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## **United Nations System-wide Coherence: Gender**

### **Joint Statement by the UN General Assembly Co-Chairs on System-wide Coherence**

#### **Opening Statement**

**Delivered by**

**H.E. Ambassador Paul Kavanagh**

**Permanent Representative of Ireland  
to the United Nations, New York**

**at Informal Consultations in the General Assembly**

**16 June 2008**

*Check against delivery*

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

- On behalf of my colleague as Co-Chair, Ambassador Augustine Mahiga of Tanzania and on my own behalf I would like to welcome you to these resumed informal consultations on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
- As delegations will recall, detailed discussion on this subject began at our previous informal consultations on May 16 last. We called that meeting in response to the many requests from a cross-regional group of member States who had indicated to us at the beginning of our Co-Chairmanship in February, that Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was an issue upon which they place great importance and would like to discuss further.
- At our consultations last month, we heard from many quarters that within the United Nations System there is a need to address gaps in coherence, authority, accountability and resources which hinder the work of the UN in relation to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
- Delegations suggested to us that the Secretary-General be asked to provide a note to give more information on the work of the UN in relation to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, specifically the gaps and challenges which hinder the United Nations System's ability to deliver on this important area which is a priority for all member States. This it was felt would provide a useful basis from which to continue discussions.
- In response to this request, your Co-Chairs forwarded a letter to the Secretary-General and asked him to produce a note on the programmatic and substantive work underway with the UN System on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, in order that delegations could be fully informed of the issue before continuing discussions.
- On June 6 last, the Secretary General provided the membership with a 'Note on the United Nations System Support to Member States on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment'.
- We are very grateful for the Secretary-General and his colleagues for preparing this note and for their continued support.
- We are particularly grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General who has been leading this work on behalf of the Secretary-General and who is here with us today to introduce the Note.

Distinguished delegates,

- Delegations will be aware that the Co-Chairs have continued throughout this process to take an open and pragmatic approach. We have responded at each stage to the broad wishes of the membership. We have given assurance that there will be no a priori decisions, no faits accomplis and no pre-determined outcomes.
- In relation to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the broad membership has accepted that we should, all together, in the first instance have an appreciation of the current state of the work of the UN System with regard to Gender. Member States gave their own extensive views of the programmatic aspect at the open consultations on 16 May and it was agreed that the Secretary-General, having heard the views of member States in plenary, should prepare a paper – not on the question of institutional arrangements – but exclusively on the substantive, programmatic aspects. It was agreed that only at a subsequent stage, would the process take up the matter of institutional arrangements.
- Now, we have received the Secretary-General's paper, dated 6 June, concerning the programmatic aspects of Gender. It appears to us to echo many of the points raised by member States from the floor here on 16 May.
- In today's consultations we will want to hear the views of member States on the analysis contained in the Secretary-General's paper and any further comments that delegations may have on the programmatic aspect.
- Only in light of this would we be in a position to move, in a non-prescriptive manner, to the next phase – where we would take up the issue of institutional arrangements. Delegations will recall that we have been keen to give a full airing to the programmatic aspects, so that when we do come to take up the institutional aspect, our work in that phase will be solidly rooted in a broad appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the current System. Put another way, we very much share the approach that “form follows substance”.
- And so, distinguished delegates, your Co-chairs look forward to deepening our shared analysis of the UN's work on this important matter today, and to hearing the views of member States on how to proceed in light of the information provided to us by the UN System.
- Without further delay, therefore, I would like to give the floor to her Excellency the Deputy Secretary-General.