to better serve the interests of capital, weakens the state’s traditional role as mediator of social conflict and also modifies the contents of its democratic action. Any attempt to think of what kind of UN we want, what areas we should consider more important than others, has to be done in the light of these State reforms and the intra-State decentralization processes that are underway. If we avoid these conversations, we would be again narrowing the debate around UN and UN Reform to technical issues and expert conversations that are not translated into local and national realities. It is in the local and national realm where the language of UN documents needs to be implemented.

And, more than ever, the UN is a crucial space for fighting unilateralism and the power of corporations. We believe the UN has a unique and valuable role, not only to create rules at a multilateral level but also to be a shield, for both women and men, against voracious capitalism and hegemonic political and economic power. So let’s not give up on the UN; let’s engage as women and feminists, but critically. One key question posed by Zo Randriamaro, a Madagascar activist, in one of her publications is that, in order to evaluate the UN, we should consider where global governance and “we the people” would be without it. Furthermore, as women and their organizations face new and ever more daunting challenges today, it is vital to build on the achievements and assets accumulated in several decades of feminist activism at the UN. Certainly, we can make substantial contributions in terms of making the UN more effective.

Regional Women’s Recommendations for UN Reform

We want to strengthen the idea that the UN remains an important multilateral institution for the establishment of rules and the construction of consensus, and we have to work jointly for the UN to retain this element. We feel the

¹ Title of a book (subtitled Lessons learnt and ways forward for women’s human rights advocacy) launched by GEO-ICAE and REPEM in 2006.

UN's multilateralism should be further developed as therein lies the real power to fulfil international conventions and resolutions.

The UN as an organization cannot find the solution in an isolated manner. We have to do this jointly, and to this end we need, among other things, to broaden and strengthen civil society's participation. As Lydia Alpizar, a Mexican feminist and a representative for the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) from the region noted, "without us, the peoples" the UN is nothing but an empty shell. A UN like this does not work for us, does not belong to us; it is contaminated by political and economic interests that do not allow it to develop the mission for which it was created. We must recover that mission. Thus, we need changes in terms of how, for what reason and for whom the UN functions. We must review and debate structures, functions and power dynamics at the UN with the active participation of civil society, as part of its vision and mandate. Only then we will have a UN more credible and capable of serving justice and global democracy.

One of the best mechanisms for a more effective UN could be consultative status for NGOs in the General Assembly. Our participation should not be limited to special invitations; we have to create a permanent mechanism that can be used to influence resolutions as well as commissions. With regard to the Security Council, we advocate that its discussions should include stakeholders beyond the Member States and encompass broader themes such as democratization, transparency and accountability in the decision-making process, as well as generating spaces for dialogue and consultation with civil society. There should be a formal permanent mechanism that would allow civil society to help build and implement the concept of human security that includes women's security in the public and private spheres. ECOSOC should be reinforced and its status elevated; ultimately, it should serve as a forum on development cooperation to which the International Financial Institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) are subordinated and accountable.

Finally, we as women's groups and activists know that change is possible from within the UN. We reclaim our UN as a crucial forum we helped to develop. To this end, we will have to continue to involve ourselves in its mechanisms in order to determine the how, the ultimate direction and the reasons for the changes as part of a wider UN Reform process. We call on women's groups and feminist movements, in our region and globally, to work together to create the time and space needed for this involvement to be effective.

The International Women Commission, UN Resolution 1325 and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Rola Hamed

As the UN embarks on its most comprehensive reform effort in decades, I am keenly aware as a feminist peace activist of the opportunities created by new bodies, such as the Peacebuilding Commission. However, I am also concerned about whether the Commission will honour UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which explicitly calls for women's participation in and contribution to peace negotiations. How can it be ensured that women from all walks of life, not just the few representing governments, will gain a seat and - more importantly - a voice in peace negotiations that the Commission will broker and administer? How can it be ensured that the ongoing efforts of women peace activists to bridge conflicts and contribute to reconciliation are supported, strengthened and incorporated into official UN procedures?

The example of the International Women's Commission (IWC) might be a good test case for whether the changes brought about by UN Reform in the area of conflict resolution and peace-building will be mindful of women's and feminist peace activism and the valuable contribution that women all over the world are already making. It may therefore be helpful to take a close look at its genesis, the hopes attached to it, and the promise it holds thanks to the leadership of women engaged in it. While this is a regional example from the Middle East, the IWC might in many ways be a blueprint for the resolution of culturally motivated conflicts currently bringing so much destruction, pain and suffering to people, many of them women and children, all over the world.

Questions of Identity

The concept of identity encompasses various cultural components: language, religion, customs, traditions, symbols and history. A history of suffering and the need for a homeland are the most dominant aspects of both Palestinian and Israeli identities. The legitimacy of and international support for both nations are very much based on the homelessness of the Palestinians on the one hand, and on the experience of the Holocaust and its survivors on the other. In both cases, we see a nationalist ethos cultivated through stories of noble fighters who gave their lives for the nation, and of young people who devote their lives to building that nation.

Another important aspect in both identities is the Diaspora. The Palestinian refugees and the Jews in Israel represent only a minority of their nations, and both peoples justify the 'return' of the Diaspora. The Zionist would like all Jews to come to Israel and be a part of the Jewish homeland, while the Palestinians fight for the return of their people who have twice been expelled from their homes and villages, first in 1948 and again in 1967.

I would argue that both the Palestinian and the Israeli 'imagined communities' are stepping-stones on the way for the Palestinians and Israelis to co-exist: the Israeli connection to the Jewish Diaspora and the 'law of return', which aims to keep a Jewish majority inside Israel, and the Palestinian refugees' right to return, something which is unlikely to be accepted by the people and government of Israel in the coming decades.

Feminist Peace Organizations

My experience in peace and feminist organizations over 20 years proves that Israeli and Palestinian women can

speak out with one voice and share the same vision for our common future. We can protest against the Israeli occupation and show support for and solidarity with Palestinians and Israeli mothers, sisters and daughters, with the families of victims from both sides and with each other as individuals.

In 1989, a meeting was convened in Brussels between prominent Israeli and Palestinian women peace activists. The meeting initiated an ongoing dialogue that in 1994 resulted in the establishment of the Jerusalem Link composed of two women's organizations - Bat Shalom on the Israeli side and the Jerusalem Centre for Women on the Palestinian side. Each organization is autonomous and takes its own national constituency as its primary responsibility, but together we promote a joint vision of a just peace, democracy, human rights and women's leadership. Mandated to advocate for peace and justice between Israel and Palestine, we believe a viable resolution of the conflict between our two peoples must be based on recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an independent state alongside the state of Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states, and a final settlement of all relevant issues based on international law. We are struggling for peace and equality of all women and especially for equal rights of Palestinian women from poor neighbourhoods in Israel.

The two organizations do not agree on everything, but we have not allowed this to prevent our close collaboration over the last decade. The urgency of our mission today springs from years of escalating violence since the outbreak of the second Intifada, during which time we have witnessed in ever more devastating detail the catastrophic effect of war on women in particular. This has encouraged us to come up with another mechanism, and we proposed an international women's commission that would be formally attached as an advisory panel to any Middle East peace negotiations (not merely the 'roadmap', should it survive the current crisis). The commission, made up of Palestinian, Israeli and international peacemakers, would have a specific mandate to review all documents in light of the impact they would have on women, children and normal, non-military society. The key plank to this proposal was UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, unanimously passed by the UN Security Council in October 2000.

The Italian Government gave its support to the proposal, which also won the full backing of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In September 2003, Baroness Symons, Minister of State at the Foreign Office in London, pledged the support of the British Government in seeking to bring the commission into effect. Finally, in 2005 the International Women Commission (IWC) for a just and sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace was officially launched in Istanbul, and its charter of principles was adopted on 27 July of that year.

Designed as a consultative and advocacy body, the Commission is composed of 20 outstanding women from the international community, and 20 women each from Palestine and Israel. IWC members are women leaders who hold official positions such as parliamentarians and government representatives, and leaders in civil society - women's rights activists and peace activists. The Commission is chaired by the Executive Director of UNIFEM.

Based on a set of agreed principles, coupled with the reputations and abilities of the women Commissioners and regularly informed by grass-roots meetings that have already begun, the IWC will seek entry into negotiating processes and discussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict, whether at the local or international level. Ongoing contact with organizations such as the European Union (EU), the UN and the Quartet (comprised of the UN, the United States, the Russian Federation and the EU) are therefore of particular importance. The purpose is essentially to bring women's voices to the negotiating table, as demanded by UN Resolution 1325, for the achievement of peace.

IWC is an international initiative to stop the violence immediately. It works to guarantee women's full participation in formal and informal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, based on principles of gender equality, women's human rights, international human rights and humanitarian law, in any future resolution of the conflict. We are insisting that all negotiating teams include at least fifty per cent women - in the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, in the UN teams and among representatives of all governments involved in attempts to resolve this conflict.

Conflicts that are based upon or involve questions of identity are the most complicated ones to resolve, because an individual's identity is so fundamental to that person. In addition, because we live in a patriarchal male-chauvinist

world that does not 'know' a non-violent way of solving conflicts, it may sometimes seem impossible to resolve them in peaceful ways. As women, both Israeli and Palestinians, we perceive unilateral actions as violations of basic human rights. We deplore the brutal culture of militarism and violence, the politics of fear and hate that manipulate public opinion. We know that in a world based on fear, hatred and despair we are all losers. A secure peace demands an entirely different set of values and actions, one that honours the perspectives and concerns of both sides. Women's voices have traditionally gone unheard on issues of national security. Yet we know that the only guarantee of our security rests on justice and the end to conflict.

We also know that there are ways of resolving conflicts in a non-violent way, and I suggest two approaches:

- a. Crossing ethnic boundaries by bridging different identities through similar sub-groups, based on gender, social class, sexual identity, people with disabilities, etc.
- b. Decentralizing power by undertaking alternative activities that aim to make politics irrelevant and creating new forms of dialogue between the different groups.

We Israeli and Palestinian members of women's peace organization want to share the resources of this land and its holy places, believing that the area can be shared between two independent and equal nations. Israel should not rule the lives of Palestinians, and neither Palestine nor Israel should believe that peace can be won through violence and force. We want to work through the IWC and with the UN - particularly a reformed UN that stops paying lip service to gender equality and puts it into action in its conflict-resolution and peace-building actions and mandates.

No reason to fight? European women and the UN reform

Franziska Brantner

Why did, do and should European women rights activists get involved in the United Nations? The answer is quite simple: the UN is the global rights-setting institution. If in the policy arena the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund might have sidelined the UN in terms of real impact on women's lives, the UN has had and will continue to have the capacity to advance the international human rights agenda. It is therefore an important place for feminist advocacy.

Why should European women rights activists get involved in the UN Reform process? The global struggle for women's rights is at least partly framed by the UN's institutional setting, its rules and procedures. The institutional setting lays down either favourable or disadvantageous conditions for the advancement of women rights at the UN and via the UN in the field - for example, access rules for NGOs or, quite simply, the level at which gender issues are dealt with. These organizational settings, rules, policies and operations are now under reform. European feminists are part of the global struggle; therefore the framing of our common struggle should matter to us.

Restructuring of UN Agencies

System-wide coherence¹ is a point that passed without much public attention in September 2005, though after intense negotiations. What is it about? It is about the reorganization and restructuring of the UN's work at headquarters and in the field in order to render it "more effective and relevant." It concerns UN funds, agencies and programmes in general as well as the UN presence in every country.

The High-level Panel set up to develop proposals for "more tightly managed entities in the field of the environment, humanitarian assistance and development" has quite significant European representation. (*Please see Doris Mpoumou and June Zeitlin's article on the High-level Panel and the list of panel members on page 28.*) The Norwegian Prime Minister is one of the three chairs of the Panel. In February 2006 the UN Ambassadors of 13 donor countries (G13) presented a letter to him containing proposals with far-reaching consequences (its Annex outlines eight "key issues for strengthening the UN operational system"). The G13 comprises Canada and 12 European countries: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. European countries have been discussing this restructuring for a while, but within the framework of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) rather than at the UN¹.

As envisaged in the World Summit document, these donor-developed proposals consider restructuring the UN's funds, agencies and programmes into three big organizations (development, humanitarian assistance and the environment). At the country level, the UN would work as one team, under one programme and one coordinator. This implies merging or at least combining many agencies- the papers propose different ways and stages. One target that is always mentioned is the fusion of UNIFEM into UNDP.

Will this serve the women's rights agenda? The restructuring will certainly have an impact on the work of women's rights activists on the ground. Streamlining the organizations and making sure that all parts pull in the same direction could be positive, but it could also be negative if that 'mainstream' does not integrate a strong gender perspective - while the gender-specific fund will have disappeared. It is therefore of special importance to women's rights activists to make sure that the gender aspect does not lose out. This is especially important for European

¹ At the DAC conference in December 2005, Belgium presented a paper entitled "Redesign of the UN Development Architecture," and the Netherlands presented the paper "A UN operational system for development fit to face the challenges of reaching the MDGs."

activists, as the pushes and proposals for reform emanate from Europe. Advocacy for a strong gender component in the new 'system-wide coherence' will have to be directed towards the European governments, whose proposals so far are weak on this aspect and will most likely not be strengthened in the process by proposals of the G77.

A coalition of several women's rights groups- including the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) - have campaigned for strengthening the gender aspect in this process. They managed to get the Secretary-General to mandate that gender mainstreaming be added as a cross-cutting issue in the Panel's work. The Panel now will review both the 'gender architecture' of the UN and gender mainstreaming as part of its official assessment. The coalition also made a number of proposals regarding a future possible architecture.

However, after a showdown in the 5th Committee over the Secretary-General's management report, the Panel will apparently not now work on radically restructuring or creating institutions. Rather, it will focus on how to best mainstream environment, gender, human rights and sustainable development in the UN (besides UN financing and the Resident Coordinator system). It is therefore not less important and this is a big opportunity for women that should not be missed.

Follow-up to Beijing

As the follow-up process to Beijing seemingly came to an end with the Beijing +10 Review in 2005, the Outcome Document of the World Summit has set the new framework for the follow-up of all major conferences and summits of the 1990s. In order to strengthen the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Outcome Document decided that an Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) within the ECOSOC high-level segment will be responsible for reviewing the follow-up to the outcomes of the major conferences.

A draft resolution on ECOSOC reform is currently being discussed in order to define such a review in more detail. One aspect of the debate concerns the review's format: Will the AMR each year examine the follow-up to one conference, or work according to thematic foci or cross-sectoral issues? The latter is the proposal of the G77. Their proposal so far reads "recommends that the Economic and Social Council establishes a multiyear programme of work based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits including the objectives, goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration for the Ministerial review."

What does this mean for the follow-up to Beijing? Is gender equality going to be a cross-sectoral thematic focus at all and, if yes, when? The G77 proposal further suggests that governments would make voluntary presentations on the cross-sectoral thematic issues and none on progress on the outcomes of the major conferences. This should be of serious concern to all those who agree that what is needed now is implementation. The reluctance to strengthen any sort of monitoring of implementation has been very strong by all actors, developed and developing, and there are attempts at weakening even the existing structure.

Furthermore, will the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) just be responsible for feeding into the bigger thematic matters on 'women's issues' - in accordance with its mandate - or can it contribute on all issues? How will decisions taken by the CSW feed into the larger processes, and who will ensure that its decisions are really taken into account? To put it briefly: The future work of the CSW partly depends on the decisions made on ECOSOC reform.

In addition, the September 2005 Summit has again shown that the UN is no longer hosting large, formal preparatory processes. This will most likely not change in the near future. The UN preparatory processes of the 1990s were a good way for civil society to be involved and allowed for broad consultative processes reflecting the diversity of the civil society movements. How will such a broad consultation - not only of the New York-based NGOs - be ensured and allow for networking, cross-issue fertilization and inclusion of local and regional women's NGOs? While women

NGOs from the developed world fare better in the current system of sporadic NGO hearings, it is in our interest to fight for inclusion, broad access and consultation of our partners from around the world. We should ask for formal (regional) preparatory processes that allow for wide NGO participation.

Gender Equality Inside the UN

One of the sad points of the World Summit outcome is that language calling for the strengthening of the status and resources of women-specific UN entities and for gender balance in the staffing of the UN has not been included. At one point, the call for gender balance in staffing was included (§ 161 c), but then it was deleted again.

The Secretary-General has now proposed a series of management and staff reforms, many about restructuring the relationship between the General Assembly (GA) and the Secretariat but some also relating to senior management. The latter address gender balance - but always combined with geographical balance - as one criterion for appointment. Given the turf struggles over 'equitable geographical representation', women's rights activists have to continuously monitor high-level appointments and lobby for women to get the jobs (if equally qualified and coming from all the regions, of course). Even though the process has been slowed down by North-South confrontations in the 5th Committee, women's rights' activists should continue lobbying for improved transparency in appointment procedures and in monitoring of staff (not least to make sure that future peacekeeping soldiers do not abuse women and children).

Furthermore, the selection of the UN Secretary-General is one of the most significant collective decisions made by its Member States and will occur this year. It represents a crucial moment for women, especially from Eastern Europe as this region has a certain admitted claim to fill this position (next to the Asian group). The European Women's Lobby has been advocating for selecting a woman as the next Secretary-General. But the debates within the GA go much further, trying to establish mechanisms that would actually increase the chances for women to be selected.

The Secretary-General is approved by the GA upon recommendation by the Security Council. In fact, the Security Council selects one candidate and the GA accepts. GA Resolution 11(1) from 1946 decided that the Security Council should recommend a single name for appointment as Secretary-General and that debate on the nomination in the GA should be avoided. Despite a 1997 decision by the GA to make the process more transparent, no significant step has up to now been undertaken in this direction.

However, in the framework of the debate on 'Revitalizing the General Assembly', Canada has now put forward concrete proposals to render this process more transparent and accountable. First of all, a list of qualifications should be agreed upon. Secondly, the GA should have the benefit of examining the declared candidates on their positions and qualifications before the Security Council takes a decision. Furthermore, the Canadians propose to abolish the possibility of re-election (with the possibility to extend the term to seven years), increasing the frequency of the selection process and "thereby creating the possibility of more regular distribution among regions and between genders". The Canadian proposal does not suggest that the Security Council put forward more than one candidate, because the risk of politicization and division of the GA being too high.

Such reform is surely in the interest of women by increasing transparency in the procedure and highlighting the importance of finding measures that promote an equal distribution between genders. We should lobby the European governments and the two European Permanent Five (P5) countries to support such a procedure.

Time to Act

The UN reform is a process, and the real impact of the decisions taken still depends to a large degree on the implementation and specification of certain aspects. Regarding the follow-up to Beijing +10 and the restructuring of the agencies and funds, most is still up in the air. In times of rather hostile governments, it is important to act to ensure an institutional framework that is favourable for women's rights.

And on all these issues European feminists can no longer take for granted that the EU position, the compromise between its 25 Member States, will be progressive and does not require our lobbying. Several countries, especially from the new Eastern European Member States, have extremely conservative governments right now, others are more conservative after elections, while others, such as Germany, are more conservative after elections. The compromises that the EU defends, especially with respect to women's rights, are not up to our standards. Remember that the first anti-abortion exhibition is taking place now in the European Parliament. We have to watch out that the progressive governments do not sell out the women's right issues in exchange for receiving the support of the reactionary governments on other aspects closer to the hearts of the male decision-makers.

While the European Women's Lobby is in Brussels and New York only for major events, the EU positions need to be monitored on a continuous basis. This is indispensable for collecting information and then forwarding it to national and European actors for advocacy and lobbying of our national governments, and for holding them accountable. Too easily do they escape by arguing that it was not possible to maintain a stronger position because of the reluctance of some of the conservative governments. This is no excuse. There are many other issues on which they do not give up their positions - just think about agricultural subsidies - so why should we accept this argument when it comes to women's rights?

Why should North American women engage in this process?¹

Katherine McDonald

There is a perception, real or imagined, within North America, that women's equality has been achieved and that there is no need to support advocacy for women's rights. Yet this is the moment when the UN system absolutely must incorporate women's rights as one of its pillars, together with development, peace and human rights. The reform of the UN should be a priority for women in the region.

From a Canadian perspective, women value the role Canada has played in international forums to advance women's rights and promote gender equality. Canada takes a strong position on human rights and includes women's human rights and gender equality as a strong pillar in its foreign policy statement. Stephen Lewis, a Canadian and UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Africa, has recently recommended that UN reform efforts should include a stand alone agency on women (Please see page for an excerpt of Stephen Lewis' speech.) Canada played a lead role at Cairo and Beijing and at these conferences' five- and ten-year reviews. More recently, Canada has taken the position that the linkages between sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS must be recognized in light of the increasing feminization of the epidemic.

That said, the feminist and anti-poverty communities in Canada are deeply disappointed with Canada's performance in meeting its international treaty obligations. Canadian activists have used the treaty body reporting system to demonstrate how federal budgets have starved many crucial social programmes during the late 1990s. Canada has experienced eight years of hefty budget surpluses since then, yet has done little to reverse the damage. Deep cuts to legal aid and welfare, discrimination against aboriginal women, the discriminatory impact of immigration law on women, the narrow eligibility rules for employment insurance that disproportionately affect women, the lack of effective pay equity legislation, the over-representation of racialized women in the low paid labour sector, and the lack of resources for front-line and anti-violence services were all identified as key issues in a recent alternative report presented to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the

¹ The author is a Canadian, and is not in a position to speak for American or Mexican women. This contribution was originally part of her article on the Human Rights Council (page 41)

VIEW FROM CANADA:
Interview with Prabha Khosla,
Canadian Committee on Women
and UN Reform
Toronto, Canada; 3 July, 2006

By Tanya Roberts-Davis

TRD: Why did women activists in Canada organize the Canadian Committee on Women and UN reform?

PK: In the past, women have used the UN system in many ways to bring attention to the systemic injustices and inequalities faced by diverse populations of women in Canada. Now, is the time to come together to say to the Prime Minister, and to the President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Mr. Greenhill, that Canada needs to speak up for-- and financially support--a UN Women's Agency. For a number of us in the feminist movement it was critical to be involved in the UN reform process taking place now. Some of us in the Committee are ourselves from the Third World and/or are linked to women in the South in multiple ways. We see the failure of the UN to deliver on the ground in terms of women's rights and equality. Neither has the Canadian government delivered on women's rights at home, even though Canada has signed on to the UN Conventions on women's rights and human rights. It is also time for Canada to financially support women's rights in this country.

(continued on page 65)

Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) - an umbrella group representing many grassroots women's organizations - and the National Association of Women and the Law.²

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Yet in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, 1.9 million women still live in poverty, representing 17 per cent of Canada's 33 million people. This is while the newly elected Conservative government reneged on the former government's promise for a national child-care programme, replacing it with a stipend to all parents of young children that covers less than three days per month at a licensed child-care facility.

Will Canada maintain its leadership role at the international level? Women are mobilizing to protect domestic rights, and if women around the world are demanding that the women's right machinery is strengthened, the ripple effect could influence Canada as well. Conversely, Canadian women need to hold their government to account at both the international and national level if we want real change.

So, while UN reforms may seem a distant event, women everywhere should be on the alert and mobilizing.

² FAFIA presents reports to all the treaty monitoring bodies and has been responsible for holding Canada to account on its treaty obligations. See www.fafia-afai.org/.

TRD: What are the main demands of the Canadian Committee on Women and UN Reform?

PK: The Committee was formed to speak to two aspects simultaneously. This is a unique opportunity internationally for the UN to take a bold step towards making women's rights and gender equality a reality. But also, we are urging the Canadian government to take a bold step to address women's inequalities (including lack of national daycare, poverty, homelessness, rights of First Nations women, etc.) in this country. Thus, our campaign and advocacy speaks to the various issues facing diverse women in Canada and accountability to women's rights and gender equality at the UN.

We are working with some women's organizations in the South to lobby together for an autonomous, strong, and well-resourced women's agency at the UN.

Such an agency has a lot of potential. But, it cannot be created by a small group of people in New York, as that would not benefit women globally. It needs to be constructed from the base so that women's civil society organizations have a voice and are able to shape its direction. A strong women's agency has the potential to step up the work women are doing on the ground, which will have a direct impact on women's organizing in the South and the North. Internationally we are linked in many ways—for example through the trade union movement, the Gender and Trade Network, the Gender and Water Alliance, the reproductive and health rights movement, the gay & lesbian rights movement, Energia, the Gender and Disasters network, AWID, WEDO, etc. The kind of money that should be going to women's organizations has not been allocated through the UN or multi/bi-lateral institutions. This new agency should be allocated real money to run programmes/campaigns for the rights of half the people on the planet.

TRD: The Canadian Committee on Women and UN Reform recently met the President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Robert Greenhill, to make recommendations for the UN Reform Panel (of

which he is a member). What was the outcome of this meeting?

PK: With Mr. Greenhill, we discussed what is needed on the ground in terms of a new women's agency and to address the violence, poverty, and HIV/AIDS epidemic on women as well as the sex for food in refugee camps, and situations in conflict zones like Darfur, where women are subject to rape and are excluded from decision making and peace making processes. We explained that women need an agency with an operational and a policy development mandate in one organization. Women need an agency that will give priority to their rights. His response was positive, and we will have a follow-up meeting. In the meantime, the Canadian Committee has committed to speak with women's groups in different world regions to get a sense of how they are responding to the call for a new women's agency and how we might work together. We will be doing some outreach, because there is so much exclusion due to the speed at which the reform process is moving forward and the lack of information about the mandate of the Reform Panel.

TRD: Given the current lagging commitment of the UN to develop and activate a 'gendered architecture,' is it realistic to think that a new Women's UN body could advance the women's struggles worldwide for justice?

PK: Women are fed up with the rhetoric. Over many years of organizing as activists and advocates we have been let down by the UN. UN conventions and plans on women's rights are very important and have had an impact, but they have never been fully realized. We have no illusions. What we are saying to the UN is that if it wants to redeem itself in the eyes of women, this is the moment.

We need a new women's agency at the UN, and cannot lose this unique opportunity by not engaging in the UN process. This is why we are sharing information with women, lobbying members of the Coherence Panel and the Canadian government. Around the world, women need to lobby their governments and build towards the UN General Assembly Meeting in September.

TRD: A global institution that would stand up for the rights of over half the world's population and have the capacity to implement meaningful changes still can seem like a distant dream. How does the Canadian Committee see this vision as becoming a reality?

PK: First, we need a vision of the kind of women's agency that we want—its structures, principles and operating mechanisms. And by we, I mean all women and not only women in Canada. We need to be clear about how this agency would work with and relate to other UN bodies. A new women's agency needs real power and resources and the rest of the UN agencies and programmes also need to be accountable to the UN commitments on women's rights. At the same time that we create a new women's agency there should also be time-bound goals and accountability mechanisms on women's rights and gender equality from the rest of the UN. This is not a situation of either or. The UN Women's Agency needs to be a dynamic, responsive agency and not another layer of bureaucracy. Lessons need to be drawn from the successes of women's groups on the ground, and organizing strategies from the base. It would need a country-level presence and a regional structure to include women from civil society organizations as decision makers and implementators. There is no consensus within the reform panel about this proposal, which is why we need to lobby the Reform Panel, national governments and mobilize fast.

Working with the UN at National Level

Rosalind W. Harris

Interest in the reform of the United Nations stems from the hope that the UN can be more responsive to the varied needs of the world's peoples - in terms of both policy-making for a global agenda and the implementation of policies at all levels. It is now generally understood that neither of these goals can be achieved without the participation of the people and groups that are affected. Thus the reform process should include measures to facilitate and enhance relations among all stakeholders and at all levels. However, working at the inter-governmental level to develop such measures is not the only way to influence international decisions. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have affected the UN and its programmes in many ways over the years by working with national and local authorities, and they will continue to do so while promoting more effective measures for women.

UN policies and programmes exist because they reflect the interests of the world's governing institutions, so the question arises as to how civil society can play its part in decision-making. It often appears that decisions are made at a great distance by unknown persons. In fact, government policy on issues that eventually come to the UN for debate and action is generally formed in the capitol and then transmitted to the representatives abroad, who also inform the government of other views and the progress of negotiations.

Since UN policies are determined by national governments, persons who wish to influence them should begin this process by learning which agencies of the government are dealing with UN policies. If a group has views on the positions the government should take, it should try to discuss them with the appropriate officials. It should demonstrate concern by following up to learn what actions, if any, the government representatives took at the UN.

When UN policies on women, for example, are set forth in resolutions at major conferences and related conventions are adopted, groups should press for ratification of the conventions. If the government has ratified, it is important for NGOs to insist on the legislation needed to implement the provisions of the conventions or resolutions. They can also advise on relevant programmes, including the needed budget appropriations.

The existence of UN policies, such as those related to violence against women, are useful tools for local groups to use in bringing pressure on local and national authorities to abide by agreed upon principles. Thus, there is a two-way street: Concerns arising from local perceptions of the need for water, schools and health care, for example, result in international action; and international agreements serve as tools to facilitate local action.

The comments above also relate to policies decided at regional levels by UN Commissions. The regional process is a significant part of the global process as it provides a platform for discussion, development of programmes and reconciliation of differences, as well as a venue where material is prepared for global conferences. Results are fed into the global process or may provide for regionally oriented programmes. NGOs may be in a better position to participate in regional meetings when global ones are too distant and should make use of any opportunities that arise. However, it should be recalled that the official participants are government representatives and thus NGOs at home can work on the preparations for regional meetings as well as global ones.

In addition to looking at and affecting policies, NGOs should be involved in the broad range of UN operational activities flowing from policy decisions. These can be effectively shaped and used by groups at the local and national level.

The UN and its related agencies have representatives and offices in many countries. There is today an effort to coordinate the various UN development programmes, so NGOs should make contact with the UN national office.

They should also approach their national government when it is preparing projects for consideration by the UN agencies. At times this can be a useful bridge in planning a rational project. In some instances international development programmes have established advisory NGO groups that can be effective in, among other things, identifying local concerns, persons and customs to be considered in specific projects.

Another crucial area for civil society is in the reporting and monitoring of international agreements. Many of the conventions outline follow-up mechanisms needed to implement their provisions. NGOs alert to these texts should work with government and parliamentarians to see that these mechanisms are put in place. NGOs should also be aware of the reports governments must submit on their actions and, if possible, contribute to the contents. If they find the official report has serious deficiencies, they may prepare 'shadow' reports that can be circulated.

NGOs at the local level can contribute information on what, if any, impact international decisions have had. Engaging them in the process of monitoring and reporting is valuable not only for more precise reporting but also in stimulating communities to work towards better implementation.

In addition NGOs should consider contributing to the work of relevant Special Rapporteurs. When Rapporteurs make a visit to a country, NGOs there should arrange a meeting. If no visit is forthcoming, information and data can be sent to them.

All of the above requires education and information. Knowledge is needed about international agreements and the opportunities for implementing them at all levels. Above all it means knowing the process of government at national and local levels and who the persons are that should be approached in order to achieve the desired goals.

It should also be noted that pressure from civil society is most effective when it includes coalitions of organizations with the same objective. Working with others when looking critically at government reports, developing project proposals or mounting educational campaigns is often essential to success. Cooperation ensures more and faster sharing of information and extends the outreach of programmes.

Other Ways of Making Your Voice Heard/ Other Initiatives



Campaign for a Woman Secretary-General

Antonia Kirkland and Jacqueline Hunt

In the 60 years since the United Nations was founded, no woman has ever been elected to serve as Secretary-General, despite a wealth of experienced and qualified candidates. Equality Now began its campaign for a woman Secretary-General in 1996 by highlighting six highly qualified women who had been publicly mentioned as potential candidates for the post. A woman was not elected in that year, nor was there any transparency as to the process of election.

Women are also underrepresented in the ranks of the organization. As of 30 June 2005, they occupied only 37.1 per cent of professional and higher positions and made up only 16.2 per cent of the Under-Secretaries-General. The Platform for Action adopted in 1995 in Beijing at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women called for the development of “mechanisms to nominate women candidates for appointment to senior posts” in the UN and set the target of “overall gender equality, particularly at the professional level and above, by the year 2000.” Yet 11 years after the Beijing conference and six years after the target date, the UN is nowhere near the established goal, and there is no indication that a woman has ever been considered for the top post.

Every year the General Assembly adopts a resolution on the “Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat,” lamenting the lack of progress that has been made and calling for the achievement of gender balance in the Secretariat’s staffing. However, the shortlist of candidates for the position of Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, appointed in March this year, included only men, and a man replaced the most senior woman in the UN when Mark Malloch Brown took over for Louise Frechette as Deputy Secretary-General in April.

Women’s unequal access to positions of decision-making power within the UN hinders progress towards all the organization’s goals, including equality, development and peace. The current discussion underway on UN reform provides an opportunity for much needed action and a serious examination of the need to rectify this imbalance of power in order to meet these goals.

The World is Ready

Current UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan proclaimed on International Women’s Day 2006 that, “the role of women in decision-making is central to the advancement of women around the world, and to the progress of humankind as a whole,” and that “the world is ready for a woman Secretary-General.” The election of a new Secretary-General will take place this year when his term comes to an end. Traditionally, the post should rotate so that each geographical region gets its ‘turn’. Yet, while there are plenty of qualified women from all regions of the world who could serve as Secretary-General, women have never had a ‘turn’.

Shortlist for Secretary-General:

Ban Ki-moon

Foreign Minister - South Korea

Dhanapala, Jayantha

Former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament and former Secretary-General of the Sri Lankan Peace Process - Sri Lanka

Surakiart Sathirathai

Deputy Prime Minister and former Foreign Minister - Thailand

Shashi Tharoor

Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information - India

Sources:

<http://www.unsg.org/candidates.html> and
<http://www.unsgselection.org/content/current-candidates/>

Region	# of Terms	# of Secretary-Generals
W. Europe	6	3
Africa	3	2
Asia	2	1
Latin America	2	1
E. Europe	0	0

Under the current system, the Security Council is responsible for recommending a candidate to the General Assembly. The Security Council is composed of five permanent members (China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States) and ten rotating members (this year they are Argentina, Congo, Denmark, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Slovakia and Tanzania). To be nominated by the Security Council, a candidate must secure at least nine votes and avoid the veto of any permanent member. It is generally understood that no national of the five permanent Security Council members should serve as Secretary-General. Shrouded in secrecy, this selection process discourages qualified candidates from putting their names forward for consideration, and there is no evidence that attention is paid to the candidates' track record in promoting gender equality.

In a statement to the UN General Assembly on the selection of the Secretary-General in April 2006, Ambassador Allan Rock of Canada noted, "Gender equality requires that we include both men and women among the outstanding individuals considered for the post. Our collective record on gender equality in senior appointments is woeful and must be improved." Canada cited paragraph 59 of General Assembly Resolution 51/241 of 1997, which states, "In the course of the identification and appointment of the best candidate for the post of Secretary-General due regard shall continue to be given to regional rotation and shall also be given to gender equality."

Women's rights advocates are using the current reform taking place within the UN system as a platform to urge greater gender representation as well as stronger action in the implementation of all resolutions on the improvement of the status of women globally. The upcoming election of a new UN Secretary-General is an opportunity to implement the commitment made in Beijing in a meaningful way as well as to show progress towards achieving the gender balance the General Assembly claims to promote.

The Security Council should be actively seeking qualified women committed to all UN goals, including gender equality, and urging them to step forward rather than waiting for women themselves to declare their candidacy. This may involve the development of a pro-active recruitment process, such as through an international search committee to seek out strong nominees - including women - instead of simply doing business as usual behind closed doors. Establishing a transparent and fair procedure for this and future UN Secretary-General elections might well encourage more women to put their candidacy forward and so be a step towards concrete implementation of the commitment made by Member States to achieving gender equality within the UN.

Ms. Vike-Freiberga is on the 'Serious Speculation' list but has yet to be officially nominated.

Sources:

<http://www.unsg.org/candidates.html>

<http://www.unsgselection.org/content/current-candidates/>

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/12/15/news/latvia.php>

Possible Candidates

Some of the women that Equality Now has highlighted in its campaign are women already serving at the level of Under-Secretary-General or at the highest level of national government. They include the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand, President Tarja Halonen of Finland and President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia, who has expressed interest in the Secretary-General post and has been discussed as a potential candidate. Former Prime Minister of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland later held the post of Director-General of the World Health Organization. Currently serving as a judge on the International Criminal Court, Navanethem Pillay served previously for four years as President of the UN Rwanda Tribunal.

If the system of regional rotation is honoured, there are plenty of qualified Asian women who are serving or have served at the highest level including Chan Heng Chee, Singapore's Ambassador to the US and former Ambassador to the UN and Han Myung-Sook, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea. Sadako Ogata from Japan was UN High Commissioner for many years and Nafis Sadik from Pakistan is a former Executive Director of UNFPA. Anson Chan served with distinction as the head of Hong Kong's civil service for many years. Leticia Ramos Shahani was President of the Philippines Senate, as well as a UN Assistant Secretary-General. There is no shortage of internationally experienced, highly qualified women. The Security Council has only to look for them.

Time for a woman? We are ready and waiting.

Actions Readers Can Take

Please write to the Security Council members and to your own foreign minister or secretary of state, urging them to seek qualified women candidates and support the election of a woman to the post of Secretary-General. Recall the commitment made in the Beijing Platform for Action, and repeated in annual General Assembly resolutions to achieve gender balance at all levels of the UN Secretariat. Note that the upcoming election of the most senior UN post represents a unique opportunity to honour this commitment.

In order to stay informed both during and after the process, below are some organizations that are active in this field. Although they do not all necessarily operate under a specifically gender perspective, they are excellent sources nonetheless.

http://www.equalitynow.org/english/actions/action_1102_en.html

Equality Now is the organization that wrote this article. They offer the most comprehensive list of female possibilities for the Secretary-General.

PO Box 20646

Columbus Circle Station

New York, NY 10023

USA

Fax: +1-212-586-1611

Email: info@equalitynow.org

<http://www.unsg.org/>

UNSG.org is a blog published by Tony Fleming, a masters' candidate in international security at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy, with occasional contributions by guest authors. It provides excellent background information on the selection of the Secretary General

<http://www.unsgselection.org/content/>

UNSGSelection.org is an informal NGO coalition calling for a more open and transparent process for the selection of the UN Secretary-General. It is maintained by the World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy. It looks at selection processes for other high-level officials, and is developing a list of procedural requirements and candidate criteria that can be endorsed by civil society groups to guide the current selection process and initiate longer-term procedural reforms.

708 Third Avenue, 24th Floor

New York, NY 10017

USA

Phone: + 1-212-599-1320

Fax: + 1-212-599-1332

Email: info@UNSGselection.org

<http://chapter15.wordpress.com/>

This is another blog "Looking at the race for the next UN Secretary General." It provides daily analyses of developments and includes links to some of the candidates' websites and blogs.

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org>

Security Council Report is an independent not-for-profit organization in affiliation with Columbia University's Center on International Organization - check out the 2 reports on the selection of the Secretary General. They provide excellent background information on the process, as well as a current analysis of the selection.

Security Council Report

One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza

885 Second Avenue at 48th Street, 31st Floor

New York, NY 10017

Tel: + 1-212-759-6327
Fax: + 1-212-759-4038
Email: contact@securitycouncilreport.org

<http://www.unausa.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKRI8MPJpF&b=1613453>

The United Nations Association of the United States of America offers articles, reports and interviews on selecting the next Secretary-General.

United Nations Association of the USA
801 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017
212-907-1300 (phone)
212-682-9185 (fax)

South Asian Campaign for Gender Equality

Bandana Rana, Saathi, Nepal (in consultation with the South Asian Network)

The year 2005 was an important one for several reasons. It commemorated 30 years since the first UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, 10 years since the Beijing Declaration and the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA) by UN Member States, 5 years since the approval of the historic Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council, and 5 years since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For us women activists in South Asia, these forums and events provided the opportunity to collectively reflect on the processes that have been at work in the region, both to promote the advancement of women and to identify gaps in terms of where the various South Asian countries are in their journey towards equality and development.

A Critical Juncture

Against this backdrop the leaders of the women's movement in South Asia have considered the UN Reform process that has come about at this critical juncture as a window of hope for significantly eliminating inequalities in all spheres: economic, civil, cultural, social and political. Women constitute 51 per cent of the population of the majority of developing countries, and it is critical that UN Reform addresses women's rights. We are concerned that if this focus is not integrated into the UN Reform process, the mandate of the UN Coherence Panel formed in February 2006 will not be adequately fulfilled in terms of the three areas identified: development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

The last three decades have seen major achievements on the setting of norms and standards on gender equality by the UN. Nevertheless, experiences of developing countries highlight the fact that women's rights issues have not been adequately recognized and implemented in key areas. For instance, they have been marginalized and ignored in areas such as access to and control over economic resources and markets, livelihood opportunities, participation in governance and the community, and personal security in the public and the private spheres.

In this regard the women's groups in South Asia, working collectively through different networks on women's issues, have seen the need to appeal for a UN nodal agency for women with a more apposite position and authority in a restructured UN, with the resources, privilege and position that other critical issues receive. Whenever there has been reform, history has shown us that women's voices and concerns are often set aside and easily forgotten about. This time we want to make sure our voices are heard effectively. It is with this agenda in mind that activists involved in women's movements in South Asian countries decided to initiate a campaign for ensuring that the new restructured UN pay adequate attention to gender issues.

The South Asia Women's Campaign

The South Asia Women's Campaign is a move to take forward this agenda to all women globally. It brings together the voices of civil society, NGOs and individual men and women from all across the region who believe in the need for UN Reform to respond to country level realities and demands. The networks involved in this Campaign have a long history of having strived to work for the betterment of humanitarian and women's issues at national and regional levels and of being women's partners in development. Their long unmet needs have led them to come together and campaign with a united voice for women's issues and concerns to be adequately addressed through the UN Reform process.

The Campaign aims to bring before the Coherence Panel for UN Reforms, the UN Secretary-General and the UN Member States:

- The urgent need for sufficiently addressing the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross-cutting issue on various themes.
- The call for a stronger 'gender architecture' in the UN system, including an autonomous agency for women

with a proven track record like UNIFEM, which has operational know-how of women's issues and a perception of what women need, connecting women's voices and concerns to macro policies and global processes.

Various initiatives have taken place at national and regional levels to take this Campaign forward. For example, women's organizations from all over South Asia, each representing and voicing the pleas of thousands of women, have written to the co-chairs of the Coherence Panel. The women's movement also initiated signature campaigns all over the region, both manually ('South Asian Solidarity for Gender Equality') and online at www.southasianwomenscampaign.org. To date, more than nine hundred thousand people, both women and men, have added their signatures to the growing list. These individuals might not realize the important roles they have played just yet, but each of them brings us one step closer to making gender equality a reality 'in-the-near-future' and hopefully a permanent fixture in the longer term.

Promoting UNIFEM as an Autonomous Agency for Women

On 22 April 2006, a delegation of women activists who have been involved in the women's movement in South Asia met Pakistani Prime Minister H.E. Shaukat Aziz, one of the Co-chairs of the Coherence Panel, in Islamabad. They apprised him of South Asian women's concerns and requested him to put these concerns before the rest of the Coherence Panel members. During the meeting the team drew the attention of the Prime Minister to UNIFEM's role and responsibility as the agency within the UN system that works holistically and with consistency on gender equality and women's rights. This agency emerged in 1976 following the call from women worldwide to the General Assembly for the creation of an institution with the mandate and resources to give visibility and voice to women's rights and their implementation. However, our experience shows that UNIFEM was not given the structure, position and resources to be the lead agency on women that was envisaged by the World Conference on Women in Mexico and reinforced in world conferences in Nairobi and Beijing.

Despite the limitation of status and resources, however, UNIFEM has emerged over the years as a powerhouse of support to governments, civil society and women's movements at regional and national levels. It has in its initiatives supported women's groups at the national level to work in partnership with governments in implementing the commitments of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing PFA. The importance of UNIFEM has also been reiterated in regional meetings in Asia. Against this backdrop the delegation urged the Prime Minister to recommend that the UN Reform process designate UNIFEM as a fitting autonomous agency for women within the UN. They further requested that the Coherence Panel confer with women's organizations in the countries they visit and that a special gender hearing be facilitated in Pakistan before the Panel so that the voices of the women from developing countries could be heard in discussions on the new 'gender architecture' of the UN system.

In Nepal a large group of like-minded individuals from civil society have joined forces to form what has amicably been baptized 'Friends of UNIFEM'. This is a group of women and men from all walks of life who have come together to support 'South Asian Solidarity for Gender Equality' and are working on getting the message across to people in their personal and professional networks and collecting signatures through the same. They meet once or twice a month and correspond on a weekly basis via email to monitor the progress of the signature campaign or suggest new ideas like radio info-messages and interviews on how to make the campaign more effective.

Many well-established and long-serving NGOs have shown their support to 'Friends of UNIFEM' by writing official letters to members of the Coherence Panel to back the campaign. They have repeatedly and tirelessly voiced in their networks and among their respective partners the need for the mandate of UNIFEM to be "strengthened so that it can be even more active in its role of catalysing and mainstreaming"¹ gender equality and women's rights.

While we recognize the need for all UN agencies to institutionalize and implement women's rights, experiences of the last three decades have also shown that the UN system urgently requires a powerful autonomous agency with political strength and resources to operationalize and engender development in conformity with CEDAW and

¹ Group of 77 and China, Document L-041/2006, 31 March 2006.

the BPFA. Designating UNIFEM as that agency, with the necessary status and resources, will strengthen its capacity to make major contributions to the UN in its effort to promote a rights-based approach to development, gender equality and the empowerment of women, in the context of international human rights norms and the MDGs.

Bringing Women's Perspectives into UN Reform Processes

Devaki Jain

The setting up in this day and age of a High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and environment with only three women out of 15 members has been a shocking revelation of the continued exclusion of women from high profile arrangements on policy. It shows that the UN, set up as a level playing field for nations and a guardian of the equality principle, is withdrawing from its original mandate and the founding Charter. Sixty years of international struggle by women does not seem to have made a difference to the UN, even as it is advising nations to give equality in those spaces.

Several suggestions have come forward to influence this Panel, including building stronger women-centred independent multilateral agencies solely to protect women's rights and reveal their strengths. But the lack of gender balance is not the only difficulty with the Panel - or the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The report has been deeply neglectful of the founding responsibilities of the UN, and the long and brilliant history of its association with development, linked to the aspirations and advice of the nations of the South.

A former Secretary-General of the UN, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in a speech given at the meeting of the governing body of the South Centre, Geneva, held in New Delhi in 2005, says, "In its report, the High-Level Panel endorses the progressive weakening and erosion of the UN's role in the socio-economic domains that has taken place over the last two decades. The Report puts forward the North-driven institutional agenda of entrusting socio-economic problems to the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, the institutions that enjoy a 'comparative advantage' and to the Group of 8. Negotiating and decision-making on hard economic issues would no longer take place in the UN, which would be oriented to becoming a forum for consultation and debate."¹

The G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) group of countries have also prepared papers critiquing the thrust of the reform, not only its concentration on security but also its stigmatizing of the developing countries as the source of this 'insecurity' and concomitant loss of interest in poverty removal and equitable global development.²

Women and marginalization

There have been many attempts at reform of the UN, one of which was to streamline the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). UN development activities have given birth to an enormous structure called the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which has gradually become a self-serving bureaucracy. I happened to be on the three-member high-powered review committee set up in 1998-1999³ to reform this structure, and we visited a diverse number of countries, including Romania, Vietnam, Ghana and Yemen. We found that the recipient countries felt somewhat assaulted by the multiple fingers of UN Development assistance thrusting into their countries, often competing for space and legitimacy. Their autonomy in deciding what they wanted was often being trampled on by the many UN experts and officials who were living in privileged positions in their countries. We suggested therefore a harmonization process and the building of a common country programme that the country could claim as its own. In almost all the countries, gender was chosen as their thrust area, but was represented by one gender person, in a room, while the rest flowed on. The usual ghettoization.

Even the special agencies focusing on women that were set up both as international agencies and as national machineries have suffered from similar marginalization, ghettoization and the demeaning gaze that excluded peoples and women have experienced at all societal levels worldwide.

¹ 'The United Nations Crisis and its Reform', South Bulletin 97/98, 28 February 2005, p. 62.

² South Bulletin, March 2005.

³ Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Devaki Jain and Mary McCowan, External Assessment of the UNDAF, Impact Evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), 2001 (Quoted at the Fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly ECOSOC A/56/70-E/2001/58) 14 May 2001

I learned this and so much more while working for over three years on a book, *Women Development and the UN: A 60-year quest for equality and justice*⁴. It was an extraordinarily humbling and enriching experience for me. I developed new respect for history in itself, having previously as an economist been only interested in the here and now. The story in this book reveals what the UN can be - as an arbiter of justice, as an exemplary democratic space that the excluded and oppressed can use to emerge out of those binds, as a space where emancipatory ideas can be consolidated and dispersed and even embedded into the rule of law. I realized that the power of ideas is greater than the power of institutions and numbers.

Women's activities both outside and inside the UN, especially in the early years 1945-1975, provide brilliant examples of how the oppressed can nudge, budge and penetrate these hard rocks of entrenched power. The instruments they used were collective thinking and bonding across divides such as class, race and location. Every investigation into women's status - whether done by UNESCO et al. or by those outside - revealed flaws in facts, in reasoning, in policy and programme and in the design of institutions. Women exposed the mismatch between the UN's intentions and acts through knowledge supported by effective advocacy and influenced UN's conceptualisation and delivery of development.

Yet they could not quite break the hard rock of entrenched patriarchy or use their knowledge to break through the entrenched thinking, ideas and paradigms. They were faced with many dilemmas. Does effective participation mean sitting at the existing table of power or at their own table? Separate or melded? A further question that haunts those who wish to jump into what is called the mainstream, to 'integrate into existing policies', can be captured through Hamlet's famous timeless existential question, "To be or not to be?"⁵ Integrate into the mainstream or remain apart, challenging its legitimacy and its values? Integrating into a given set up that is inaccurate and flawed means surrender, apart from perhaps leading to undesirable results. But staying away from participating also has its negative effects, i.e., exclusion. In the language of the feminists this question has also been phrased as: "do we want a piece of the poisoned cake?"⁶ or "do we want to swim in the polluted stream?"⁷

The Need for a Women's Commission

It is we women with our consciousness of discrimination, our experience of nurturing and sustaining life at all costs and our immense intellectual skills that can rebuild a scarred and unequal, warring and unipolar, profit-driven world. These situations need to spur us into revolutionary actions, not reformist ones. In this revisiting and rethinking process, there is a need to introduce something new to the experience of gendered architecture as it has been conceived and has operated in the last 60 years.

My suggestion is that, instead of lobbying to be included in that flawed schema of current UN Reform, we should demand that the UN set up a Women's Commission for UN Reform or "UN reform: as women see it or want it". This commission could look at restructuring the UN from the point of view of women from the poorest communities, facilitated by the grassroots and community-based agencies that are working with them. How would they like to have the UN's hands and fingers reach out to them?

Our input into the UN reform agenda should be to bring back development as the core, rather than security and humanitarian services. This could be refreshing - it could revitalize the international women's movement and at the same time allow the UN to be the kind of space that gives us all an opportunity to build knowledge-based, solidarity-based transformation both at the international level and locally.

If it is set up as an independent commission, as was the Commission on Human Security⁸ co-chaired by Sadako Ogata

4 Devaki Jain, 'Women, Development and the UN - A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice' published by Indiana University Press in 2005, Website of the UN intellectual history project of which this book was one of a series is: www.unhistory.org

5 In Hamlet, Shakespeare immortalized the ultimate existential question: "To be or not to be?" This philosophical question that distinguishes the human mind touches on the universal experience of doubt, of questioning.

6 Devaki Jain, "The Role of Peoples Movement in Economics and Social Transformation", Paper presented at the Opening Thematic Plenary for Economic and Social Development, at 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs, The Role of NGOs in the 21st Century: Inspire, Empower, Act (10-16 October 1999, Seoul, Korea).

7 Bella Abzug, Bradford Morse Memorial Lecture, UNDP, Beijing, 5 September 1995.

8 Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now* (New York: Commission on Human Security, 2003). The Commis-

and Amartya Sen, it will not enter the heavy abdomen of the UN. It is only if it is commissioned by the UN that it will enter its debating spaces. Regions could be asked to send detailed reports from women in the communities on how they have benefited from the UN system, or what their ideas for change are. The Regional Commissions could call on nations to do an exercise of this kind in collaboration with women's networks and local groups. Through a process of harvesting of voice, the commission would give advice on how to reform the UN. In other words, we would set our own table and give a full report, uncorrupted by militarism and domination, on UN reform from top to bottom, from security and development to humanitarian services.

The commission could also hammer out a perspective on what can be called 'gendering international efforts for economic and social justice' or, more directly, 'women's perspective on the development agenda'. The old benchmarks, like looking at Beijing and its Platform for Action, have become outdated as the economic world and the political world have changed since 1995 in very basic ways. The issues poor women are grappling with have changed, and it is imperative, if we are to avoid the deeper incarceration of women in poverty, to investigate the current forces and their flows and find monitoring frameworks that enable nations and the UN to understand that change and soften if not remove the blows.

"We're in an intense period of UN reform," says Stephen Lewis⁹. Indeed we are, and as the majority of the people of the world live in the developing countries - and as the press and public opinion in these countries are affirming - it is these countries that would like to revitalize the UN. It is the only space where the Charter mandates equality, and in an increasingly unequal and unjust world, this institution has to be refreshed and brought back. It will be a betrayal of all that our foremothers fought for if we, as a women's movement, do not engage in this task - not as interventionists, not as lobbyists, but bringing to bear our immense experiential skills and ability to think out of the box. It will also help us to regain our height in the global landscape by building the UN from below, but brilliantly!

sion on Human Security was chaired by Amartya Sen and former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata (<http://www.humansecurity-chs.org>)

9 Stephen Lewis, Keep A Child Alive, UN Special Envoy for HIV / AIDS in Africa, at a Conference on UN Reform and Human Rights, Harvard Law School on 26 February 2006 (www.keepachildalive.org)

Glossary

Affirmative action - A policy or a programme that gives certain preferences to demographic groups that have been subjected to prejudice. Affirmative action seeks to increase the representation of these groups - characterized most commonly by race, gender or ethnicity - in fields of study and work in which they have traditionally been underrepresented. It is intended as a corrective measure for governmental and social injustices, and typically focuses on education, employment, government contracts, health care or social welfare.

Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) - Adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China, September 1995), the BPFA is an agenda for women's empowerment that includes actions aimed at eliminating discrimination against women, eradicating poverty and adopting measures towards placing a significant number of women in decision-making positions. The BPFA reaffirms that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and seeks to promote and protect women's full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout their life cycle.

Bretton Woods Institutions - The UN Monetary and Financial Conference, commonly known as the Bretton Woods Conference, brought together 730 delegates from 45 nations in July 1944 to discuss the post-war recovery of Europe and the creation of a global, open market that would eliminate practices that were felt to be harmful to world prosperity. The Bretton Woods Agreement created two international institutions to facilitate these objectives: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank).

Cairo Programme of Action - See ICPD Programme of Action

Civil society - Made up of society and organizations that are separate from the state, family and market but have a distinct stake in society. Active members of civil society are advocates for their cause and have increasingly played an important role in policy-making around the world. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power, and includes registered charities, NGOs, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) - A functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the CSW was established in 1946 as a mechanism to promote, report on and monitor issues relating to the political, economic, civil, social and educational rights of women. The Commission's work is closely related to the Beijing and the Outcome Document of the Beijing +5 review, held in 2000, so as to ensure their effective implementation.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) - Described as an international bill of rights for women, CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and came into force on 3 September 1981. It established an agenda of action for putting an end to sex-based discrimination: States ratifying (or formally agreeing to) the Convention are required to enshrine male/female equality into their domestic legislation, repeal all discriminatory provisions in their laws and enact new provisions to guard against discrimination against women. They must also establish tribunals and public institutions to guarantee women effective protection against discrimination, and take steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination practised against women by individuals, organizations and enterprises. The United States is the only developed nation that has not ratified CEDAW.

Democratization - A term that can be applied in the geo-political or organizational sense. In the political realm it refers to the transition from authoritarian or semi-authoritarian systems to democratic political systems in which there is universal suffrage, regular elections, a civil society, the rule of law and an independent judiciary. Within organizations and processes it refers to an increase in transparency, access and participation.

Consensus - Agreement arrived at between a number of people. In the UN it is an agreement between all Member States; this is how all decisions are reached (rather than by majority vote).

Convention - An international agreement dealing with a specific matter. UN conventions are legally binding for all countries that ratify (or formally agree to) them.

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - One of the principal organs of the UN established by the charter, ECOSOC assists the General Assembly in promoting international economic and social cooperation and development. It coordinates 14 UN specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions and the five regional commissions. ECOSOC is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It has the power to make or initiate studies and reports on these issues. ECOSOC has 54 members, all of whom are elected by the General Assembly for a three-year term. The members meet once a year in July for a four-week session

First World Conference on Women - The first UN world conference on the status of women was convened in Mexico City to coincide with the 1975 International Women's Year, observed to remind the international community that discrimination against women continued to be a persistent problem in much of the world. Along with the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), proclaimed by the General Assembly five months later at the urging of the Conference, it launched a new era in global efforts to promote the advancement of women by opening a worldwide dialogue on gender equality.

Gender architecture - The bodies within the UN that specialize in gender issues, which are currently UNIFEM (the UN Development Fund for Women), DAW (the Division for the Advancement of Women), OSAGI (the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) and INSTRAW (the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women). It also includes the gender units found in most UN entities, gender focal points and gender theme groups at the country level. Not directly part of the architecture but also playing a role is the network of employment equity specialists that include gender balance and gender equity in the human resource management arena.

Gender Focal Points - Officers whose role in a department or organization is to assist the process of gender mainstreaming in the work unit. While gender focal points may be directly involved in implementing certain gender-specific activities within the office, their main purpose is to identify strategies and actions that will enable and empower their colleagues to integrate gender concerns into their own areas of work. This is critical to avoid all gender-related work being assigned only to the gender focal points. Following the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985, the General Assembly asked the UN to establish focal points on women's issues in all sectors of the work of the organization.

Gender mainstreaming - "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." (Agreed conclusions of the UN Economic and Social Council ECOSOC) 1997/2)

Group of 77 (G77) - A loose coalition of developing nations established in 1964 by the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries" issued at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). G77 is designed to promote its members' collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the UN. There were 77 founding members of the organization, but it has since expanded to 132 member countries.

Hegemony - Leadership or dominance, especially of one State or group over others.

High-level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence - A Panel formed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in February

2006 to explore how the UN system could work more effectively and be better coordinated across the world, including the possibility of creating more tightly managed UN entities in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. The Panel, which is headed by current high-level government officials, is expected to present its findings to the General Assembly in September 2006 with the hope of recommendations being implemented in 2007.

Human Rights Council - See United Nations Human Rights Council.

Independent Commission on Human Security (CHS) - Launched at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit when Secretary-General Kofi Annan advocated the building of a world that embodied the twin ideals of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” (dating back to US President Roosevelt’s four freedoms) as goals for the new millennium. The Commission, which was co-chaired by Amartya Sen and Sadako Ogato, submitted its final report, Human Security Now, to the UN Secretary-General in May 2003.

ICPD Programme of Action - Adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, Egypt, September 1994), the ICPD Programme of Action created a key shift in the population debate by viewing population concerns within a human rights framework. It replaced a macroeconomics perspective on population policy with a focus on a woman’s need to receive appropriate sexual and reproductive health care and to control the number and timing of her pregnancies. The Programme of Action also called for universal primary education by 2015 and a reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates. It is the steering document for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

Intifada - Popularized name for two recent Palestinian campaigns directed at ending the Israeli military occupation in 1987 and 2000.

International Women’s Commission (IWC) - Established by Palestinian, Israeli and International Women for a Just and Sustainable Peace in Istanbul, Turkey, 28 July 2005 to ensure the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The IWC aims to ensure the participation of women in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Mexico Conference - See First World Conference on Women

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - Eight goals that all 191 UN Member States have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015. They include: to eradicate hunger, to achieve universal primary education, to promote gender equality, to reduce infant mortality, to improve maternal health, to combat AIDS and other diseases, to ensure environmental sustainability and to develop a global partnership for development.

Millennium Review Summit - Meeting held at the UN in September 2005 to follow up on the 2000 Millennium Summit, which led to the establishment of the MDGs. As well as reviewing progress on the MDGs and re-iterating the world’s commitment to them, the Summit was to address UN reform; however, much of this latter discussion was eventually postponed to a later date. The delegates endorsed the ‘Right to Protect’, which gives the world community the right to intervene in the case of “national authorities manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”.

Multilateralism - Multiple countries working together. The UN, for example, is multilateral in nature. This is the opposite of unilateralism, in which one country acts alone and in its own best interests.

Nairobi Conference - See Third World Conference on Women

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) - An international association of over 100 States that consider themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power blocs. The purpose of the organization, as stated in the Havana Declaration of 1979, is to ensure “the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism, Zionism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics”. NAM represents 55 per cent of the planet’s people, most of the world’s authoritarian

governments and nearly two-thirds of the UN's members.

Non-governmental organization - A non-profit group or association that acts outside of institutionalized political structures and pursues matters of interest to its members by lobbying, persuasion or direct action.

Operational efficiency - The process of increasing productivity while decreasing costs.

Paris Consensus - Adopted at a meeting of the Chairpersons and Coordinators of the G77 held in Paris on 27-28 February 2006, the Paris Consensus reaffirmed the G77's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and to relieving poverty in the Global South. Section 36 states, "We stand in full support of the position of the Group of 77 and China on UN reform..." The Consensus particularly emphasizes the importance of UNCTAD and expresses concern that its mandate not be weakened in the reform process.

Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) - Established on 20 December 2005, on the recommendations of the Secretary-General and his high-level panel, the Security Council and the General Assembly. Its purpose is to organize resources at the disposal of the international community to advise and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery, focusing attention on reconstruction, institution-building and sustainable development.

Peacekeeping forces - There are currently almost 90,000 personnel serving on 18 UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)-led peace operations. These soldiers and military officers, civilian police officers and civilian personnel from different countries monitor and observe peace processes in post-conflict situations. In addition to maintaining peace and security, peacekeepers are increasingly charged with assisting in political processes, reforming justice systems, training law-enforcement and police forces and disarming former combatants.

Regional Commissions - Five subsidiary bodies under ECOSOC that are to support the economic and social development of their geographic area. The five regions are Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe.

Resolutions - Texts through which the organs of the United Nations transmit their decisions (in the case of the Security Council) or their recommendations (General Assembly or ECOSOC) to Member States and the organizations of the UN system.

Security Council Resolution 1325 - Adopted in October 2000, SC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security is a landmark document that marks the first time the Security Council has specifically addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of war on women as well as women's special, under-valued and under-utilized contributions to conflict resolution, peace-building and sustainable peace. It urges women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.

Session - A period during which a series of meetings is held.

Special procedures - This term describes collectively the more than 40 special rapporteurs/representatives, independent experts and working groups, established primarily by the Commission on Human Rights, with a mandate to examine, investigate, monitor, advise and publicly report on major violations of human rights either (a) in specific countries or territories or (b) at a global level on a specific theme.

Special Rapporteur - In the context of the UN, this is a person appointed by a deliberative UN body to investigate an issue or a situation, and report back to that body.

Stakeholder - A person or organization that has a legitimate interest in a project or entity.

Sustainable development - "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs). The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document refers to the "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" of sustainable development as economic development, social development and environmental protection.

Third World Conference on Women - Women from around the world gathered at the UN Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 to review the achievements of the UN Decade for Women and to create a ten-year action plan for the advancement of women (the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women). The

Conference consisted of two important processes: an official process that brought together delegations from the UN member countries and a non-government process that brought together representatives of women's organizations from around the world to a parallel NGO Forum. It was the largest gathering of women in the history of the UN.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) - A subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UNCHR was the UN's main mechanism and international forum concerned with the promotion and protection of human rights. However, it was often criticized for the high-profile positions it gave to Member States that did not guarantee the human rights of their own citizens. It was replaced in 2006 by the UN Human Rights Council (see below).

United Nations Human Rights Council - An international body within the UN System whose purpose is to address human rights violations. It is the successor to the UN Commission on Human Rights. On 15 March 2006, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of creating the new human rights body, with the resolution receiving approval from 170 members of the 191-nation Assembly. It held its first session in June.

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action - Adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993 in Vienna, Austria. This marks the beginning of a renewed effort to strengthen and further implement the body of human rights instruments that have been constructed on the foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights since 1948. Importantly, States formally recognized in the document that the human rights of women are "an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights". They further demanded that "the equal status of women, and the human rights of women ... be integrated into the mainstream" of UN system-wide activity and "form an integral part" of UN human rights activities. The Conference also directly addressed the key issue of violence against women.

Researched and compiled by Katherine Martinelli

Useful Links and Resources

Links

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (awid)
http://www.awid.org/go.php?pg=un_reform#fn1

Center for Women's Global Leadership CWGL
<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/>

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)
<http://www.fes-globalization.org/>

High-level Coherence Panel
<http://www.un.org/events/panel/html/page1.html>

Human Rights Council
<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/>

Human Rights Watch
<http://www.hrw.org/>

International Services for Human Rights
<http://www.ishr.ch/>

Peacebuilding Commission
<http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/>

Reform at the United Nations
<http://www.un.org/reform>

Reform the UN.Org
<http://reformtheun.org/>

Toronto Women's Call for Action
http://www.twca.ca/UN_Reform_English.htm

UN Reform - A Vision of Youth
<http://www.un-reform.org>

Women Watch
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
http://www.peacewomen.org/un/women_reform/reformindex.htm

World Summit 2005
<http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Poverty/unworldsummit2005.asp>

Publications

Jain, Devaki. Women, Development, and the UN.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 2005.

Magarinos, Carlos A. Economic Development And Un Reform Towards a Common Agenda for Action - A Proposal in the Context of the Millennium Development Goals. United Nations Publications. 2005.

Documents

Frontal Attack on the UN by Torild Skard,
Dagbladet, 28 April, 2006
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/reform/initiatives/panels/coherence/0428attack.htm>

Gender Equality Architecture & UN Reform - For UN Coherence Panel by Aruna Rao
<http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermail/alltickers/en/0115.html>

Remarks by Stephen Lewis, to a High-Level Panel on UN Reform, 2 July 2006, Geneva
http://www.awid.org/go.php?pg=remarks_panel

Speech by Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa, to UN Reform and Human Rights Conference, 25 February, 2006, Harvard University
http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/news_item.cfm?news=748

Various issues of Women's GlobalNet, the International Women's Tribune Centre's Newsletter
<http://www.iwtc.org/305.htm>

<http://www.iwtc.org/304.htm>

<http://www.iwtc.org/303.htm>

<http://www.iwtc.org/301.htm>

<http://www.iwtc.org/300.htm>

World Summit Outcome Document
<http://www.un.org/summit2005/documents.html>

Notes on Contributors

Franziska Brantner, a graduate of Columbia University, currently writes her PhD dissertation about the role of group dynamics in this latest UN reform process. She teaches at Sciences Po, Paris and the University of Cologne, Germany. She has been involved for many years in the UN Commission for the Status of Women as Co-Chair of the Youth Caucus and then as observer for the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Charlotte Bunch, Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Douglass College, Rutgers University, has been an activist, author and organizer in the women's, civil, and human rights movements for four decades. A Board of Governor's Distinguished Service Professor in Women's and Gender Studies, Bunch was previously a Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies and a founder of Washington D.C. Women's Liberation and of *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly*. She is the author of numerous essays and has edited or co-edited nine anthologies including the Center's reports on the UN Beijing Plus 5 Review and the World Conference Against Racism. Her books include: *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action and Demanding Accountability: The Global Campaign and Vienna Tribunal for Women's Human Rights*

Josefa "Gigi" Francisco is the Regional Coordinator for Southeast Asia of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and Asia Coordinator of the International Gender and Trade Network. She teaches at the International Studies Department of Miriam College in the Philippines.

Rola Hamed is a Palestinian from Israel. She is a Member of the Israeli Branch of the International Women's Commission. She is also a Board Member of Bat Shalom, a national feminist grassroots organization of Jewish and Palestinian women and a cooperation partner together with a Palestinian women's center in the "Jerusalem Link" working for peace and social justice in the region. Rola additionally works with the Tel Aviv Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation as a Project Coordinator for gender issues.

Rosalind W. Harris has twice been President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council and has been chair of the NGO Committee on UNICEF two times. In addition she was a member of the organizing committees for NGO forums associated with UN Conferences on Population, Habitat, Women and Drugs. She has represented International Social Service at UN Headquarters for many years.

Jacqui Hunt holds a Bachelor of Science (Honors) in Linguistic and International Studies from the University of Surrey and a Master of Science in International Relations from the London School of Economics. She worked for seven years at Amnesty International, in the International Secretariat in London and in various capacities for Amnesty International USA, lastly as Director of Special Projects. She then studied law at the College of Law, London. She worked from 1992 to 1997 at Linklaters in international project finance law and subsequently as senior lawyer at the former Commonwealth Development Corporation. She is currently serving as the director of the new London office of Equality Now, from which she directs Equality Now's research and campaign work.

Devaki Jain, graduated in Economics from Oxford University and Joined Delhi University as a lecturer, later senior fellow at the Delhi School of Economics. In 1976 she founded a research centre the Institute of Social Studies Trust, ISST which focussed on issues of poverty and gender, with special interest in "work". In 1984, as Director of ISST she convened a meeting of women from the South, one per continent to consider developing a feminist perspective on development from the South - leading to the founding of DAWN, Development Alternatives for a new Era. Devaki has held fellowships at various Universities, notably at Harvard and Boston (1984) as a Senior Fulbright Scholar; at Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University as a Visiting Fellow and at the Scandinavian Institute of South Asian Studies in Denmark. She was one of two women, the other being the Late Bella Abzug, to receive recognition at Beijing 1995, the Bradford Morse award as Founder of DAWN. She received an Honorary Doctorate for her contribution to international development from the University of Westville, Durban Republic of South Africa. Devaki Jain has written extensively on women and development.

Antonia Kirkland holds a Juris Doctor from Rutgers University Law School - Newark, a Master of Science in Gender Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Brown University. She was the Coordinator of the Next Generation Leadership program at the Rockefeller Foundation and a consultant for Equality Now on an amicus brief for a case before the United States Supreme Court in 2000-01 and worked as a Program Coordinator for Equality Now.

Katherine McDonald, LL.B. is the first Executive Director of Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD), which was formed in 1997. Katherine has actively participated in the five and ten year reviews of the ICPD in 1999 and 2004, the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and its five and ten year reviews, and at the 2002 UN Special Session on Children. For the past several years, Katherine has also been actively involved with the work of the Commission on Human Rights, the central mechanism within the UN system to advance human rights. Before joining ACPD, she practiced law for ten years, and held positions as President of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and as Executive Director of the Public Legal Education Society of Nova Scotia.

Doris Mpoumou is the Gender and Governance Program Coordinator at WEDO. Ms Mpoumou, who was born in Brazzaville and grew up in France, has a Master's degree in Linguistics from the University of Brazzaville. Prior to coming to WEDO, she worked with International Rescue Committee as Deputy Program Coordinator on the Sexual Violence Program in Brazzaville. Doris was also an initiator of Congolese law reform on sexual violence.

Vina Nadjibulla is a program specialist on governance, peace and security at United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). She has a Masters degree in International Affairs from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Vina is a native of Afghanistan.

Bandana Rana is a gender activist of two decades with expertise in media and communications. She worked for Nepal TV for twenty years and founded a women's media forum in the country that actively works in harnessing the potential of the media for gender equality. She has served as board of director of Radio Nepal, member of Press Council and also briefly served as chair of the national commission for women in Nepal. She is well known in Nepal and South Asia for her advocacy and mobilisation work in promoting gender equality.

An intern with IWTC, **Tanya Roberts-Davis** completed a BA in Globalization Studies and Women's Studies and is pursuing a Masters in International law and Human Rights at the UN University for Peace. She is the author of "We Need To Go To School: Voices of the Rugmark Children", a compilation of the first hand stories of former child carpet weavers in Nepal. A perpetual activist and organizer at the local and international level, Tanya can be found at rallies, picket lines and meetings with immigrants, refugees, migrants, First Nations Peoples and their allies advocating for better working conditions, living wages, the right to an education, the rights of undocumented and other migrant peoples, women's rights, global justice and for an end to poverty, war and occupation.

Cynthia Rothschild, Senior Policy Advisor of CWGL, is currently consulting on areas related to the United Nations, HIV/AIDS and sexual rights. She is the author of *Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women's Organizing*, the co-author of Amnesty International's *Crimes of Hate, Conspiracy of Silence: Torture and Ill-Treatment Based on Sexual Identity*, and the author of a number of recent articles on sexual rights. She is a former member of Amnesty International USA's Board of Directors, and has worked with UNIFEM and a number of NGOs in UN advocacy on women's human rights, reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS.

Maria Alejandra Scampini Franco is an adviser on education, gender and citizen matters and worked for 10 years as coordinator of the Programme on Education for Policy Influence and Advocacy for Red de Educacion Popular entre Mujeres (REPEM). She is currently the Regional Coordinator for Women Rights for Actionaid International Americas. She has also worked closely with REPEM/DAWN, specifically in Latin America, and has published articles for various bulletins and other publications. Alejandra has a master's degree in education from the Catholic University of Uruguay.

Margaret (Peg) Snyder is the founding director (11 years) of UNIFEM, and was a regional advisor (7 years) at the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Books she wrote include *Transforming Development: Women, Poverty and Politics (a history of UNIFEM's first 15 years)* and *Women in African Economies: from Burning Sun to Boardroom*. She co-

authored African Women and Development with Mary Tadesse, and has written journal articles and chapters in edited books, the latter in *Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development*, and “*Unlikely Godmother: the UN and the Global Women’s Movement*”, in the recently published *Global Feminism*. She was a Fulbright Scholar at Makerere University, currently sits on the board of the International Women’s Tribune Centre and the Green Belt Movement International/ North America. Peg is also a Seminar Associate at Columbia University.

L. Muthoni Wanyeki is a political scientist who works on development communications, gender and human rights and has published in these areas. She is currently the Executive Director of the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), a pan-African membership organisation set up in 1988 and based in Nairobi, Kenya. FEMNET works towards African women’s development, equality and other human rights through advocacy at the regional and international levels, training on gender analysis and mainstreaming and communications.

June Zeitlin joined the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) as the Executive Director in 1999. She has extensive experience as a women’s rights lawyer, social policy advocate and in intergovernmental relations. She worked at the Ford Foundation for over a decade as the Director of the Governance and Civil Society Program, Director of the Gender and Institutional Change Project, Deputy Director of the Rights and Social Justice Program and Program Officer for Women’s Rights. Prior to joining the Ford Foundation, Ms. Zeitlin worked for New York City’s Office of Management and Budget and the Human Resources Administration in intergovernmental relations. She also served as a legislative assistant in Washington, DC for former Congresswoman and WEDO co-founder Bella Abzug. June began her career at Bedford-Stuyvesant Legal Services in Brooklyn, New York and later worked as a lawyer with the National Women’s Law Center in Washington, DC. She has a JD from New York University School of Law.