

The United Nations commitment to gender mainstreaming – a global strategy for promoting equality between women and men

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation on gender mainstreaming at this seminar. The fact that gender mainstreaming is featured so prominently on the seminar agenda is an indication of the commitment of senior management in ODCCP. My presentation will provide a broad perspective on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations before coming down to the work of ODCCP. The second session provides the opportunity to link this broader picture with the experiences, needs and priorities at the field level.

1. Gender mainstreaming – a global strategy for promoting gender equality

The focus on the advancement of women and gender equality within the United Nations over the past three decades has led to an increased international recognition that there are important gender perspectives in relation to the overall goals of the United Nations, such as poverty eradication, human rights, good governance, environmentally sustainable development, and to all areas of the work of the United Nations, including the work on crime prevention / criminal justice and drug control. These gender perspectives must be taken into account at both policy and programme levels to ensure the achievement of equality between women and men and sustainable people-centred development.

Gender mainstreaming entails bringing gender perspectives to the centre of attention in all areas of societal development (economic and political as well as social development) and in all types of activities. Mainstreaming as a strategy could be applied to any other overall goal or cross-cutting issue; it is not intrinsically linked to gender equality. Today one talks about mainstreaming poverty perspectives, human rights aspects, as well as the situation and interests of children or the disabled. As the term is more broadly used, the understanding of what mainstreaming entails is increasing. Initially there was some fear that gender mainstreaming, or bringing more attention to gender perspectives, entailed a hijacking of the agenda – that gender perspectives would take over and the initial focus of research, data collection, projects, etc., would be diverted. Gender mainstreaming simply means, however, that relevant gender perspectives are taken into consideration and this process should enrich the analysis and improve achievement of overall sectoral goals.

Gender mainstreaming thus involves identifying and addressing relevant gender perspectives in data collection and research, analysis, legislation, policy

development, development of projects and programmes, as well as in training and other institutional development activities. Mainstreaming can reveal a need for changes in goals, strategies and activities to ensure that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. It can require changes in organizations – structures, procedures and organizational cultures – to create organizational environments which are conducive to the promotion of gender equality.

The strategy of mainstreaming is defined in the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2, as “...*the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*” It needs to be emphasized that gender mainstreaming is a strategy, an approach, a process, a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. The ultimate goal is equality between women and men.

Gender mainstreaming means bringing in the perceptions, knowledge, contributions, priorities and needs of both women and men to the agenda in order to enrich development. Identifying and addressing gender perspectives is important from a human rights and social justice perspective; it is equally important for ensuring sustainable people-centred development in all areas and for ensuring that other social and economic goals are attained. Sustainable and effective development can only be achieved in any area of societal activity, including economic development, if the interests and needs of all groups in society – including both women and men - are taken into account and the potential of all groups is released. The role of the mainstreaming strategy in promoting and facilitating the full contributions of both women and men to social and economic development has been increasingly recognized.

Gender mainstreaming involves, however, much more than increasing women's participation; it involves identifying and addressing the gender perspectives – the linkages between gender and different sector areas - in the work of an organization. The limitations of approaches which ignore gender perspectives have become increasingly clear. Initially it was recognized that gender perspectives were important in areas where “people” are clearly directly involved, for example, in water management, agriculture, forestry and health. Increasingly there is recognition that even when the involvement of, or impact on, people is less evident, including in the area of economic development, policies and programmes will not achieve their goals if the contributions, needs and priorities of both women and men are not taken into account. Gender analysis was established as a critical instrument for gender mainstreaming, as a means of identifying the relevant important gender perspectives to be addressed. The analysis required should, however, be carried out before any actions are taken or planned – before policies and strategies are developed, activities planned and resources allocated. Gender mainstreaming implies that gender perspectives must be incorporated as an integral part of all activities and not inserted as an after-thought.

2. Strong intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming

The gender mainstreaming strategy was strongly endorsed in the Platform for Action established at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Platform for Action clearly states that before any decision is taken in any area of societal development, an assessment should be made of the situation of women and men (which includes the contributions made by both women and men as well as any specific needs and problems faced) and the potential impact of the planned activities on women respective men. The importance of gender mainstreaming is specifically mentioned in relation to all twelve of the Critical Areas of Concern identified in the Platform for Action.

The gender mainstreaming mandate was reinforced within the United Nations system in a number of important documents, the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 which provided some basic overall principles for gender mainstreaming; the Secretary-General's communication on gender mainstreaming on 13 October 1997 which provided more concrete directives to heads of all United Nations entities; and the outcome document from the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (June 2000). The following aspects are emphasized:

- *Responsibility* for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is *system wide*, and rests at the *highest levels* within agencies, departments, funds, and commissions; and adequate *accountability mechanisms* for monitoring progress need to be established.
- *Specific strategies* should be formulated for gender mainstreaming; *priorities* should be established.
- The initial *definitions of issues/problems* across all areas of activity should be done in such a manner that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed – assumptions that issues/problems are neutral from a gender equality perspective should never be made. Gender analysis should always be carried out, separately or as part of existing analyses.
- *Analytical reports and recommendations* on policy or operational issues within each area of responsibility should take gender differences and disparities fully into account.
- *Medium-term plans and programme budgets* should be prepared in such a manner that gender perspectives and gender equality issues are explicit.
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts are made to broaden women's *equitable participation at all levels of decision-making*.
- Systematic use of *gender analysis, sex-disaggregation* of data, and commissioning of *sector-specific gender studies*, as needed, is recommended.
- *Training* should be provided to all personnel at headquarters and in the field, with appropriate follow-up.

- Mainstreaming *does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific activities*; nor does it do away with the need for *gender units or focal points*.
- Clear *political will and allocation of adequate resources* for mainstreaming, including if necessary additional financial and human resources (gender units or focal points), are important for translation of the concept into reality.

More recently, the Commission on the Status of Women resolution (E/CN.6/2000/L.6 rev 1) reaffirmed that gender mainstreaming constitutes a critical strategy in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and for achieving the overall goal of gender equality. It calls on EOCSOC to consider establishing the monitoring of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system as a regular item on its agenda and to devote an entire segment by 2005 to the review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the agreed conclusions 1997/2, requesting the functional commissions as part of this review to report on progress made to implement the agreed conclusions in their work. This will have implications for the work of the commissions dealing with drug control and crime prevention.

Specific mandates on gender mainstreaming

Apart from these more generic intergovernmental mandates which apply to all parts of the United Nations, there are also very specific mandates on the need to incorporate gender perspectives in the different areas of the work of the United Nations. Specific mandates exist, for example, for the work on population, statistics, human rights, governance, poverty reduction, peace support operations. A good example of a very strong specific mandate is the Security Council resolution 1325 (October 2000) which highlights the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in all areas of peace support operations and calls for specific actions in relation to peace negotiations, conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, human rights activities, and peacekeeping operations. It calls for greater representation of women in all peace support operations and the development of training and guidelines for personnel working in these areas. A number of paragraphs (9,10,11 and 12) have direct relevance for the work of CICP on trafficking of women and girls.

There are very specific mandates on gender mainstreaming with relation to crime prevention and drug control in the Platform for Action (1995), the agreed conclusions from the Commission on the Status of Women on Violence Against Women (1998) and Women and Health (1999), as well as the outcome document from the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly – Beijing +5 (2000), in addition to those arising from the specific intergovernmental bodies on crime prevention and drug control. (A preliminary list of these mandates is available).

3. Implementation of gender mainstreaming within the United Nations

Throughout the United Nations system, efforts are being made to implement the mainstreaming strategy, to develop the capacity to identify and address relevant gender perspectives in all areas of work, at both policy and programme level. Policies and action plans on gender equality have been developed in many United Nations entities. Many entities have also established institutional arrangements to support gender mainstreaming, such as gender units and gender focal point systems and capacity building initiatives are undertaken across the system. Gender perspectives are being incorporated into procedures and processes, such as planning, budgeting and reporting processes, and guidelines and other materials to support staff are being developed to ensure gender is taken into consideration in data collection and research, analysis, support to legislative change, policy development and monitoring and evaluation.

Entities in the United Nations system also support Governments to develop gender-sensitive policies and strategies and to take gender perspectives into consideration in planning, implementing and monitoring development interventions in health, education, poverty eradication, agriculture, water resources management and all other areas of collaboration. Considerable support is given to capacity development. Non-governmental organizations and women's groups and networks in civil society are supported to play critical advocacy roles in relation to gender mainstreaming and to monitor the adherence to all commitments made by Governments. Efforts are also being taken to involve more men in promoting gender equality through gender mainstreaming.

Despite all these efforts, there is still a long way to go before gender perspectives are routinely incorporated into all areas of the work of the United Nations. While it is relatively easy to secure agreement that gender mainstreaming is an important strategy for promoting gender equality, implementation of the strategy has proven more difficult than originally anticipated. There is potential for gender perspectives to be routinely incorporated into all areas of work of the United Nations, but implementing gender mainstreaming can initially require significant changes in how business is done. Trying to bring the realities of both women and men - their contributions, perspectives, needs and priorities - to bear on data collection, analyses, policy development, planning, implementation and monitoring in all areas of development, requires specific knowledge and capacity. There can be need for changes in awareness (and in some cases even in terms of attitudes), in knowledge on gender issues and in methods and approaches. Ability to work with gender mainstreaming should be regarded as a professional competence required of all staff.

4. Key constraints to be addressed

Six key constraints to gender mainstreaming have been identified within the United Nations which will be addressed in this presentation: lack of understanding of basic *concepts*; poor knowledge of *intergovernmental mandates* on gender mainstreaming; lack of motivation or understanding of the *rationale* for working with gender perspectives; lack of knowledge on the *linkages between gender and different areas of work*; failure to identify potential *entry-points*; and lack of *capacity* to

incorporate gender perspectives. It has often been claimed that the main reason gender mainstreaming is not implemented within the United Nations and in other contexts is because professional staff do not know how to implement it. The approach taken is a very technical one - all that is required is the provision of methods and tools to staff and they will be willing and able to do gender mainstreaming. Addressing the question of "how" in organizations which still have serious problems around the "why" and "what" cannot, however, be successful.

Within the United Nations there is considerable confusion on what gender mainstreaming is, as in many other parts of the United Nations system, but the lack of understanding of *concepts* is even more complex, including a lack of understanding of the very basic concept of gender equality. Many professional staff equate gender equality with gender balance in the Secretariat. This confusion may come from the fact that Member States have historically raised questions on gender balance but not on gender mainstreaming. It may also be connected to the fact that some focal points in the United Nations have had responsibility for both gender balance and gender mainstreaming but, for different reasons, have given more attention to gender balance issues. A third possible reason is that there has simply been a lack of interest to investigate the concepts further. For whatever reasons, conceptual confusion exists which seriously hinders effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. To address this constraint, fact sheets on basic concepts have been developed – one example of which is included in the folders.

Related to this is the second constraint identified, that most professional staff are not conversant with the general *intergovernmental mandates* on gender mainstreaming, let alone the more specific mandates gender mainstreaming on their own areas of work. Most staff have heard about the Beijing conference and the Beijing +5 process but have not reflected on the implications for their own work. Professional staff are focused on the specific mandates relating to their own areas of work and give little attention to the interlinkages with mandates on gender mainstreaming in these areas. Clarity on sector and issue-specific mandates could be instrumental in securing greater management commitment to gender mainstreaming in the United Nations. The Office of the Special Adviser is therefore preparing inventories of specific mandates for different areas of the work of the United Nations, including on crime prevention and drug control.

The third constraint concerns a lack of motivation for working with gender perspectives, based on a perception of gender perspectives as being either marginal to, or totally irrelevant for, different areas of substantive work. There is a serious lack of understanding of the importance of gender perspectives and a failure to take these issues seriously. The *dual rationale* for incorporating gender perspectives into work programmes, both to secure gender equality from a human rights and social justice perspective and to ensure effective achievement of the goals set for their work, must be more widely promoted. A greater understanding of the value-added of incorporating gender perspectives must be fostered. For example, the World Bank promotes the incorporation of gender perspectives on the grounds that it “makes good economic sense”. Good practice examples illustrating how giving more attention to gender perspectives assists the achievement of overall goals are needed, such as the draft example included in the folder. A short note is also available illustrating the

positive impacts for development of the incorporation of gender perspectives in different areas of work.

A fourth major constraint is the lack of knowledge on *why gender would be a factor in the substantive work programmes*. The process of consultation within the Secretariat has revealed that many professional staff have never addressed gender perspectives in their work, largely because they do not understand that there are gender perspectives related to the issues they are working with. Promoting a greater understanding of why and how gender perspectives are relevant to their work is an important element in improving gender mainstreaming. To support greater understanding of the linkages between gender perspectives and the different areas of work of the United Nations, briefing notes are being prepared which illustrate the relevant gender perspectives.

The fifth constraint is the failure to understand where in the work programme and in the daily work-tasks, gender perspectives could be taken into consideration, i.e. to identify the relevant *entry-points*. The briefing notes mentioned earlier also identify where and how gender perspectives could be included in different areas of work. A paper on gender mainstreaming (to be published in the near future) will also provide more overall guidance on this. However efforts more directly related to the specific mandates and work-tasks of different organizations are needed to ensure that all relevant entry-points are identified and appropriate strategies and methodologies are developed. Incorporation of gender perspectives in guidelines and manuals is important. In some cases specific guidelines on gender mainstreaming are also needed.

The final constraint is a lack of *capacity* to incorporate gender perspectives into substantive work. This is dependent, of course, on adequate understanding of all the issues discussed previously - concepts, mandates, rationales, the linkages between gender perspectives and their substantive work and entry-points in the work programme. However, even with better understanding of the "why" and "what" questions related to gender mainstreaming, professional staff need to be supported with the "how" - for example, to develop methodologies so they can effectively integrate gender perspectives. Many of the tools mentioned above will contribute to overcoming this constraint. More specific targeting of the problem is also required through briefings, seminars and formal competence development programmes.

5. Identifying and utilizing opportunities for incorporating gender perspectives

It is often incorrectly presumed that gender is only related to project level activities. There are gender perspectives in relation to all the many different types of work undertaken. The activities undertaken by different parts of the United Nations include: servicing of intergovernmental bodies; facilitating and monitoring the implementation of conventions and resolutions; organizing Expert Group Meetings, seminars and workshops; undertaking policy analysis, policy development and policy advice; undertaking research and analyses and preparing reports and other publications; producing, compiling and disseminating statistics; compiling other information from Member States; providing technical assistance, including training;

providing leadership, including within the United Nations system; and networking with NGOs, civil society, academia, private sector, etc.

Within each of these different areas of work there are opportunities for incorporating gender perspectives. In servicing intergovernmental bodies there is potential for influencing the agendas to ensure that mandates on gender mainstreaming are taken into consideration. In the Secretariat increasing efforts are also being made to remind Member States of the need to increase the representation of women. (Equitable representation of women is promoted as having an intrinsic value in itself. It does not always follow that an increase in the number of women automatically leads to an increase in focus on gender mainstreaming). In the organization of Expert Group Meetings, workshops/seminars and training sessions, efforts can be made to ensure equitable representation of women and men as both experts and participants, to incorporate gender perspectives into the agenda as relevant, and to include sufficient gender expertise to ensure that gender perspectives can be taken up in an adequate manner. All work at policy level should ensure that there is consultation with both women and men and that the gender-specific impacts of policy are taken into account. The terms of reference or outlines of research, reports and publications should ensure that the initial definition of problems and issues includes adequate attention to gender perspectives. Job descriptions for experts and consultants should outline how gender perspectives should be taken into account.

In terms of technical cooperation, there are many opportunities for bringing gender perspectives to the centre of attention. A few examples will be given here, but the discussion in the second session will provide more practical examples. It is important that the initial definition of issues/problems take gender perspectives into consideration – whether through appraisal missions, baseline surveys or development of country profiles. In planning, implementation and monitoring of projects every effort should be taken to ensure that women as well as men are consulted and given possibilities to influence, participate in and benefit from the projects. All statistics should be sex-disaggregated and efforts should be made to ensure that data and information is collected on all issues of relevance from a gender perspective. In technical cooperation it is also important to keep in mind that it is not necessary to start from zero. Many years of experience in both the United Nations system context, and among bilateral donors and NGOs, has produced a wealth of information which should be tapped into. Country gender profiles exist for many countries; and strategies and guidelines for incorporating gender perspectives into different sectoral areas have been developed. Greater exchange of information and good practices on gender mainstreaming is needed, within in the United Nations, as well as with other international organizations and NGOs working in the same areas.

6. Gender mainstreaming in the ODCCP context

Gender perspectives have been given attention in relation to both crime prevention and drug control over the past 10-15 years. The efforts made are not well documented and thus not widely known. Documentation and reporting needs to be increased and, building on the lessons learned, new strategies and methodologies should be developed. A recent very important initiative was the establishment of *the Programme and Project Committee* and the emphasis on gender mainstreaming

during the first meeting of the committee in April 2001. This focus on gender mainstreaming needs, however, to be formalized through, for example, clearer reference to gender mainstreaming in the *Management Instructions* and the development of guidelines for staff preparing project documents (as separate guidelines or incorporated into existing guidelines) and guidelines for the staff carrying out appraisals of project documents.

Based on recent brief consultations with management and members of the Gender Working Group in ODCCP, a summary of some of the efforts made to address gender perspectives in the work programme is provided. Many initiatives may be missing from this summary simply because they were not raised in the discussions.

CICP

CICP has had a strong focus on violence against women, being actively involved in the development of manuals and training programmes. A workshop on *Women in the Criminal Justice System* was organized in April 2000. The *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime* provides a new opportunity for bringing gender perspectives to the fore. It will be important to include an explicit focus on women and girls in future work on trafficking in persons, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as in the advice and support provided to Member States on the implementation of the convention and its protocols. Contact with other parts of the system working on trafficking, as well as with other intergovernmental bodies and NGOs, will be critical for successful implementation of the protocol. In future work on corruption, CICP should include attention to gender perspectives, including the important aspect of gender-differentiated impacts of corruption. CICP could play a leadership role to facilitate the incorporation of relevant gender perspectives in the forthcoming convention. Efforts should also continue to be made to incorporate relevant gender issues in the legal work.

The *Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice* includes, as requested in the budget instructions, one expected accomplishment, and accompanying indicator of achievement, which incorporates attention to gender perspectives. In addition, gender perspectives are mentioned in the outputs section. In many of the areas of work of CICP information on gender issues is scarce. Emphasis should be placed on supporting necessary research. Even though it is clear that many answers will not be immediately forthcoming, it is important to start asking the pertinent questions.

UNDCP

UNDCP has given considerable attention to gender perspectives in its work over the past 10-15 years. A joint project with WHO resulted in a report: *Programme on Substance Abuse: Women and Substance Abuse. Country Assessment Report. 1993*. In 1994 a position paper was produced on *Women and Drug Abuse*. In the build-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, an informal internal working-level group on gender issues – the Gender Working Group – was established, which continues to make important contributions today. In 1996 a component on

Women and Drug Abuse was included in the *ACC Plan of Action on Drug Abuse*. Attention to gender perspectives has also been included in the *UNDCP Programme and Project Document Standard Format and Guidelines* (November 1998). Even more recently, in 1999 four assessments of gender mainstreaming were carried out in Peru, Bolivia, Lao PDR and Pakistan. A seminar was organized to develop draft guidelines, based on the lessons learned from the country studies. This work was organized by the Gender Working Group. The guidelines, which were reviewed by the field offices, are available in draft form. The development of similar guidelines gender mainstreaming in relation to demand reduction and law enforcement has been discussed in UNDCP but no drafts have been prepared to date.

The *Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: International drug control* includes a paragraph in the overview section indicating the intention to implement gender mainstreaming through, for example, use of sex-disaggregated statistics, gender analysis, and ensuring equal opportunities for participation for women and men. No expected accomplishments where gender perspectives would be incorporated were identified.

7. Moving forward

While the efforts made are very commendable, it is clear that much more could be done to integrate relevant gender perspectives in the work of ODCCP. In addition, what is being done is not reported adequately. Improved reporting, including through the Medium-term plans, Programme budgets and Programme Assessments, is needed. Meetings with management within ODCCP have confirmed that a more systematic approach is needed if significant change is to be achieved and ODCCP is to play the intended leadership role on gender mainstreaming in the areas of crime prevention and drug control. This session is a clear indication of management commitment to increase attention to gender perspectives, as is the planned competence development programme for professional staff at headquarters, scheduled for later this year. A number of other specific activities have been identified which could be undertaken to increase the focus on gender mainstreaming. These recommendations are based on discussions with management and members of the Gender Working Group in ODCCP.

- A *management level taskforce on gender mainstreaming* could be established in ODCCP to monitor progress and support the work of the existing working-level group, the Gender Working Group.
- Gender perspectives could be made a routine part of the *Programme and Project Committee*.
- *Management Instructions* could be reviewed from a gender perspective.
- Other *guidelines and manuals* could be reviewed from a gender perspective.
- Following the competence development programme for headquarters staff in 2001, the draft *Guidelines on Gender Mainstreaming in Alternative Development (UNDCP)* should be revised, with inputs from the field offices, and draft *guidelines on gender mainstreaming* prepared for other areas of the work of ODCCP.
- The *competence development programme* could be adapted and provided for field-level staff, on a regional basis.

- *Good practice examples*, especially from the field, should be developed for all areas of the work of ODCCP.

Experience from other parts of the United Nations as well as other international organizations and NGOs indicates that moving forward on gender mainstreaming is only possible if there is full commitment from management, both senior level management and middle-level management. Accountability mechanisms need to be developed so that professional staff are aware of the requirements for gender mainstreaming and are provided with incentives to implement the strategy. ODCCP is in a unique position to provide global leadership on gender mainstreaming in drug control and crime prevention, as well as leadership within the United Nations system in relation to institutional changes to support gender mainstreaming

Most of the discussion in this presentation, and the recommendations outlined, are focused at headquarters level. The field-level perspective – the important information and experiences which should inform the normative work of the organization – is still missing. The second session this afternoon provides the opportunity for this perspective to be heard. I look forward to hearing the presentations and to an interesting and fruitful discussion.

Thank you.