

**Opening remarks**  
**by**  
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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 2002 meeting of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. I believe we are all happy to see each other again, both from other duty stations and from New York. I am pleased to welcome those who are attending our session for the first time, and those who I have not had the pleasure of meeting before today. I would also like to welcome the new Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, Carolyn Hannan, with whom you are all familiar. I would also like to welcome a former member of the Committee from Habitat, Ms. Aliye Celik, who joined DESA two years ago and has kindly agreed to act as Secretary of the Network.

This is our first meeting since the ACC has gone through its most recent reform efforts and its name was changed by ECOSOC to the CEB which, as you know, stands for the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. The CEB now has a new approach to cooperation and coordination within the UN system. With its partner bodies on programme and management (HLCM and HLPC), the CEB has set out several guidelines on the direction, which bodies such as ours should take.

Basically, what this means is that the CEB no longer utilizes subsidiary standing or *ad hoc* committees and sub-committees as part of its operating machinery. However, it does not mean our work, and other inter-agency coordination has become redundant or superfluous. Now more than ever, the UN system needs to strengthen inter-agency coordination in the various areas covered by the former ACC. Our functions have neither been downgraded nor marginalized rather decentralized which is part of the Secretary-General's on-going reform programme. Now, we are being mandated by the CEB to ensure the continuation of inter-agency coordination, with more substance, flexibility, and more task-orientation in promoting this coordination. We are expected to find new ways and means to maintain dialogue and interaction without using scarce resources. I am proud to say that through the years we have always managed on very few resources. Now more than ever, the use of internet, teleconferencing and online dialogues must be used.

We have already considered the functioning of our group before the CEB began its reform process. Some of the new methodologies and modalities of work that the CEB is now promoting – such as time-bound task forces and lead agency arrangements – have been utilized by our group for the last few years. While the ACC was elaborating its most recent reform, the Network was already tightening and strengthening its working methods. And in continuation of the reform process, what was originally the *ad hoc* Meeting on Women from 1975 to 1995, became the Inter-Agency Committee from 1996 to 2000, and then the Inter-Agency Meeting in 2001.

May I recall that since 1975, this Network, under its varied nomenclature has continuously placed first gender equality goals, exchange of information, practicality and interaction among its members.

From 20 years of *ad hoc* existence, the Network was finally formalized as one of three *bona fide* standing subsidiary bodies of the ACC in 1996. I believe that over these last six years, since the Beijing Conference, the Network has demonstrated the value of this form of inter-agency cooperation and coordination. It has also shown that gender mainstreaming strategy as a means of achieving gender equality while being used more widely than ever, is still not an automatic approach in all areas of work of the UN system.

For now we are the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. Further evolution in the way of the UN will, I am sure, take place in the years to come.

At our 2001 meeting, we were briefed about the then ongoing ACC reform by Mr. Qazi Shaukat Fareed. Today, we once again have the pleasure of Mr. Fareed's participation in our meeting. He is now the Director of the CEB Secretariat. He will once again brief us on the outcome of ACC reform and on recent decisions of the CEB on its working methods. From his presentation, I hope that we will be able to explore what the future working methods of our own Network will entail, so that we can best enhance inter-agency activities on gender equality.

Much has happened since our last annual meeting in 2001 which will affect our programme of work for this session. The Commission on the Status of Women, which begins its forty-sixth session next week, decided upon its multi-year work programme. The two themes being covered in 2002 are the eradication of poverty through women's empowerment throughout their life cycle, and environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters from a gender perspective. We need to consider the work programme of the Commission when we consider our work programme for the next few years.

Women, peace and security including inter-agency activities in Afghanistan is one of our standing agenda items. At the International Women's Day observances in New York for the last two years, women, peace and security has been used as the theme. In 2000 "Women uniting for Peace" was the title, while in 2001 "Women and peace: women managing conflicts". In 2002, the theme of "Afghan Women Today: Realities and Opportunities" has been chosen and approved by our group. Afghanistan has come more to the forefront within the last five months since the tragic events of 11 September. The Secretary-General, Mr. Brahimi and the UN system have pushed for Afghan women's participation in leadership and decision-making positions. The results: two women were full delegates in the United Nations-sponsored talks in Bonn, Germany last December and two women Ministers are on the Interim Administration in Afghanistan. The first Integrated Mission Task Force, which had been established to advise the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, includes a gender specialist from the Division for the Advancement of Women and gender perspectives were integrated to the extent possible.

I also participated in the Afghan Women's Summit for Democracy in Brussels with UNIFEM, where the meeting adopted the Brussels Proclamation, which addresses women's demands regarding the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Since then, a delegation of Afghan women met with members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General. It is necessary for us as members of the UN system, to ensure that Afghan women are included as full partners in the decision-making process and to ensure gender mainstreaming in all areas of recovery and development. We need to discuss further steps which we can take not only as individual entities, but as well as together to promote inter-agency cooperation for Afghan women and girls. Afghanistan however should not blind us to the dire situation of women in Africa, Asia and some parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Under the theme of women, peace and security, 31 October 2001 saw the first anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325. We recognized that anniversary by organizing a panel at which Under-Secretaries-General from disarmament, peacekeeping, political affairs and humanitarian affairs, and the

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor, informed us how they had used resolution 1325 to integrate gender into their work. On the same day, the President of the Security Council, the Foreign Minister of Ireland, issued a statement underscoring the importance of promoting active and visible mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all its policies and programmes on armed conflict. The Council reaffirmed its strong support for increasing women's role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution, and expressed concern that there were still no women appointed as special representatives or special envoys of the Secretary-General to peace missions. Of particular concern to us, the President made special mention of our Inter-agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, welcoming our efforts in implementing all aspects of resolution 1325, and in preparing the Secretary-General's study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. At our session, we will hear a report from the Task Force on Women, Peace and Security on the progress of that report. We will also be updated on the action plan for the system-wide implementation of this resolution. We will share these with you in the next few days and seek your comments and contributions. We must endeavour to complete this report by the appointed date, so I look forward to a fruitful discussion on this study.

With regard to high-level appointments, inter-agency networks have provided potential candidates for senior level appointments as well as for consolidated rosters. Such efforts have resulted in the identification of a greater number of qualified women candidates and should eventually lead to improved gender balance ratios at the senior level, including those of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Special Envoys for Peacekeeping.

In keeping with our new direction of not only developing our own projects, we continue to remain involved in the work of other areas of the UN system. Our involvement in the International Conference on Financing for Development was visible. I was pleased to see that many of you attended the Day of Dialogue yesterday, hosted by the Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Financing for Development. We discussed ways of "staying engaged" in relation to incorporating gender perspectives into FfD and its follow-up, and its future role for the task force on another effective mechanism for follow-up. We focused on the different issues being addressed in the preparations for the Conference, and we made concrete recommendations for actions to be taken by all actors in the area of financing for development. This Day was just one of the many projects in which we as a group are involved. As a result of all our efforts, the Monterrey Consensus contains some important references to gender equality. However, as you may agree, there are not as many explicit references to the critical gender perspectives in all the important issues raised in the Monterrey Consensus as we would like. There are no clear recommendations on how to bring greater attention to gender perspectives apart from the reference to gender-responsive budgeting. Nevertheless, we have moved forward.

We must focus on getting our message heard at other upcoming events within the UN such as the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, 8-12 April 2002); the UN Special Session on Children (New York, 8-10 May 2002); the World Food Summit: five years later (Rome, 10-13 June 2002); and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 26 August-4 September 2002). The Network must continue to remain alert to emerging areas of work and events in our own organizations where we can make a difference as it pertains to our own agenda. We must continue our collaborative efforts in this regard. The integration of a gender perspective into the preparation of and follow-up to International Conferences, summits and special sessions, remains a vital part of the IANWGE agenda. Proof of the effectiveness of our Network, is definitely the incorporation and integration of a gender into the outcome documents of these meetings. That, and the follow-up, should continue to be one of our main goals.

At our meeting we will hear the reports of several other Task Managers – on financing for development, which I already mentioned; gender and ICTs, tools and indicators for gender impact

analysis, monitoring and evaluation, mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the CCA/UNDAF process; gender mainstreaming in programme budgets; and database activities and WomenWatch. I thank our Task Managers who throughout the year, whether from Geneva, Rome, Santiago or New York, kept us updated on their activities and developments in their focus areas.

At this session, we must decide on the future of the task forces. This is particularly pertinent given the reform of the CEB. We must decide where we should focus our energy, time and resources. What should be our priorities for the coming years, in particular 2002/2003. What are our guiding principles? Are we achieving what we set out to achieve? We must decide what we can and cannot do within our available resources. As we plan for the future, let us build on our collective evaluation entitled, "Proposed Coordinating Mechanisms on Gender Equality under ACC Reform" which finally convinced CEB that a gender perspective was still needed.

This is our seventh annual meeting since the Beijing Conference at which we will discuss what action we can take to sharpen the focus on gender equality in the work of the United Nations system. We will also continue to enhance gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality goals. As in the last two years, we will have a one-day workshop on gender mainstreaming on Thursday, this time with a special focus on capacity-building and training. Ms. Sissel Ekaas, Director of FAO's Gender and Population Division will give the keynote address.

I greatly enjoy meeting with you in this forum and through other ways over the year. Your support and your dedication to our unified goal of promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the UN system is gratifying and inspiring. I look forward to what I am certain will be a very productive meeting. Our tight schedule requires focus, cooperation and hard work from all of us over the next four days. We want to make real progress on the various items on our agenda. As usual, I cannot conclude without thanking our inter-sessional Task Managers and working groups and the OSAGI/DAW team including Carolyn, Michio and Abby who helped so much in the preparations for this meeting. Without your work, this session would not be productive. I wish you all the best for a valuable session both in our formal meetings and in our interaction outside.

Thank you.

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