

Opening remarks
by
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“Ten year Review of gender mainstreaming: Focusing on results”
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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am very happy to see you all here and to welcome you to another workshop of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. The theme of this year's workshop is "Ten year Review of gender mainstreaming: Focusing on results". As the title says, I hope that our discussion today will help us to think not only on what we are doing, but also how we are doing it so that in the end we deliver the results that improve both the condition and the position of women in the world.

At the outset, I wish to thank the presenters for accepting our invitation to share their experiences. I recognize that they have taken time and made the extra effort to prepare the presentations and for this I wish to commend them. I also thank those who have accepted to collaborate with my office in chairing the various sessions.

As we participate in this workshop today, I would like us all, as an Inter-Agency Network to reflect on how we can capitalize on our different perspectives and mandates to accelerate the achievement of gender equality in the countries that we serve. In the past few years our workshops have focused on strengthening our own capacities, improving methodologies and ensuring that the work of our organizations reflects a gender perspective. All these issues are essential and we must continue to address them. Indeed we cannot slow the momentum we have created within our organizations. Yet we need to do more, we should make every effort to do so.

In this context, we have two presentations that focus on measuring the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women at the country level. These types of tools and methodologies are crucial to our work. We must therefore promote the adoption of such measurements so that we may determine whether in fact there is action behind the rhetoric about promotion of gender equality. These measurements should also help to reinforce accountability, expose the gaps and promote discourse at various levels including the reasons for the slow progress towards implementation of commitments on gender equality.

Consideration should also be given to broadening our horizons focusing as well on emerging global issues that have the potential to sideline attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women. We may want to ask ourselves questions such as: how do we as a constituency focused on gender issues become a strong voice in the debates that are taking place today in the UN system, many of them driven by member states? We started our dialogue on this

issue yesterday. Do we have an opportunity to change the paradigms through which we work so as to respond adequately to emerging issues? If so, what can we do differently, or better, than what we are doing now?

I have been pondering on these issues as I listen to various debates and read various reports that are being produced that have the potential to impact the manner in which the UN works and how gender issues are positioned within the system. The report of the High level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change entitled “A more secure world: our shared responsibility”, and the report of the Millennium Project entitled “Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals” give food for thought. Both reports raise issues that are quite different and which pose various challenges for us individually and collectively since we are the ones entrusted with spearheading change to promote gender equality.

One of the more interesting aspects of the report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is that it postulates that the UN as a system must begin to do things differently if it is to be successful in addressing emerging threats. I strongly believe that this message is also a timely one for our Network. Some members of this Network have raised the issue of possible “gender fatigue” among ourselves as well as among donors, suggesting that perhaps we need to critique ourselves and our methods to see what we need to do differently. Given the enormous task that we have, we need to be able to promote our issues with a high degree of enthusiasm, but also with a higher level of acceptability than we are witnessing today. One of the big challenges that we face is that gender as an issue has to compete with other issues which are backed by better resourced constituencies. So under these circumstances how do we communicate our messages so as to ensure receptivity?

The report of the High Level Panel also recommends increased resources and development of new institutions for conflict prevention, peace making and peace building. It has also recommended the full implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325. This recommendation is welcome and very timely. Yet most of us are now familiar with the abuse of women by UN peacekeepers in the DRC and the slowness of a response to protect women in the Sudan. Within the context of this report, what can we do collectively to ensure that the new institutions and the new responses being proposed address the systemic failure of various responses to protect women in conflict and post conflict situations? How for example can we prepare the communities in the Sudan to receive the proposed huge influx of peacekeepers so that the suffering that women and girls have already been subjected to is not continued under the umbrella of the UN flag?

While I support gender-sensitive training of peace keepers themselves, I believe that we must also prepare the host communities themselves regarding their relationship and dealings with the peacekeepers, before the latter arrive. The UN system needs to reassess their involvement in line with their mandates in order to assist communities to develop social defence mechanisms that can help to protect women and girls against the type of abuses we have witnessed in so many places by those who should be their protectors. While I do not expect that we shall be able to find answers here and now, I hope that we can use this workshop and the presentations that will be given to devise new ways of operating “out-of-the-box” so to speak, in order to exert our

influence at the more critical juncture of various processes. We need enhanced co-ordination, particularly at the regional and national levels. My Office, which is entrusted with this responsibility, first by the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the Secretary-General, will ensure that this is done in a co-ordinated manner.

One of the presentations today will share with us experiences on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). That presentation will hopefully also be able to guide us on how we begin to respond to issues raised in the report of the Millennium Project. The report has not only underscored how important the promotion of gender equality is to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals but it has also prioritized the areas that are the most important to focus on. This is an opportunity to reposition gender equality issues again at the center of the development debate. For example in identifying the priority areas for future increased public sector investments, the report mentions areas such as making sure farms are more productive, ensuring increased food output, addressing the needs of the rural landless, delivering affordable health services including in reproductive health, accelerating universal primary education and expanding secondary school education and improving resource management. In each of these areas women are disproportionately represented. (in one way or another). Therefore if public investments are going to be increased we need to ensure that women and girls benefit in proportion to their needs. We need a strategy in order to influence current debates.

In today's workshop we shall also hear a presentation on working with specific constituencies to promote gender equality. This is another theme that is reflected in the Millennium Project report which stresses the importance of working with the civil society, among others. How to expand our constituencies and create new issue-based partnerships is yet another challenge. I recall that this network used to have regular meetings with OECD-DAC Group on Gender Equality before the latter was disbanded. This was quite a loss so we may want to think further on what other groups we can network with. We have raised in this forum in prior meetings the need to develop a functional linkage between our Network and the UN Country Teams so that our work and the work of the Task Forces can find a ready audience at the country level. This is something that is still to become operational. Given the constant scramble for resources that we are all so familiar with, we should find new ways of aligning the limited resources to achieve maximum results.

Let me conclude by saying that I hope this workshop will bring new insights to our work. As usual I am sure that we will use the workshop to share and exchange our experiences but at the same time candidly question our methods of work and the yardsticks we use to measure success. We as a Network should put in place mechanisms to monitor and assess ourselves by applying the reporting and monitoring systems that we have discussed in the past.

I want to wish you all very fruitful discussions and I look forward to your recommendations at the end of the day.

Thank you.
