



Statement

Executive Board of UN Women – First Regular Session

24-26 January 2011

Madam Chair,

I speak on behalf of the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a network of over 300 women's, human rights and social justice groups around the world that worked for over four years with UN member states and the UN Secretariat to create UN Women.

We congratulate Madam Bachelet on her appointment as Executive Director of UN Women, and welcome her leadership as this historic organization takes form. We are fully supportive of the Executive Director's vision and One Hundred Day Action Plan, and look forward to working together to implement the five thematic priorities. We strongly believe that the creation of this body will lead to a more coherent and coordinated response on the part of the UN system to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women as crucial components of development, human rights, humanitarian concerns, peace and security.

The GEAR Campaign understands that having a UN body to address both gender mainstreaming and women specific work within the UN is a daunting task. As India noted this morning, resources are crucial to this task, and civil society has therefore supported a \$1 billion budget from the beginning. We urge governments to increase their financial support to ensure that this organization succeeds.

GEAR is encouraged by the Executive Director's commitment to create an NGO Advisory Group. We have prepared a number of suggestions for engagement with civil society, such as the five points enumerated in our civil society paper, which includes an Advisory Group, as well as

thematic mechanisms. We are hopeful that UN Women will also establish other formal mechanisms of participation with civil society who are its key supporters. In particular we urge that UN Women, within its proposed organizational structure, designates dedicated staff to liaise with civil society at all levels – global, regional, and national. It is essential to have women’s voices heard in order for UN Women to fulfill its mandate and be accountable to the people it is trying to serve, including women’s movements.

We hope also that this Board and the Executive Director of UN Women will continue to make clear to all other UN entities, including the specialized agencies and programmes such as the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and UNAIDS, that the establishment of UN Women does not diminish their own responsibility to integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women in all their work. It is also essential that UN entities continue to fund robust programs directed at women and work closely with UN Women to ensure effective coordination, particularly at the country level.

The GEAR Campaign made up of women’s and social justice organizations worldwide look forward to working with UN Women and contributing to the achievement of its goals, including development of its strategic plan.

Thank you.