

STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON  
INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE ISSUE OF GENDER AS PART OF THE ONGOING  
SERIES OF CONSULTATIONS ON PROPOSALS OF THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON JUNE 16,  
2008

Distinguished Co-Chairs,  
Madam Deputy Secretary General,

Thank you for organizing today's informal consultations on the issue of gender as part of the ongoing series of consultations on proposals of the High Level Panel. We welcome the "Note on the United Nations System Support to Member States on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" and thank the Deputy Secretary General for introducing it. We align ourselves with the Statement of the Joint Coordinating Committee of G77 and NAM.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

India was the first country to adopt the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action without reservations. It is committed not only to the MDGs on promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, but to going beyond it while transforming the lives of the over half a billion women and girl children. At the national level, India has ensured that 5% of all government expenditure is available for gender programmes. It has also effectively drawn women into the political process through the largest ever affirmative action programme in democratic decentralization.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We obviously agree with the High Level Panel report on the importance of achieving gender equality. We also readily agree to the need for the UN to pursue gender equality and women's empowerment far more vigorously, both within and outside the UN.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We would like to see UN development operations in the sphere of gender being both effective and efficient. The Secretariat note informs that the responsibility for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women lies with member states and frankly acknowledges that there are gaps of "coordination and coherence", "authority and positioning", "accountability" and "resources"; and that the way forward is to have strong commitment and leadership from top management, sufficient resources, improved coordination and accountability and strong institutional authority and leadership. There appears to be an unstated conclusion drawn from all this, viz., that a gender entity could help bridge these gaps.

However, the basic infrastructure for gender mainstreaming and for enhancing its ability to support gender empowerment across the globe already exists within the UN system. By itself, the creation of a new gender entity will hardly increase the ability of these structures to better deliver to the satisfaction of member states. At the heart of the issue lies the availability of sufficient resources - core, predictable resources, resources without conditionalities. It is clear that any gender entity would be unable to address the complexities and challenges of gender mainstreaming and to boost women's empowerment, unless it was to derive strength from considerably enhanced and more predictable resources. Furthermore, for such an entity to be genuinely accountable to Member States, it is not enough for it to merely report to Member States through the UN General Assembly. An effective leader of an invigorated gender entity would also be needed and is far more likely to emerge out of a system such as one that envisages confirmation hearings or one that is based on a selection and election process that involves all Member States in determining the most suitable out of a short-list of highly qualified and competent candidates. This is also an aspect to which we may need to devote some attention as we proceed.

Thank You.

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