

System-wide Coherence Informal Consultations

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Closing Remarks by the Co-Chairs

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Augustine Mahiga

Monday, 16 June 2008

Deputy Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

- We have heard loud and clear today a message from across the broad membership, both in representative group and individual national statements, a strong desire to address effectively the manifest weaknesses of the UN system in the area of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. We detect an unmistakable, and broad-based momentum in this direction.
- Delegations will recall that at the very outset of 2008, the Co-chairs asked for guidance from the broad membership as to which specific issues need to be addressed in this process. In response, the membership signalled on 7 February – and consistently since then – that, along with Delivering as One and the related area of Harmonisation of Business Practices, Funding, Development and Governance – Gender was to be among the priority issues which need to be addressed in this context.
- Our opening remarks today have set out the context. We have the Secretary-General's paper of 6 June concerning the substantive, programmatic aspects of Gender. This paper was drafted, taking into account the substantive comments on this aspect made by

member States on 16 May. Today, we have heard the views of delegations on the Secretary-General's paper and their further substantive comments.

- Your Co-chairs believe that – in light of all of the foregoing – we are now in a position to ask the Secretary-General to bring forward, by mid-July, a second paper. This would focus on the institutional dimension of Gender. The Secretary-General could be asked to present, in a non-prescriptive manner, a range of institutional options which would help the UN System to improve its performance in the area of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The Secretary-General could give a comprehensive and comparative assessment of each of the options and their implications for strengthening of the UN system with regard to Gender. Clearly, in drafting this second paper, the Secretary-General would take account of the views and questions raised by member States on 16 May as well as those expressed today. We believe the paper will give a focus to the Assembly's consideration of this matter and help it to advance towards an agreed outcome.

Distinguished delegates,

- We have once again today heard from member States views on how the General Assembly should ultimately move to decide on issues arising from our consultations. In other words, States have views on the format or construct of the decision-making phase.
- Your Co-chairs believe that we can continue, for the time being, to address the substantive issue of Gender without prejudice to how, ultimately, the Assembly would approach the decision-making stage. We believe that the member States will be much better

equipped to take up the matter of decision making once they have a clearer picture of the substantive elements that are in play.

- The Co-chairs will need to move to bring forward their report on the process to the President of the Assembly. We have also heard today that there would be a desire among member States to have all substantive elements presented together. Our intention is that by mid-July, member States would have received the Co-chairs' report and the Secretary-General's options paper on Gender. Indeed, the two would form part of a single whole substantive picture. Let me repeat that our substantive deliberations are proceeding without prejudice to the form or format of any ultimate decision-making.
- For our part, as Co-chairs, we would be available to the President to continue with our facilitation right up to the end of the current Session. We will try very hard to make as much progress as possible - and hopefully decisive progress - on a wide front, on an agreed basis, during the current 62nd Session.