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Closing remarks  
by  
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at the sixth session of  
the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)  
New York, 22 February 2007

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

We have come to the end of the Sixth Session of the IANWGE meeting. At the outset, I would like to commend you for your commitment in attending this session and for your insightful and focused participation. The session has covered a lot of ground and we have come up with quite specific concrete and practical recommendations on the way forward on a number of very important issues. I believe if we can follow up on what we have decided we shall have contributed significantly to increasing coherence in our work on gender equality and advancement of women.

In my opening remarks, I specified six objectives that I felt we should accomplish during this meeting. I am pleased to note that we have made tangible progress on all of them. Let me give just a few highlights since the detailed report will follow shortly.

Firstly, we discussed inputs for the Report of the Secretary-General on assessment of progress in gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of the United Nations System focusing on training and capacity development. We reinforced the need to develop collective capacity training approaches for different cadres of staff and using different formats. We agreed that the UN Staff College has a role to play in this regard and that this is an area that we must pursue. Furthermore, we underscored the importance of mandatory training on gender

mainstreaming for all staff in the same way that the ethics and security training in the field has been done. The Network needs to refine these two areas so that we can begin to work with other stakeholders to ensure implementation. An emerging area is that greater clarity and more guidance is needed regarding the reporting to the CEDAW committee by the UN country teams who may not have the capacity required. The importance of the CEDAW concluding comments in both the normative and operational work of the UN and of governments was underscored in securing the rights of women.

Secondly, we commenced the implementation of the UN system-wide policy and strategy on gender mainstreaming. An Ad Hoc Working Group on the Action Plan for the UN system-wide strategy on gender mainstreaming was created comprising of the following entities: WHO, WFP, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UN-HABITAT, FAO and DDA. OSAGI will act as secretary to this group. The group met for the first time on Wednesday, 21 February 2007 and began an elaboration of the framework for the Action Plan. The group recognized the need to make linkages between the normative and the operational work of the UN entities as well as the development, humanitarian and peace and security aspects of UN work related to gender issues. The Ad Hoc Working Group expects to present a draft Action Plan at the next intersessional meeting of the Network in June or July of this year. Other entities who would like to participate in this group are invited to send their names to my office.

Thirdly, on the implementation of the Security Council resolution 1325 Action Plan, the Network noted the challenges that it faces in completing the implementation review, updating the Action Plan, collecting best practices and, most importantly, reinforcing national implementation. In this regard, it was emphasized that the revised Action Plan must have clear

performance indicators, time-line and specific target groups. At the same time, the need to link up with non-UN actors in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 was noted.

Fourth, the Network, through a new task force on combating violence against women, commenced implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/143 on “Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women”. The Network agreed that this resolution offers a new opportunity to engage with non-traditional stakeholders including such actors as local authorities. It also creates an opportunity to undertake new initiatives such as costing of gender based violence and looking at gender based violence within specific sectors. This task force has been charged by this Network to develop terms of reference with a time-line and clear deliverables that can enhance a UN system-wide approach to this issue. It is my expectation that the task force will report at the next intersessional meeting. The Network was also briefed on the newly adopted Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which creates another opportunity for us to help member countries support persons with disabilities, particularly women, who are generally a very invisible group.

Fifthly, we had a lively discussion based on the Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement of the Status of Women in the UN system. It was clear from the discussion that much more needs to be done to reach the 50/50 gender balance that has been mandated by the General Assembly. It was also recognized that even though the gender balance function and the gender mainstreaming function within entities are structurally different and should remain so, they are conceptually linked and they reinforce each other. The Network welcomed the comprehensive statistics that depict the status of women within the UN system and resolved that tools that entities could utilize within their own organizations to advocate for removal of barriers to women’s career progress in the UN system should be developed. Additionally, it was evident

that allies such as men who have a vested interest in work-life balance, as well as selected member states, can become strong partners in this endeavor. OSAGI was requested to take the lead in coordinating communities of interest in areas such as gender balance score cards, work-life issues and accountability. Due to the strong interest and the importance of this topic, more time will be allocated at future IANWGE meetings.

Finally, the Network reviewed the work of the various task forces. It accepted the recommendation of the Task Force on Indigenous Women to wind up at the end of 2007 after the successful implementation of its programme of work. The Network also endorsed the new terms of reference for the Task Force on Gender Equality and the MDGs Task Manager, the World Bank and UNDP. In addition, the Network accepted the recommendation of UNCTAD to revive the Task Force on Gender and Trade for which it is Task Manager. All the other task forces were asked to review and refine their terms of reference and their programme of work. I would like to request that all task forces submit their terms of reference and their programmes of work, including sunset clauses, to my office by 30 March 2007.

During the workshop, we exchanged a lot of ideas on issues related to reinforcing accountability of our entities to gender equality results and supporting development of gender statistics at the country level. We noted that accountability for gender equality within our entities is linked to our capacities to support member countries to positively impact the lives of women. The Network endorsed collaboration with the WomanStats Project whose data base can contribute significantly to making the lives of women visible. It was agreed also that the Task Force on Gender Equality and the MDGs, Co-Task Managers World Bank and the UNDP, will advise the Network on how best to interface with the WomanStats Project.

For the theme for International Women's Day 2008 we have agreed that future themes should be closely related to the theme of the Commission on the Status of Women so as to build on the momentum generated at the country level including engaging grassroots organizations. For 2008 the theme will focus on an aspect of "Financing for Gender Equality", which is the theme for Commission on the Status of Women in 2008. This theme will be refined in collaboration with the Department of Information (DPI) and disseminated to you by 15 April 2007.

In conclusion, let me once again thank you very much for your enthusiastic engagement throughout the meeting and your very candid observations and contributions. On your behalf, I want to thank the presenters, the moderators, the organizers and the technicians as well as all those who have helped in one way or another. I also extend our thanks to Ms. Mbugua, Secretary to the IANWGE, for the commendable job that she has done in organizing this meeting.

And with those few words, it is my pleasant duty to declare the Sixth Session of IANWGE closed.