

### **Discussion Points for May 3, 2006 Meeting of Women's Organizations with the Secretary General**

- There must be a stronger voice for women's human rights and gender equality throughout the UN system; including in peace, security, human rights, development and the environment.
- For this, there must be strong women-specific machinery both in operational and policy-setting spheres and at the global and country levels. This needs to be strongly linked to and inform gender parity and gender mainstreaming efforts within the UN.
- It is clear that for this to be achieved there needs to be a major up-scaling of the power and authority as well as resources dedicated to gender equality, women's human rights and women's empowerment.
- At the operational level in particular, there needs to be a strong and independent women's agency with a broad mandate to deal with these issues with substantial resources at the global and country level linked to policy and norm-setting activities.
- While we are not endorsing any particular form for such an agency, we fully support a serious and comprehensive assessment of what is needed and want to emphasize that, to meet the goal of an effective gender equality architecture, such an agency must have the following characteristics:
  - be an autonomous UN agency with a comprehensive mandate dedicated to the full range of women's human rights and gender equality derived from the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, etc
  - be directed by an Under-Secretary General to guarantee a voice for women and a seat at the UN decision-making table
  - have substantial, regularized and predictable resources adequate to implement the mandate.
  - have headquarters and in-country presence with sufficient and well trained personnel and resources
  - have an accountability mechanism which includes regionally-diverse independent women's rights advocates as part of its governing body
- As part of our ongoing work we are pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with the Secretariat of the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence and have made the following recommendations:
  - that gender equality issues be explicitly considered under each theme
  - that the panel engage in consultations with civil society groups, especially women's groups at every level in order to ensure consideration of the impact on women of any proposed reforms
  - that the Panel appoint an independent gender-equality expert to thoroughly review the options
  - that in its final report it make strong recommendations for more effective UN mechanisms to achieve gender equality in all spheres of its activities and policy making

We look forward to strong leadership and support from you on the issues of gender equality and women's human rights both as the Panel completes its work, within the Mandate Review process and within the General Assembly and the UN more broadly throughout this UN Reform process.

In the immediate process to follow we look to you to:

- encourage the Panel to make bold recommendations on gender architecture
- encourage and facilitate consultations with women at all levels in these and further processes

**Participants in 3 May, 2006 meeting with the UN Secretary General**

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