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Advancement of women**Improvement of the status of women in the
United Nations system****Report of the Secretary-General****Summary*

In response to General Assembly resolution A/RES/62/137 of 14 February 2008, the present report provides information on the status of women in the United Nations system including up-to-date statistics, information on progress made and obstacles encountered in achieving gender balance, and recommendations for accelerating progress. It includes information on the representation of women in organizations and agencies of the United Nations system from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007, and in the United Nations Secretariat from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2008. In the United Nations system, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories increased negligibly from 36.9 to 38.4 per cent between December 2004 and December 2007, a total of 1.5 per cent - an annual average increase of 0.5. In the Secretariat, the percentage of women staff in the Professional and higher categories showed a negligible improvement of 0.2 per cent during the two-year period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2008, increasing from 37.4 to 37.6 per cent. Challenges encountered by United Nations system entities in achieving gender balance include: inadequate accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms; lack of special measures for gender equality; weak integration of focal point systems; weak implementation of flexible work arrangements, and higher attrition rates for women as compared to men. Among the recommendations for accelerating progress are senior leadership sponsorship, enhanced monitoring and accountability, and more rigorous implementation of existing policies. Although there is heightened awareness of the imperative for gender balance, reversal of the slow trend and pace towards gender parity requires urgent and intensified action.

* The submission of the present report was delayed due to the unavailability of updated statistical data.

