

Empowerment of Women should be at the heart of the future United Nations development agenda

Vienna Policy Dialogue participants agree that gender equality is vital to progress in development

VIENNA, 14 December (UN Information Service) – Gender injustice remains pervasive across the globe. Gender equality and the empowerment of women must be at the heart of the development agenda according to a range of experts from Governments, the United Nations and civil society who have been meeting in Vienna.

The two-day Vienna Policy Dialogue has brought together gender experts and those involved in development cooperation including senior representatives from developing and developed countries, local governments, civil society, parliaments and women's organizations to identify gaps and obstacles and develop concrete policy recommendations.

Delegates discussed how the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda could be promoted in international development cooperation. There was a consensus that putting gender equality at the core of the post-2015 development agenda is both a moral and developmental imperative.

Progress on gender equality has been made through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and there are many valuable lessons to be learnt on how best to mainstream and prioritize gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women. The MDG experience, however, also shows that a future development agenda must put a greater focus on the root causes of gender discrimination.

At the closing ceremony, Wu Hongbo, United Nations Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social said: "Moving forward, we should therefore aim for a standalone gender goal coupled with the effort to integrate gender equality into all aspects of a future development agenda. We have made important progress on gender equality. However, we have not seen the kind of transformational change which would be needed to put an end to gender inequalities up until now."

It was acknowledged that women are important agents of development. Gender equality is not only a goal in itself. It is also essential to achieve all other development goals. The factors preventing women from fulfilling their potential were discussed as was the need to create an enabling legal, social, cultural and economic environment for women.

The MDGs have attracted financial resources and galvanized political will, so there was broad consensus that the post 2015 agenda needs to have a stand alone gender equality goal as well as mainstreaming gender equality into all the other goals.

The need for clear accountability was a commonly shared concern among participants. It was agreed that national accountability frameworks and partnership policies must feature gender targets to ensure that development partnerships reflect women's voices.

The Vienna Policy Dialogue is part of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) of the UN Economic and Social Council which is characterized by its interactive, open, and frank discussion on trends, progress and effectiveness of international development cooperation among a diverse group of actors. It provides policy guidance and recommendations to promote more effective and coherent international development cooperation.

The Dialogue has been organized by the United Nations in collaboration with the Government of Austria. This was the first in a series of multi-stakeholder consultations in preparation of the 2014 DCF.

About the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

*ECOSOC is the principal United Nations body for coordinating and reviewing economic and social policies, providing advice and fostering dialogue on development issues. The biennial Development Cooperation Forum, which was mandated at the 2005 World Summit, discusses issues relating to effectiveness and coherence – and provides policy guidance and recommendations on how to improve the quality and impact of development cooperation. For more information, visit <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/index.shtml>
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Meeting proceedings, summaries, press conferences and other official documents will be made available through: www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amr2009china.shtml

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