

The New Times for Women

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Search for the head of the UN women's agency

NEW YORK

UN Secretary-General outlines qualifications sought in candidates

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has asked the Member States and civil society to suggest candidates for the post of the Executive Director of the new UN women's agency.

The director will be an UN Under Secretary-General, which will give the agency an enhanced authority within the UN system.

"Above all, candidates must have a vision for and demonstrated commitment to meeting gender equality goals and securing women's human rights," Mr. Ban said.

A successful candidate should also understand the needs of women at the local grassroots both in the Global South and North and be willing to engage with civil society.

"Given the serious under-representation of women in decision-making within the UN, this position should go to a woman," Mr. Ban continued.

The Secretary-General wants to nominate the head of the new entity in a swift and transparent process, consulting widely with civil society and governments.

"We need a strong leader to ensure that we will have the new UN entity for gender equality up and running strong by the end of the year." He sees this as an important part of achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals to be reviewed at the MDG summit in September 2010.

Rumors of possible candidates are already circulating. Names of former and current Heads of States and ministers, high-level UN officials, and civil society leaders have been mentioned.

New UN women's rights agency created



Women's rights advocates around the world celebrate the creation of the new UN women's rights agency

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NEW YORK

Historic decision marks the dawn of a new era for women's rights

The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon announced the creation of a new more powerful UN organization for gender equality and empowerment of women in a special ceremony organized at the UN Headquarters. The SG's pleasure at delivering this long anticipated reform was evident.

The new agency consolidates the existing four UN organizations working on women's rights into a single more powerful entity that will be headed by an Under Secretary-General.

The agency will work in all UN

Member States to improve the situation of women on the ground, and will have a strong mandate to influence the UN's gender equality policies. It will have an initial annual budget of 1 billion USD with increases over time.

The agency will lead and coordinate the work undertaken by other UN agencies in relation to gender equality, and play leading role in supporting and evaluating the work of the whole UN system in implementing gender mainstreaming.

The creation of the new gender equality entity was welcomed by other UN agencies with a pledge to cooperate closely in making it a strong and well-resourced UN partner.

The creation of the new women's rights entity coincides with the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the groundbreaking Beijing Platform for Action defining the necessary actions

to achieve equality between women and men, and an assessment of nations' progress towards its implementation.

In many aspects progress has been insufficient. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. Some 500,000 women still die in pregnancy and childbirth every year, and women occupy less than one fifth of the seats in national parliaments. According to some estimates women represent more than 70% of the world's poor.

The four existing UN women's rights organizations have been too fragmented and under-resourced to successfully address these problems and to deliver for women all around the world.

Mr. Ban's announcement follows the United Nations General Assembly's agreement on the creation of the new

UN women's rights entity reached after a month of intense intergovernmental negotiations and several years of preparing discussions.

Significantly, the UN Member States decided to go beyond UN Secretary-General's original proposal for the new entity, requiring that it needs to be made stronger than was planned.

The Member States decided that the initial annual budget should be doubled to 1 billion USD and emphasized that the key function of the entity should be to lead ambitious programming activities at country level. They also underlined the need to fully involve civil society, in particular women's organizations, in the work of the new agency at global, regional, and national levels.

"Member States and regional groups wanted to create an entity that would really improve the lives of women and girls on the ground," a diplomat who participated in the negotiations explained.

Ban Ki-Moon welcomed the Member States' decision to strengthen the entity.

"Member States' unanimous approval and strengthening of the original proposal shows that women's rights are a high priority and not something for compromise. I will personally ensure that the concerns raised in the resolution will be addressed and that this happens immediately."

Women's rights and other non-governmental organizations around the world have welcomed the resolution.

Charlotte Bunch, speaking for the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a global network of civil society organizations that has been advocating for a strengthened UN gender equality architecture for years, said that they were "ecstatic that governments around the world recognize that such an entity is a top priority and that women's rights are central to ending poverty, achieving the MDGs and to bringing an end to violent conflict in the world."



United Nations is receiving funding pledges for the new entity

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New women's "super agency" attracts donors

NEW YORK

Initial 1 billion USD funding target will be reached soon

To mark the resolution adopted last night that officially created the new UN gender equality entity, the Member States made generous funding pledges for the entity's work.

Countries that are not part of the usual group of donors also made commitments to fund the new entity, showing their

deep commitment to achieving gender equality.

The enthusiastic reaction of governments ensures that the 1 billion USD benchmark will be reached fast, and it will be possible to start discussing a concrete time frame for increasing the funding of the entity.

The private sector and many individual donors have also shown interest in the new entity. Several corporations, including Apple have already pledged their support to the entity with permanent annual contributions.

A private donor who wishes to remain anonymous has made a donation of 50 million USD. His spokesperson explained that this contribution comes from his belief that women's rights are key to global survival and is meant to be a sign for other private donors, from the spheres of politics, arts, sport, and economy alike.

Madonna and Bono are said to be planning a series of benefit concerts that will take place in New York, Shanghai, Berlin, Rio de Janeiro, and Johannesburg to attract funding for the new entity.

THIS IS NEWS WE WOULD LIKE TO READ. TURN THE PAGE TO SEE WHERE WE STAND NOW

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Good starting point

The plan for the new UN women's rights entity begins the process of reforming the way the UN deals with women's rights, but on a number of issues more vision and clarity is needed. PAGE 2

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Delivering for women

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Partnerships between the UN and civil society organizations are crucial for an effective progress on gender equality. The experiences of women's rights organizations show that these partnerships are often not working well. PAGE 4

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GEAR

gender/equality/architecture/reform



Views

The New Times for Women

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NEW TIMES FOR WOMEN

The front page of this newspaper provides an example of news that women's rights advocates from around the world have wanted to read for years.

Almost three and half years have passed since a United Nations High Level Panel recommended in 2006 that the existing four UN bodies dealing with women's rights should be consolidated into a single, strong, well-resourced UN entity for gender equality, headed by an Under-Secretary General, that would lead and strengthen the UN's gender equality work, especially at the national level.

It took the UN Member States until September 2009 to endorse this recommendation, yet the resolution of the UN General Assembly falls short of its full implementation.

In February 2010, UN Member States began a new round of inter-governmental negotiations on the creation of this entity, based on a detailed proposal by the UN Secretary-General. The aim is to adopt a resolution that will finally give the UN system the long awaited go ahead to concretely set up the new entity.

It should be made clear to the Member States that they cannot afford to delay the process any further and continue compromising the needs of women and girls.

However, for the new entity to be a real breakthrough for women's rights, the UN Member States must address the shortcomings in the Secretary-General's proposal. In particular, the entity should have a stronger mandate to lead the UN's gender equality work through catalytic programming at country level, and effective gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system. Civil society participation and funding of the entity are other issues that will have to be discussed.

The news on the front page should be made reality without delay. This is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that could mark the beginning of New Times for Women.

FUNDING COMMITMENTS NEEDED

Once the resolution setting up the new UN gender equality entity has been adopted, the priority of UN Member States should be to pledge multi-year core funding to enable the entity to really work for women around the world.

The Secretary General's proposal sets the funding benchmark at 500 million USD. 500 million USD may sound ambitious, but in reality it accounts for less than 2% of the expenses of the UN agencies and entities in 2008.

This benchmark also falls short of the existing financial needs to achieve effective gender mainstreaming within the UN system, and to promote women's rights and achieve gender equality at country level. The global financing gap for reaching the Millennium Development Goal 3 to promote gender equality and empower women will be at least 10.3 billion USD in 2015.

Therefore, 500 million USD should only be considered as a starting figure. UN Member States should ensure that this target is reached by the time of the proposed three-year review of the new entity in 2013, and recognize that the funding for the new women's rights entity has to be rapidly increased to the level of 1 billion USD.

Women's rights and equality between women and men cannot be a luxury to be addressed only in times of economic growth. The current economic crisis should not be used as an excuse for failing to allocate these funds needed to make the new UN gender equality entity deliver for women. On the contrary, as the impacts of the current financial and economic crisis are higher on women, the crisis makes it even more necessary to allocate more resources to women's rights.

Proposed entity is good starting point

Ban's proposal begins process but needs improvement, says GEAR Campaign

Women's rights and other civil society organizations from around the world welcomed the UN Secretary General's proposal for the new UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment that was released in early January 2010.

The report has been praised for setting clear guidelines for UN Member States to take the process further, but some of the proposed details of the new entity have raised concerns.

According to the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a global network comprised of more than 300 women's rights, human rights, and social justice groups, the report lacks clarity on several important issues related to country level operational activities, civil society participation, and funding.

The GEAR Campaign has urged that the shortcomings of the report be addressed in the intergovernmental negotiations aiming for a UN General Assembly resolution that sets up the new UN gender equality entity, and in the consequent transition process.

One of the Campaign's main concerns is that the proposal can be seen to downplay the entity's key task to undertake programming activities – i.e. to finance and lead concrete projects that improve the lives of women and help to achieve gender equality – at country level.

Undertaking programming activities at country level is no more presented as the priority function of the entity, as it has been in the previous UN papers. The report also describes the new entity as a subsidiary body working through other UN agencies rather than a body having its own programming capacity.

For the GEAR Campaign, strengthening the UN's programming capacity for women's rights at country level has always been the top priority in seeking a new entity, as the purpose of the whole reform is to improve the UN's capacity to deliver for women's rights on the ground.

The report suggests that the new entity could start its work in those some 80 countries where UNIFEM is currently present, strengthening that presence from what it currently is. For the Campaign, strong country presence means



Women's groups gathered to raise awareness about violence against women. Globally, at least one in three women is beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime.

more than just increasing staff in these 80 countries, and it calls for a clear timeline for expanding the country presence in the future.

It is also important that the entity has the authority to lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality and to hold it accountable for an efficient gender mainstreaming. The GEAR Campaign sees the need for a clearer definition of the entity's role as the leader for gender equality, in particular at country level.

Another concern of the GEAR Campaign is that the report does not propose adequate mechanisms to guarantee the meaningful involvement of civil society in the work of the new entity.

The report suggests that the leader of the new entity should create a civil society advisory board, which the Campaign welcomes.

However, nothing is said about how the entity would collaborate with civil society at regional and country levels, although systematic and formal collaboration mechanisms with civil society, especially women's organizations, in the countries where the entity is present are key to the success of advancing women's rights.

"We expect that the new entity will in-

volve representatives from civil society at the global, regional and national levels, and hope that particularly at the national level, the agency will be well linked to civil society networks," FEMNET, the African focal point of the GEAR Campaign said.

"The entity should guarantee a thorough and democratic participation of civil society organizations," required also FEIM, the Latin American focal point of the Campaign.

Finally, the GEAR Campaign draws attention to the 500 million USD funding benchmark set in the report.

The Campaign has called for a budget of 1 billion USD, and says the proposed 500 million USD falls short of what is needed to promote women's rights and catalytic programming at country level and to achieve effective gender mainstreaming within the UN system, "500 million USD may sound ambitious, but in reality it accounts for less than 2% of the UN system's expenses in 2008," European GEAR Campaign Working Group pointed out.

The Campaign also emphasizes that the funding for the new UN women's rights entity will need to be increased over time and clear targets and timelines should be set for this.

GEAR - building a UN that really works for women

The continued advocacy of civil society organizations has been one of the driving forces behind the UN's gender equality architecture reform.

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign has been one of the strongest and most consistent voices since the beginning of the reform process.

The first steps that led to the creation of the Campaign were taken at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2006, when the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) led the effort to put this topic on the agenda of the System Wide Coherence Panel.

In 2007, they convened a meeting to develop a strategy to gain UN General Assembly's approval for the creation of the new women's entity.

The GEAR Campaign was officially launched soon after this. Its purpose is to mobilize women's groups and allies

to push for the adaptation of the new UN gender equality entity at global, regional, and national levels.

In just over two years, the Campaign has grown into a global network of more than 300 civil society organizations from more than 80 countries. The Campaign works through its New York based

lobbying group, and eight regional focal points.

Among other things, the Campaign has been meeting UN officials and Member States, providing substantive inputs to papers prepared by the UN Secretariat, and mobilizing civil society throughout this process.

Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR Campaign)

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)
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
South Asian Campaign for Gender Equality (SACGE)/SAATHI

BACKGROUND

Will the new entity deliver better for women?

Strong programming can make a difference for women everywhere

From the point of view of women and girls around the world, the most important question regarding the new UN gender equality entity is whether it will make a difference in their daily lives.

How will the new UN entity support women to generate their own income, keep girls in school, prevent violence against women, assist women to access healthcare, and increase their participation in decision-making?

The projects and programmes that the entity will undertake and the financial support it will provide to improve the lives of women and to support efforts to achieve gender equality at national level are key for finding the answer.

The SG's proposal for the new gender equality entity includes concrete suggestions that help to envisage what the new entity could look like when it will be up and running. When evaluating the improvements that the new entity will bring for women and girls on the ground, country presence, programming activities, and funding are crucial.

Secretary General Ban proposes that the new entity could start from those 80 countries where the United Nations Development Fund or Women (UNIFEM), one of the existing UN women's entities, has presence at the moment.

Although the number of countries where the new UN women's rights entity has physical presence would not immediately increase in comparison to the present situation, the level of support offered for these countries

would improve.

Currently UNIFEM has less than 200 people working in the field. According to the plans, the new entity would have 600 national staff, tripling the number of total staff working at country level.

Another improvement is that many of these 600 people would be at a higher level and working with permanent contracts so their presence would not be of project character, as is the case with many of the current field staff. This would significantly increase UN's capacity to respond to women's needs at country-level and ensure continuity of its women's rights work.

The big shortcoming is that there are no clear plans of when and how the presence of the entity will be expanded to more countries. The report mentions that the new entity would have six regional teams to provide support in countries where it is not physically present, but this is of course not the same thing as having a team in the country.

The increased permanent staff would support both the national governments and civil society organizations in their work related to women's rights, identify the needs and challenges that women and girls face in these countries, as well as lead the gender equality strategy of all UN agencies present at national level.

One of the important questions is how much funding and support the new entity will be able to provide for civil society organizations and other partners to implement projects that address the identified needs.

The proposed initial budget of 500 million USD for the whole operation is an improvement. In 2008, the funding made available for the four existing gender equality entities was 225 million USD. Yet, in comparison to the budgets of other UN agencies,



Girls in a small schoolhouse near Ghazni in Afghanistan to learn math in a room separate from the boys. 67% of the world's illiterate are women.

the new women's entity remains a small player. UNICEF has a budget of more than 3 billion USD.

The Secretary-General estimates that around 125 million USD would be needed annually for staff costs and

administration to enable the new entity to carry out its core functions at country and regional level and at the Headquarters.

375 million USD is proposed for catalytic funding for program-

ming activities at country level. This is the part of funding that is really going to make a difference in comparison to the present situation, and have the most impact on the daily lives of women and girls.

Member States play a crucial role since only seven million USD of the whole 500 million USD budget would be covered from the UN's regular budget. All the funding to build up the basic operating capacity and to undertake programming will be covered by voluntary contributions from Member States and other sources.

In order to reach the initial funding target of 500 million USD, the Member States should more than double the level of their voluntary contributions for the existing UN women's entities if year 2008 is taken as the point of comparison.

The new entity will also have a chance to improve women's lives by monitoring that UN Member States implement international gender equality agreements such as Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, and the UN Security Council Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict, and Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

"At the UN level, there is a critical need to ensure that these gender equality commitments are integrated in a coordinated, coherent, and system-wide approach that links inter-governmental decision-making and the implementation on the ground, into the heart of women's movements, into our communities," says femLINKpacific, the Pacific GEAR Campaign focal point.

However, the proposal mandates the new entity only to "support Member States" in implementing and monitoring these agreements, not to monitor their implementation alongside Member States and make recommendations for them.

Much awaited but slow reform

Years have passed since the UN gender equality reform was set in motion

The creation of a strong consolidated UN women's rights entity headed by an Under-Secretary General was recommended by a High Level Panel in 2006, as part of a process to strengthen the UN system in terms of coherence and coordination.

Originally this reform process known as System-wide Coherence only included the areas of development, humanitarian affairs, and the environment, but after pressure from women's organizations from around the world, the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked the Panel to include gender equality in the process.

There are currently four separate women's rights entities within the United Nations system: the U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

These entities are under-resourced,



Former Secretary General Kofi Annan congratulates System-Wide Coherence Panel for its report that recommended creating a new strong UN gender equality entity

fragmented, and lack high-level authority in the UN system.

Therefore, the UN has not been able to address sufficiently the many challenges in relation to women's poverty, health, violence against women, under-representation in decision-making and other areas highlighted in the 12 Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted in 1995, and deliver for women.

Kofi Annan took the recommendation of the High Level Panel on board,

and initiated a process to establish the Under-Secretary-General post and to consolidate the existing women's rights institutions into a strong new UN entity for women's rights just before he left office.

The current Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon endorsed the Panel's recommendation on gender architecture in March 2007.

In 2010, more than three years later, the entity is still waiting to be established, and the post of the Under-Sec-

retary General to be created.

During these three years, the UN Secretariat has produced several papers laying out options for the structure of the new entity, and Member States have debated these options and details in extensive intergovernmental consultations and discussions.

In these discussions, Member States have agreed that reform is necessary, that the four existing entities should be consolidated into one single entity, and that this entity should take the shape of a so-called "composite entity" combining normative policy work and operational activities on the ground.

In September 2009, the process finally moved forward when the 63rd UN General Assembly adopted unanimously a resolution "strongly supporting" the creation of a new composite gender equality entity and "supporting" that the entity should be led by an UN Under-Secretary General.

Yet, this resolution still falls short of the actual implementation of the recommendations made by the High Level Panel in 2006.

Women's rights groups and many UN Member States considered the September 2009 resolution incomplete as it did not specify the mandate and functions of the new entity, and it did not directly authorize the creation of the USG post.

Instead, it threw the ball to the next session of the UN General Assembly, and mandated the UN Secretary General to produce a detailed proposal for the entity for its consideration.

This paper, which spells out the functions, governance structures, organizational arrangements, staff numbers, and funding needed for the new entity, was produced by the end of 2009. The intergovernmental negotiations based on the proposal started in February 2010.

Ban-Ki Moon, many Member States, and women's rights groups from around the world have called on Member States to adopt a new resolution effectively establishing the new entity as a matter of urgency. Many fear that the process may again be delayed.

"If this decision is further delayed, the current gender agencies will be kept in limbo and unable to deliver for women around the world," warned Ambassador Juan Antonio Yanez-Bar-nuevo of Spain, which currently holds the Presidency of the European Union.

According to Asia-Pacific Women's Watch, one of the GEAR regional focal points, the impacts of this delay are already visible. "We have received reports that programs on gender at the UN are already being stalled as agencies are expectedly adopting a wait-and-see attitude."

WORLD NEWS

Civil society can make the new entity stronger

The new women's agency could be a champion for CSO participation

Women's organizations across the world play a tremendous role in working for women's rights not only through their advocacy to advance policies in this area, but also as providers of services to support women, for example in the areas of violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, development, and education.

They do this work with minimal resources, which are being further reduced because of the economic crisis.

The new UN women's rights entity should build on the experience and knowledge of women's organizations and support their work in order to succeed in its tasks and to gain the trust of women around the world.

This means setting up systematic ways to support and collaborate with the civil society at international, regional and national levels.

The contribution of women's rights organizations will be crucial for the new women's agency especially when it comes to supporting the achievement of gender equality at national level. Organizations that have been working for years to improve the lives of women and girls are in a good position to help the UN to identify the key needs and challenges that women face in their countries and define solutions.

Women's rights organizations with experience, knowledge, and networks are also ideal implementing partners for the programming activities that the new UN gender equality entity will undertake.

The experiences of women's rights organizations on the ground show that



Civil society representatives in UNIFEM capacity building event in Mozambique

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UN bodies are not creating enough synergies and channels for mutual support with civil society organizations in work on women's rights issues.

According to a study made by the International Gender Policy Network (IGPN), a member of the European GEAR Campaign Working Group, in Eastern European and CIS countries no systematic mechanisms exist to engage local and national women's rights organizations with the gender equality work done by UN agencies.

The collaboration seems to work best when the gender equality work of the UN country team is well coordinated, which confirms that the new women's entity should have a strong coordinating role at national level.

In many countries civil society or-

ganizations find it difficult to work with UN agencies. Some of the problems identified are the absence of civil society focal points – either general or gender equality related – within the UN country teams; the lack of internal coordination on gender equality issues within the UN system; and the limited range of civil society organization the UN works with.

In some instances, the little funding that is available for work on gender equality goes to governments or generic larger organizations rather than to smaller women's organizations active on the ground.

A representative of a women's rights organization working in a small Eastern European country explained that when developing an extensive programme to strengthen national

capacities to prevent domestic violence, UN agencies neglected the long standing work of civil society on this issue.

In this particular case, civil society organizations had succeeded in introducing a national strategy and pieces of legislation to prevent domestic violence a few years earlier, and were monitoring their implementation. The women's rights organization felt that the UN did not acknowledge this work, as the UN's strategy was to introduce a completely new legislation. "With this approach, UN agencies have nullified 14 years of efforts of the CSO's. They are just reinventing the wheel!"

In other cases mentioned in the study, women's rights organizations felt that the UN agencies neglected

the information that they provided about the national situation and lacked a "systematic, professional and strategic approach".

The creation of the new UN women's rights entity is a possibility for the UN to improve the way it collaborates with the civil society on women's rights issues at national level and hence deliver better for women's rights.

The IGPN study indicates that a better coordination in relation to work on gender equality within the UN country team can start to make a difference, but that real progress comes through systematic mechanisms for civil society participation.

Unfortunately, the UN Secretary-General's report on the details of the new gender equality entity does not take the opportunity to propose mechanisms that would improve civil society participation.

The report proposes that the leader of the entity should establish a global civil society advisory board, but does not say anything about civil society participation at national level. This is not enough to build ground for creating the kind of solid partnerships that would allow the new entity to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of civil society organization.

The IGPN study makes some recommendations about the way forward. The new women's rights entity could, for example, make sure that a clear focal point for CSOs working on country level can be identified.

While coordinating and leading the UN country team's work on gender equality, the new entity could establish a regularly meeting body where civil society organizations and the representatives of other UN agencies could meet to discuss gender equality issues. It could also actively engage national civil society organizations as implementing partners for its country level programming.

Gender equality is the key to reach the MDGs

Progress on gender equality has been too slow to reach the MDGs

The UN will review progress on the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010, with five years to go until the 2015 deadline. This is also an opportunity to review progress on reaching gender equality globally.

The setting of the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3) to promote gender equality and empower women signaled a strong recognition by UN Member States of the central importance of gender equality to human development.

Gender equality concerns are not restricted to MDG3, but intertwined with all the other seven goals. Poverty (MDG1), HIV/AIDS (MDG6), and reducing child mortality (MDG4), for example, have a profound gender perspective.

According to some estimates women represent more than 70% of the world's poor. Three in every five adults living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women; and three quarters of deaths among babies in the first four weeks of life could be prevented if women were adequately nourished

and received appropriate care during and after pregnancy.

MDG3 has been criticized for its narrow interpretation of gender equality and women's empowerment. The selected target for MDG3 is eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels no later than 2015.

This is measured through three indicators: the ratios of boys and girls in all levels of education; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural section; and the proportion of the seats held by women in national parliaments.

Achieving gender equality and empowering women, and meeting all the other MDGs, will require action on a much broader range of women's rights issues than education.

Guaranteeing women's property and inheritance rights; combating violence against women and girls; reducing women's unpaid care and domestic workloads; and promoting a progressive position on sexual and reproductive rights are only some of the priorities to achieve the MDG3.

Even when narrowly measured, progress on MDG3 has been uneven and slow. 94 countries failed to meet the 2005 goal of eliminating gender disparity and education in primary and secondary education.

To this date, women's share of waged non-agricultural employ-

ment has increased by only three per cent since 1990, and only one in five members of parliament worldwide are women.

The swift creation of the new powerful, well-resourced UN gender equality entity will be an important step in putting the efforts to reach the MDG3 back on the track, and also in helping to achieve the other goals through effective gender mainstreaming.

However, the role of the new entity with the suggested 500 million USD annual budget can be at best catalytic in this immense task. The World Bank has estimated that the cost of interventions needed to achieve the MDG3 and to implement gender mainstreaming in the other MDGs will be 83.2 billion USD in 2015.

Even according to the most optimistic estimate, the financing gap between the costs and the domestic resources mobilized will increase from 8.3 million USD to 23.8 billion USD in 2015.

A more systematic and coordinated UN approach to women's rights and gender equality through the new entity will help, but also systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming in bilateral development cooperation, and an increase in the share of development assistance used directly for gender equality will be needed.

