

Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session
27 February -10 March 2006

Item 3a of the provisional agenda

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: Review of gender mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system:
A verbal report in response to General Assembly resolution 59/164 of 20 December 2004

Presented by

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1. The Beijing Platform for Action called on the United Nations to achieve overall gender equality of staff in the Professional and higher categories, with particular reference to reaching the 50/50 gender balance goal at the managerial and decision-making levels by the year 2000 (para 193 a and c). The Platform also called on Member States to nominate women candidates for election or appointment to United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other autonomous organizations of the United Nations system (190 j) as well as in their delegations to the United Nations and other international fora (192 i). Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women supports temporary special measures aimed to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. General Assembly resolutions repeatedly mandate the achievement of gender equality at all levels and in all occupational categories. Three of the most recent resolutions, entitled “Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system” include: A/RES/57/180; A/RES/58/144; and A/RES/59/164.

2. Progress remains slow and uneven with the goal of parity still being elusive. The present update is provided in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 59/164 of 20 December 2004 and provides information on:

- the representation of women in the **United Nations Secretariat** as of 31 December 2005;
- the representation of women in the **United Nations system** as at 31 December 2004;
- progress and concerns in the **United Nations Secretariat**.

I. Representation of women staff in the Professional and higher categories in the United Nations Secretariat

A. All Staff with appointments of one year or more¹

3. As of 31 December 2005 women in the Professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more, represented:

- 37.2 per cent **overall** (2223 women out of 5976), an **increase** of 0.1 percentage points since 31 December 2004;
- 38.4 per cent at the **P1-P5** level (2077 women out of 5414), an **increase** of 0.4 percentage points since 2004;
- 27.3 per cent at the **D-1** level alone (98 women out of 359), a **decrease** of 5.2 percentage points since 2004;
- 26.0 per cent at the **D-1** level and **above** (146 women out of 562), a **decrease** of 2.9 percentage points since 2004;
- 20.4 per cent at the **ASG** level (10 women out of 49), a **decrease** of 1.8 percentage points since 2004 when women constituted 22.2 per cent at this level (10 women out of 45);
- 15.0 per cent at the **USG** level (6 women out of 40), a **decrease** of 2.5 percentage points since 2004 when women constituted 17.5 per cent at this level (7 women out of 40).

B. Staff on posts subject to geographical distribution²

4. Staff on posts subject to geographical distribution constitute 43.6 per cent (2606) of the total pool (5976) of staff with appointments of one year or more. As of 31 December 2005, in this more restricted group, women represented:

- 42.9 per cent of **all** Professional staff (1118 women out of 2606), an **increase** of 0.2 percentage points since 31 December 2004;
- 33.5 per cent at the **D-1** level and **above** (112 women out of 334), a **decrease** of 3.6 percentage point since 31 December 2004;
- 38.9 per cent at the **ASG** level (7 women out of 18), an **increase** of 0.8 percentage points since 31 December 2004;

¹ Source: Table 1

² Source: Table 2

- 20.8 per cent at the **USG** level (5 women out of 24), a **decrease** of 5.3 percent since 31 December 2004.

5. In terms of geographic balance among the Secretariat staff, numbers are available only for posts subject to geographical distribution. Thirty-three countries have no women representation (*excluding* seventeen member states that are unrepresented).³

C. Representation of women staff in departments or offices

6. In the 39 individual departments/offices in the Secretariat, data as of 31 December 2005 reveals that for those with 20 or more Professional staff:

- five have met or exceeded the gender balance target, thus contributing to reaching the overall target for the Secretariat;
- ten have 40 to 49 per cent Professional women staff;
- eleven departments/offices have between 30 and 40 per cent Professional women staff;
- five have less than 30 per cent women Professional women staff;
- at the D-1 level and above, nine departments/offices have met or exceeded the target of gender parity;
- three departments/offices have achieved 40 to 50 per cent representation of women at the D-1 level and above.

D. Staff in the Professional and higher categories in peacekeeping and peace-building missions administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Office of Mission Support

7. As of 31 December 2004⁴, women represented:

- 25.7 per cent of the 1,221 (314 women and 907 men) professional staff with appointments of one year or more assigned to peace operations. This is a **decline** of 1.8 percentage points from 27.5 per cent as of 30 June 2004.
- at the D-1 level and above, women constitute 11.4 per cent of staff (14 out of 123), a **decline** of 0.8 percentage points from six months earlier.

8. As of February 2005⁵, of 13 missions with more than 20 Professional staff members:

- four have more than 30 per cent Professional women staff:⁶

³ Source: Table 16b (OHRM, not in annex)

⁴ Latest available data

⁵ Latest available data

⁶ 36 per cent in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); 32 per cent in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO); 31 per cent in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC); 31 per cent in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

- two missions are headed by women Special Representatives of the Secretary-General;⁷
- three missions have women as Deputy Special Representatives;⁸
- ten missions have gender advisers on their staff.

E. Representation of women staff in the General Service and related categories in the Secretariat

9. Women constitute the majority of staff members in the General Service category with 61.1 per cent at 31 December 2005, which is a decrease from 61.6 per cent in December 2004.

II. Statistical Update on the representation of women in the United Nations system⁹

10. Aggregate data for the United Nations system are provided through the Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. (see Table 3)

11. As of 31 December 2004 the representation of women in the United Nations system:

- stands at 37 per cent in the Professional and higher categories, the **same** as the previous year;
- stands at 24 per cent at the D-1 level and above, representing an **increase** of 1 percentage point from the previous year;
- Gender balance was achieved in two organizations: the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (56 per cent - 12 women out of 27) and the United Nations Population Fund (50 per cent - 192 women out of 381). Two other organizations are close to achieving gender balance: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (45 per cent - 473 women out of 1048) and United Nations Children's Fund (46 per cent women - 931 women out of 2015) although with a 2 percent decrease from the previous year.

III. High-level representation in intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations

12. A cursory review of some bodies with members appointed by Member States reveals that women are without exception underrepresented. For example, women represent 39 per cent of the membership of the seven human rights treaty bodies; three of these are chaired by women. When CEDAW (96 per cent women) and CRC (50 per cent women) are excluded women represent only 19 per cent of the membership of the remaining five treaty bodies. Of the six committees of the current sixtieth session of the General Assembly, none is chaired by a woman and women make up 21 per cent of bureaux members, a decline of 17 per cent from the fifty-ninth session when women made up 38 per cent of the bureaux members. In terms of Permanent

⁷ United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

⁸ UNOMIG, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

⁹ Source: Table 3

Representatives to the United Nations, there are 18 women in New York, 13 in Geneva and, 18 in Vienna.

IV. Progress and concerns in the United Nations Secretariat

A. Administration of justice

13. A strong system for the administration of justice is key to improving the status of women within the workforce. Both on account of traditional attitudes towards women and their relatively greater disempowerment in terms of representation and rank, the issues of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment affect them disproportionately. In this context several relevant policies/programmes have been recently promulgated.

- Prevention of workplace harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority (ST/SGB/2005/20) introduces a system-wide, self-administered e-learning programme on this topic. All staff at all levels are required to complete the training which became available in all official languages on 1 December 2005.
- Protections against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations (ST/SGB/2005/21). The policy entered into force on 1 January 2006. It establishes mechanism for reporting misconduct and protecting against retaliation through internal and external channels.
- Ethics Office – establishment and terms of reference (ST/SGB/2005/22). An Ethics Office was established on 1 January 2006. It reports directly to the Secretary-General on retaliation complaints, administers the financial disclosure programme for senior staff, and provides guidance and training on ethics issues.
- The DPKO conduct and discipline team was established in October 2005. The team provides oversight on conduct and discipline matters, guidance to missions to ensure compliance by peacekeeping personnel, policy guidance and technical advice on training to strengthen the capacity of missions to address misconduct and in particular sexual exploitation and abuse, and oversight of the implementation of the DPKO Action Plan on sexual exploitation and abuse. Conduct and Discipline teams have also been established in some peacekeeping missions (Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan) to address misconduct prevention through training, monitoring and provision of improved welfare and recreation facilities.
- Establishment of a Redesign Panel on the United Nations Internal Justice System. The goal of the Redesign Panel on the United Nations Internal Justice System established on 1 February 2006 is to propose a model for a new system for resolving staff grievances that is independent, transparent, effective, efficient and adequately resourced and that ensures managerial accountability. The redesign panel will consult with United Nations staff, including individual staff members, the Staff Union and managers, in

order to form an opinion as to how and why some aspects of the system function effectively while other aspects do not. The panel will submit its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by the end of July 2006. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women will work to bring issues of particular relevance to women to the attention of the panel.

B. Human resources policy and the work of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

- Within the framework of **Human Resources Policy reform**, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI) has submitted proposals to promote gender balance, including the application of special measures for the achievement of gender equality to which ever sex is under-represented in a given department and at a given level.
- Other recommendations cover the recruitment, selection and appointment process including at the D-2 level and above; maximizing the effectiveness of the network of Departmental Gender Focal Points; and work/life balance.
- Phase II of the General Assembly mandated **analysis of the causes of slow advancement of women** in the UN system is currently underway covering four UN agencies. Phase I, conducted in 2004, covered the Secretariat and was reported to the General Assembly in Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations System (A/59/357). It formed the basis for many of my gender balance and human resources policy reform proposals.
- OSAGI participates in the **Central Review Bodies** in an advisory capacity to ensure that women are given fair consideration in the process of staff selection and that evaluation criteria are applied equally. In this context, agreement has been reached that all generic job descriptions, from which evaluation criteria are drawn, will include gender competencies.
- The Office of the Focal Point for Women continues to assist individual women with their concerns regarding employment conditions.

V. Conclusions

14. Progress towards gender equality in the Secretariat and in the UN system has been slower than anticipated indicating the need to strengthen implementation of existing mechanisms and to institute new policies and practices. Clearly much remains to be done. However, focus will be placed on a few select items during the upcoming year. These include:

- Interaction with the **redesign panel on the United Nations internal justice system.**

- **Implementation of the special measures.**
- Work within the reform initiatives to **strengthen accountability for gender balance targets in the staff selection system.**
- Promulgation of revised **Terms of Reference for the departmental focal points** to align and strengthen their functions with the staff selection system in place.
- More systematic **preparation of succession plans, with the participation of the departmental focal points.** Attrition and retirement present excellent opportunities to address gender imbalance.
- **Promulgation of a unified policy and guidelines on both sexual harassment and harassment.**
- **Reporting to the General Assembly** in the Sixty-first session on Phase II of the Analysis of the probable causes of the slow advancement in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system.
- **Child Care** in the context of the **Capital Master Plan (CMP)**. The CMP offers an opportunity to better address this long standing problem for a service that is greatly required and will become increasingly central as the age of the labor force decreases with the expected swell of retirements.

Tables

1. Gender distribution at the Professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more in the UN Secretariat (as of 31 December 2005)
2. Gender distribution at the Professional and higher categories with appointments subject to geographical distribution in the UN Secretariat (as of 31 December 2005)
3. Gender distribution at the Professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more in the UN system (as of 31 December 2004)