

**Statement by Dr. Nafis Sadik
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at a

**Panel discussion for International Women's Day
“Gender Equality Beyond 2005: Building a More Secure Future”**

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Members of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change had no doubts about the importance of gender equality for global security. We just had difficulty articulating actionable recommendations. The great majority of current conflicts are internal rather than international; they involve whole populations. There is an additional threat from groups of criminals, who can operate with or without state support, within and across national borders. These groups may be ideologically motivated, or they may be drug dealers or traffickers in human beings. They thrive in conditions of political chaos, economic deprivation and human insecurity. In all these cases, the human rights of women and girls are disproportionately at risk.

Women have special needs in conflict and post-conflict situations; they have a stake and a contribution to make in peacemaking and peace-building; and they are essential agents in longer-term development. Institutional arrangements at international and national level should reflect these realities.

All this is very well-known. The Security Council’s resolution 1325 of 31 October, 2000 covered much of the ground. Three of the Millennium Development Goals refer to women directly. The first MDG, halving poverty by 2015, cannot be achieved without gender equality

In 2002, the Secretary-General’s report on “Women, Peace and Security”, and the UNIFEM-commissioned Independent Experts’ Assessment on the “Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building” covered many of the issues. The Secretary-General’s report on “Women and Peace and Security” last October once more made valuable suggestions. I think we have all the evidence we need, and enough in the way of recommendations, goals and targets. What women need now—and what global security demands—is action.

Governments and the international community as a whole must seriously reconsider their priorities. Global military expenditure is over \$900 billion dollars. Expenditure by OECD countries on development assistance is less than \$70 billion. About \$3 billion of that goes towards gender equality. What contributes more towards security, \$3 billion invested in women, or \$900 billion squandered on weapons? It is time for political leaders to stop *talking* about peace and start *investing* in it.

The Millennium Development Goals are the essential underpinning for global security in the 21st century, and women's equality and empowerment are at the heart of the goals. This year, with the five-year review of the Goals in September, we have an excellent opportunity for governments and the international community, finally, to commit to action.

Institutional Mechanisms

The High-level Panel considered what institutional mechanisms the United Nations needed to promote security and development. I urged stronger and more explicit reference to gender issues—but then, I always do.

Let me cover some suggestions the Panel considered:

There is considerable professional experience and expertise on gender-related policymaking and execution in the United Nations system, but this body of knowledge is not reflected in policymaking. At Headquarters level, four different parts of the system [*OSAGI, DAW, INSTRAW, and UNIFEM*] have primary responsibility. All programmes and agencies have focal points on their staffs, but these individuals and units are low-level and have little impact on policy.

Only two units at UN Headquarters, OSAGI and DAW, are funded from the regular budget, with a total of 42 staff. On the other hand, UNIFEM with 47 core staff (the only one which has field operations), and INSTRAW with only five, rely entirely on voluntary funding, which is always inadequate. The General Assembly has requested UNIFEM to strengthen its country-level activities in a number of critical strategic areas, including CEDAW implementation, peace and security, and HIV/AIDS—but member states have not provided the resources. UNIFEM, a part of the UNDP system, is not represented even in that organisation at the policy-level table. Its Director is not even at the same level as the Regional Programme Directors. Obviously UNIFEM's level needs to be raised.

There is a very strong case for the United Nations to consolidate institutions and leadership to promote gender issues in support of the Millennium Development Goals. There is an even stronger case for member states to support such a move—we must mobilise the political will to make it happen.

This lack of overall policy direction has an impact at national level. For example, most instances of trafficking go unreported because women have little awareness of their rights, and because governments and communities refuse to exercise their responsibility for protection, policing and judicial enforcement.

The United Nations, including UNODC (the lead agency on organised crime, including trafficking) and ILO (for migrant workers), should take the lead. The UN system should be more aggressive at all levels in encouraging member states to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls.

At the country level the different parts of the United Nations system should work together, in collaboration with government and civil society; for example, to offer protection to the victims of trafficking, and to provide decent livelihoods to ensure they do not fall again into the hands of traffickers. The United Nations and its partners in civil society and the donor community should advocate with governments to accept their responsibility to protect; work to raise awareness of the risks; extend labour protections to migrant workers; support victims and help re-integrate them into society. All should promote community-level development and social inclusion.

From my observation, we have some examples of successful co-ordinated advocacy and action at the country level. But, at the moment, co-ordination depends on individuals rather than institutional arrangements. Each part of the United Nations runs its own activities, according to its own remit and its own view of priorities and in co-ordination with its counterparts in government and the NGO and donor communities. Co-ordination with other parts of the United Nations system is seen as desirable but not essential. There is lip service on all sides to co-ordination within the system, but little real action on the ground.

Recommendations

My first institutional recommendation – in the context of UN reform - would be to rationalise the various United Nations bodies. They need secure funding, a proper staff, and access to high-level policymaking. These arrangements would be reflected across the system and especially at country level, so that countries get the UN support they need, within and across borders.

My second recommendation is that while gender mainstreaming is the ultimate goal, targeted programmes are still needed for many particular needs of women like maternal mortality reduction, violence against girls and women, trafficking of girls and women, protection during armed conflict or natural disasters. Targetted action is also needed in mainstreaming areas like getting and keeping girls in school or halving poverty by 2015, both MDG goals. Please note the Secretary-General's statement saying just this.

Many of the High-Level Panel's recommendations relate to agreements already reached or actions already decided on by the international community. My third recommendation therefore would be simply for governments, the international community, civil society

and international organizations to do what they have already agreed to do, by the means already agreed, according to the agreed timetable, and with the agreed levels of resources. Member states do not need to adopt new resolutions, reopen discussions or rewrite consensus documents, so much as simply get on with the job.

I am not claiming that any of these agreements are perfect. I am simply remarking that they are good enough to work with. I would also point out that the dangers of inaction far outweigh the risks of acting along imperfect lines. There are so many threats to peace and security, new and old. There is so much to do. We need to *move on*.

Moving on will mean, as the Secretary-General said, and I quote, “investing in infrastructure beneficial to women, increasing their role in policymaking and guaranteeing their rights to sexual and reproductive health, property ownership, inheritance and equality in employment”; and it will mean working towards what has been called the “Ninth MDG”, the sexual and reproductive health of women. Equitable and sustainable development, development that lays a sound basis for global justice, peace and security, depends on women’s empowerment and equality—and those in turn depend on that ‘ninth MDG.’ It would be better of course to make the goal explicit—but the Cairo and Beijing consensus laid it out very specifically, with a dateline and resource estimates, including North-South flows. That should be good enough. A few ideologues and bureaucrats have an enduring obsession with reproductive health and with the notion that women should have control over decisions that affect their lives . We cannot let them stand in the way of common sense as you did when you adopted the CSW statement. We must – we will – move on.

Despite tragedy and hardship, despite conflict, exclusion, economic exploitation, violence and the ravages of HIV/AIDS (which increasingly acquires a female face), women’s issues have made progress over the last decade. Women in many settings are showing a new confidence and sense of entitlement. We are moving on. We will not be stopped. The question is, will the international community make it easy for women, or more difficult? Will governments recognise that they have a stake in women’s empowerment and equality, and act accordingly? In this area, global interests, national interests, individual interests and human rights coincide. It is time for some serious action.

Thank you.