



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

UNITED NATIONS
62nd Session of the General Assembly

**Informal meeting of the plenary
on the United Nations System-wide Coherence**

Gender

Statement by

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on behalf of the European Union

New York, 16 June 2008

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Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Let me first thank the Deputy Secretary General for having submitted the "Note on the United Nations System Support to Member States on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", which greatly assists us in today's discussion. The Note follows the discussions of our last meeting, outlining in a concise and clear way the gaps and challenges arising from both the ground and at central level.

The note reflects the statements by various UN organizations and Members States during the last debate on Gender on 16 May 2008. There seems to be a growing agreement that the work of the UN is fragmented, under-funded, lacks coordination and accountability and that structural changes are needed to address these gaps and challenges. The last meeting also demonstrated the desire of the member states for concrete guidance from the Secretary General on how to move forward in order to address these issues.

As already stated in the previous EU statement delivered on 16 May, the United Nations has a central role in assisting its members in strengthening gender equality, including through country-owned and demand-driven gender specific programs at the country level. While all relevant entities have been active in the area of gender and inter-agency cooperation has increased, overall progress on the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been uneven with persistent gaps and challenges remaining in all areas. Strengthening of the UN capacity to promote gender equality, women's rights and empowerment of women and a more effective mainstreaming of gender issues, including at the country level, is essential for the achievement of all our commitments.

The EU stresses the importance of strengthened functioning at the central level. Let us recall: We discuss these questions today because we want to bring about enhanced results at the country level and mobilise forces of change at the global level. There is therefore a clear need for structural and organizational changes. We look for a strong structure in support of gender equality that consolidates parallel functions and creates synergies. A new entity must build on the strengths of the current structures, deliver better results, and improve accountability for gender equality in the UN system's policies and practices. It must work more visibly, more coherently, and more influentially, also with respect to other UN entities as far as gender issues are concerned.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continues to be part of the Stabilization and Association Process.

Our common aim should be to increase coherence by bringing together the normative and analytical functions of the existing architecture with its technical, policy, programmatic and operational role. A new entity must be able to assist all States to address gaps in the implementation of our international commitments on gender, improve channels of communication to provide essential feedback from operational levels and have the ability and capacity to assist states to deliver on their commitments when they request such assistance.

We need to continue strengthening effective gender mainstreaming throughout the entire UN system and accountability for this. But while all UN entities bear responsibility for delivering on gender, we also believe that we need a central driver with the authority and ability to coordinate, guide and support the work of the UN system in this area. In this regard, the European Union would encourage any efforts that would lead to the strengthening of UN gender resources and coordination mechanisms; the appointment of a dedicated high level official at the Under Secretary General level is an appropriate way to achieve this objective. A strong gender entity is necessary to deliver the goals and commitments of the international community. But this entity must not assume sole responsibility for delivering gender equality across the UN system. All parts of the UN system are critical to delivering on gender, especially at the country level and on the ground where results are most necessary.

Our common objective should be to strengthen the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the UN system in the area of gender. We have analyzed the gaps and challenges we are facing today. Let us now move forward. We encourage the Secretary General to present to the Member States his concrete proposal on how to make the UN system work better to support achieving the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly on how to address the underlying structural, organizational and systemic shortcomings. Gender equality and women's empowerment is a matter of direct relevance and concern to all Member States of the United Nations, regardless of their stages of development. It is in our common interests to move forward on this important issue during this 62nd General Assembly.

Thank you.