

**Panel on Gender Mainstreaming in the Functional Commissions
of ECOSOC**

11 June 2002

Opening Remarks

by

**Ms. Carolyn Hannan
Director
Division for the Advancement of Women**

Mme. Vice-President,
Distinguished panellists,
Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our distinguished panellists and all participants to this important panel. I believe that all of us gathered here in this room share a common commitment to ensuring that gender perspectives are fully integrated into the work and outcomes of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary machinery, especially its functional commissions.

Speakers before me have emphasized the role of the gender mainstreaming strategy for the achievement of the goal of gender equality – a development goal in and of itself, as well as a means for achieving other goals such as poverty eradication, sustainable development and social cohesion. The importance of gender mainstreaming for the achievement of equality between women and men is well recognized. What needs to be emphasized more forcefully now is the fact that the Millennium Declaration Goals of the United Nations cannot be achieved unless all stakeholders- women as well as men - can influence, participate and benefit from development activities in all areas.

Developments in recent years, in particular the greater recognition of the importance of social dimensions, have resulted in increased attention to aspects such as community involvement, participation and ownership. This has facilitated a stronger focus on specific groups, including women. The emergence of a more holistic framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development, with a strong focus on the empowerment of all stakeholders, should also lead to greater responsiveness to the integration of gender perspectives.

Many would, however, agree that it has not always been easy to get attention to gender perspectives into the discussions and documents on the diverse range of issues dealt with by the Council and its functional commissions. Despite the knowledge gained and the efforts made at research, data collection and policy development, gender perspectives are still not seen as an integral routine part of the work in the economic, social and related fields. The analysis of issues and policy formulation is not always informed by a consideration of gender differences and inequalities, and opportunities for narrowing gender gaps and supporting greater equality between women and men are not yet consistently identified. Unresolved questions thus remain. Why – when we have the knowledge about the contributions, needs and priorities of women as well as men – are gender perspectives not taken into account fully in the research, analysis and decision-making phases? Why is the incorporation of relevant and important gender perspectives not seen as essential for the achievement of the full range of goals pursued by the Council and its subsidiary bodies?

One of the reasons for lack of progress is the limited understanding of the important linkages between gender perspectives and different sector areas. Critical questions on gender perspectives need to be raised in all areas. For example, in what way are gender perspectives relevant for the promotion and protection of human rights; what are the critical gender perspectives in water resources management; how do gender perspectives come into play in decentralization processes; what role do gender perspectives have in poverty eradication? If these linkages are made clear, and there is an understanding that gender perspectives are important for achieving the goals of the

United Nations, effective action plans can be put in place and real changes made to the way work is carried out.

Today's panel discussion provides an opportunity to discuss the relevance of gender perspectives in the work of three subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council. We have invited our speakers to provide examples of good practices, or success stories, where gender perspectives are well represented in their areas. We have also asked them to discuss the challenges and constraints encountered in bringing greater attention to gender perspectives, and ways and means by which the Commissions and their Secretariats are working to overcome such constraints. Furthermore, we have suggested that panellists could identify a topic or area on their future work programme where gender perspectives might be given more attention. And lastly, as mentioned by the Vice-President, speakers are encouraged to discuss the role they see for the Council in support of their work, and their expectations with regard to the Council's new sub-item.

Having thus set out the framework for the presentations, permit me to just add a word about the composition of the panel. First, we are very grateful to all our panellists for having accepted to participate and speak today. Chairpersons, or their designated representatives, have been invited - together with the Directors of the Divisions that provide substantive support to these intergovernmental bodies - to discuss their experiences. This approach is based on the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 that "requested the Secretariat to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation". In other words, the Council believed that gender-sensitive reports would facilitate the adoption of resolutions or agreed conclusions that likewise paid attention to gender perspectives. I look forward to the illustration of this point by our distinguished panellists.

I would now like to turn to the organization of the panel. After the presentations by each group of two, that is, a Director and Chairperson, some five minutes will be set aside for follow-up questions, including for clarification. After we have heard from all

six panellists, we should have about an hour for discussion and dialogue. We have asked panellists to limit their comments to seven minutes, to allow time for discussion.

Our first panellists are Mr. Johan Scholvinck, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and His Excellency Ambassador Iftekhar Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, and Chairperson of the Commission for Social Development.

Thank you very much.

I now turn to our second group. I have pleasure of inviting Mr. Gustavo Eduardo Ainchil, Vice-Chairperson of the United Nations Forum on Forests, and Mr. Jagmohan Maini, Coordinator and Head of the Secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests, to make their presentations.

Thank you very much.

Let me now turn to our visitors from Vienna. I am very pleased to invite Mr. Eduardo Vetere, Director of the Centre for International Crime Prevention, and His Excellency, Ambassador Javier Paulinich, Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations in Vienna and Vice-Chairperson of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, to address us.

Thank You.