

March 22, 2010

Dear GEAR Campaign Supporters,

The recent meeting of the 54th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) advanced the GEAR Campaign goal of continuing civil society pressure on governments to move forward in passing the resolution that creates the entity during this session of the General Assembly (which ends in September). At the CSW, over 60 countries (list to be available soon) from all regions spoke in support of the new gender architecture in their speeches. Governments initiated a resolution that was co-sponsored by 180 countries and introduced by the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and Group of 77/China (JCC) supporting the creation of the entity – indicating the wide spread assumption that this will happen. (The resolution is attached.)

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, called on governments to take action to create the entity without further delay, and the NGO Action of holding up a “GEAR UP NOW!” sign in the balcony on the day of his speech (<http://www.ippfwhr.org/en/node/1401>) as part of the UN official observance of International Women’s Day on March 3rd was greeted with enthusiastic applause. The sessions on the new entity were packed, and many other sessions that addressed UN structural issues assumed the new architecture as part of the future UN landscape. All the NGO regional groups at CSW used this period to advocate for GEAR and specifically for a strong operational capacity in the new entity.

The General Assembly (GA) held several informal discussions on the System-Wide Coherence process (including gender architecture) before the CSW and has scheduled more March-June during which time, it is anticipated that a SWC resolution launching the new women’s agency will be drafted. Now, the GEAR Campaign’s greatest concern is not whether the entity will be created but WHAT will be created.

We expect the resolution to be passed by the end of this GA session in time for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit review in September, but there are still a number of important details to be resolved. In order for the entity to be effective as a driver for the UN system on women’s rights and empowerment, it must have a robust country level operation that is more than just advisory to the UN system. This requires that it be both a coordinating body for the UN’s work on women with the capacity to hold the system accountable for gender mainstreaming as well as able to engage in its own programmatic work and to support governmental and NGO work at all levels.

We remain concerned about the money to enable the entity to be effective. Member states should pledge core, predictable, and multi-year voluntary funds now with a goal of growing to \$US1 billion and beyond over time. There has not been enough progress on financial commitments to date. Further, we want the resolution creating this entity to recognize that civil society has played a vital role in work on women’s rights and that it is critical to partner with us and tap into the expertise and insights of a diverse and wide-ranging NGO constituency, particularly women’s organizations.

We would like to see the Secretary-General initiate a transparent recruitment process for the Under Secretary General to lead the entity immediately. We are encouraged that there are many rumors floating about names for this position which suggests the inevitability of the creation of the entity, but we would like a clear and accessible process begun soon to ensure a strong committed woman is appointed to this critical job. The GEAR statement articulating these concerns is attached as a flyer with

talking points which we hope will be used by GEAR supporters in the coming two months to advocate for this kind of entity.

Finally, we have attached a new document from the Deputy Secretary General's (DSG) office, "Establishment of a New Composite Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Key Messages, Background and Current Status." This document answers many of the questions that we planned to address in a GEAR Q&A. It is a public document that we think is very useful in clarifying many points about what the entity is intended to do. While we agree with most of its points, it is also clear from this document why we need to continue to advocate with governments and the UN for a stronger operational presence of the entity on the ground that goes beyond what UNIFEM has now as well as for the money to make this possible and for greater civil society engagement.

In the coming weeks, we urge you to continue to advocate for a resolution that creates the women's entity with these characteristics – using both the DSG's paper and the attached GEAR talking points.

*Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
On behalf of the GEAR Campaign Working Group*

GEAR Campaign Working Group

Global Focal Points: Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

Regional Focal Points: African's Women Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW), Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD-A), European Women's Lobby (EWL), femLINKpacific, Foundation for Studies and Research on Women (FEIM), Servitas Cameroon and South Asian Campaign for Gender Equality (SACGE)/SAATHI

New York UN Lobbying Strategy Group: AIDS-Free World, Amnesty International (AI), Bahá'í International Community, UN Office, Care International, Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), ENLACE and Feminist Task Force - Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), Equality Now, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Huairou Commission, Human Rights Watch (HRW), InterAction, International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF/WHR), International Service for Human Rights, International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), MADRE, FIMI, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), World Federalist Movement (WFM) and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)