

UPDATE: UN Reform and the Gender Equality Recommendations

The following is an update on what has taken place at the UN since the Coherence Panel released their report "Delivering as One" on 9 November 2006. Included is an update of the various processes in play now, as well as several suggested actions and next steps for advocacy.

Presented by

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)

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The recommendations from the Coherence Panel on reforming the UN's gender equality architecture incorporate many of the suggestions made by women's organizations and networks. Now the difficult work of implementation begins, including promoting their adoption during the inter-governmental processes at the UN, without having them weakened. A number of processes - both immediate and long-term - have been set into motion since the report's release, but unfortunately the timeline remains unclear and unpredictable.

The General Assembly Process: The GA is expected to review and debate the Panel's recommendations starting in early 2007, and right now the report is being translated so that it can be reviewed closely by all member states. While the informal discussions for the report now looks like it will run between late January - March, there will be a more formal process afterwards. Already some opposition is emerging to aspects of the Coherence Panel report including to the "One UN" at the country level. It is unclear how opposition to other parts of the Panel's report will affect the creation of a new women's entity with a new high level USG position.

Fast-track Initiative: Recently, there was also an unsuccessful initiative undertaken by the Secretary-General Kofi Annan to "fast-track" some of the recommendations in line with what he announced at the Nov 9 launch of the Coherence Panel Report, most importantly, the creation of the new Under-Secretary-General position to head the new women's agency. His proposal was essentially to create the position by the end of the year, with the idea that in 2007, the incoming SG Ban Ki Moon would appoint the new USG who would oversee the transition of consolidating UNIFEM, OSAGI and DAW into one new entity. Kofi Annan convened his Internal Policy Group to come up with this set of recommendations for the USG (see attached report), which on the whole corresponded with what was laid out in "Delivering As One".

There has been opposition, especially from the G77, to this "fast track" initiative, and it has been scuttled even before reaching the GA budgetary committee (the 5th Committee) whose approval would have been needed to create the position. It is not clear whether the opposition was related to concerns with the gender recommendations in particular, or concerns with other parts of the report, but there was definitely a concern with the process. The creation of the USG post would have sustained the momentum to push forward the creation of the new women's agency. It looks likely now that we will enter into a long inter-governmental process next year, and a lot of work remains to be done to ensure that the gender equality recommendations go forward and are not weakened during that stage.

Meeting with the Secretary-General-elect: The SG-elect Ban Ki Moon has agreed to a meeting with women's NGOs on the Coherence Panel recommendations, probably to be held in New York in mid-December. This is an opportunity to discuss the new agency, the new USG position and gender equality across the entire UN system. Women in South Korea have also briefed him on these issues, and paved the way for the New York meeting. We will report back when we know more from this meeting.

Some of you have been involved in regional and national advocacy efforts to push for the implementation of the Coherence Panel's recommendations, and in particular the new women's agency and the creation of the USG position. If anyone has more information from these efforts or has prepared statements, we encourage you to send these to the SG-elect as soon as possible. Please copy us as we can hand-deliver these to the SG-elect in the meeting so he hears a range of women's voices from around the world.

We attach the Statement we sent in November, now signed by 121 organizations around the world. We continue to use this statement in our lobbying efforts.

Suggested Next Steps and Actions

For quick action:

1. **SG-elect Ban Ki Moon meeting:** Send in regional or national statements (or create them) and copy them to Lexi Lenton at lexil@wedo.org so they can be hand-delivered to the new SG. Some key messages could encourage and welcome the creation of a new women's entity, a USG position heading that entity, an open and transparent global search to fill the position, and a universal country presence with senior level staff.

For Longer-term Action:

2. **Fact-finding:** It is important to map out positions of governments, and we encourage you to talk to your contacts to see what they are planning around this or get them engaged with if they are not.

*Would they champion the gender equality recommendations, or are they opposed to them? What issues do they have with the entire report? What are their concerns, and if any, alternative proposals? As you gather information during lobbying in December and January, please share it with all of us.