



THE AFRICAN FEMINIST FORUM

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Statement of the African Feminist Forum on the New UN Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

We, African women from diverse women's organisations and networks across the continent participating at the African Feminist Forum in Accra Ghana, from November 15th -19th 2006 welcome the UN Secretary-General's High Level Coherence Panel's recommendations on strengthening the UN's institutional gender equality and women's empowerment architecture. We believe that the consolidated agency led by an Under Secretary-General with an ambitious country presence and substantially increased financial and human resources will enable the UN to deliver effectively its mandate for women's rights, respond to the needs of African women at country level and governments to better address the rights of African women at national and local levels.

We appreciate the establishment by the UN Secretary-General of a Policy Group to consider further the structure of the new women's organisation. We support and emphasize the Coherence Panel's recommendation for an open and transparent global search process for the recruitment of the Executive Director of this new entity.

We believe that women's rights are not optional, and that all efforts to create mechanisms within the UN system for the empowerment of women must be enabled with the necessary resources both human and financial, and with the requisite authority to effect the desired change at all levels including decision making levels. This will signal the importance accorded to women's rights and empowerment by the UN and its willingness to take bold steps to support the Panel's recommendation in principle as well as in practice.

Bearing this in mind, we call upon Member States to adopt the Coherence Panel's recommendations on the women's rights architecture within the UN system as a demonstration of their political will to bridge the tremendous gap between rhetoric and practice.

We also call upon the UN Secretary-General to do the following:

Ensure that the definition of the mandate of the new entity has a relevance to the needs and concerns of all African women.

Ensure that the Policy Group set up an open and inclusive process to consult with African women's rights groups and include their perspectives in shaping the structure of the women's entity.

Ensure that the new entity is allocated adequate human and financial resources and that these considerations should not be subjected to the will of donors, nor should they be resourced exclusively from voluntary contributions, but also from assessed contributions of Member States.

Strengthen UN Country Teams to address women's rights by incorporating senior women's rights specialists at the decision-making levels.

The UN Secretary-General and Policy Group must note that the time for the realisation of women's rights at the UN is now. We are committed to continue our engagement with the process of shaping the new entity.

Signed:

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