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**62e Session de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies**

**Consultations officielles sur la cohérence à l'échelle du système des Nations Unies**

**Déclaration prononcée par  
Mr. Thomas Gass**

**Mission permanente de la Suisse auprès des Nations Unies**

**New York, le 16 mai 2008**

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**62<sup>nd</sup> session of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

**Informal consultations on United Nations system-wide coherence**

**Statement by  
Mr. Thomas Gass**

**Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations**

**New York, May 16<sup>th</sup> 2008**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

We very much welcome today's discussion on strengthening the UN's performance on gender equality and women's empowerment .

## **Background**

In the past decade, the direct links between gender equality and progress in development have been reaffirmed by the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Security Council and the Boards of UN Funds and Programmes, through the Beijing Declaration and at the 2005 World Summit. The essentiality of gender equality to development, peace and security is thus undisputed.

On the normative side, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has complemented the existing and solid policy framework.

However, as we all know, and according to the results of several evaluations conducted well before the High-Level Panel Report, and despite the explicit political and policy background, the UN system is still struggling in giving a practical, effective and coherent response to gender inequality and discrimination as well as a gender sensitive approach to programmatic work. As a result of this unsatisfactory response, global efforts to promote economic growth and sustainable development have been considerably hindered.

As Member States have already stated in several different fora, there are a variety of factors that have been impeding the current system from giving an effective and efficient response, commensurate with the full potential of the United Nations.

We will limit ourselves to stressing the following ones:

## **Gaps**

- A gender sensitive approach to programmatic work still needs to be enhanced throughout the UN system;

- The UN system is lacking a strong voice and authority to advocate and take a lead in further mainstreaming gender equality throughout the UN system. As a consequence, the system is not only missing opportunities to further pursue the agenda of gender equality and empowerment of women to its full potential, but it is also failing to be accountable to the different mandates it has received from Member States;
- The efficiency of the UN system is negatively affected by a lack of coordination resulting in the duplication of mandates among the different UN entities;
- At the country level, poor capacity, weak positioning of gender focal points in organizational structures and the lack of incentives are limiting the scope and impact of gender related strategies and programmes.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

These challenges are well known to the General Assembly. There is also widespread agreement among Member States that gender related challenges cannot be addressed in isolation from other development challenges, and that while a coordination mechanism is needed, it will not relieve the different entities of the UN from their responsibility to address gender related concerns. We remain convinced that gender equality is and should remain the mandate of the entire UN system. At the same time, we recognize that the different entities of the system have individual and specific expertise in this field.

The Concept Note submitted to the General Assembly by the Deputy Secretary-General in August 2007 already gave some suggestions on how to improve the efficiency and coherence of the system. Since then, through the TCPR, Governments have reiterated their call and provided specific guidance to the UN system to further mainstreaming and pursuing gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as improving its institutional accountability mechanisms and the coordination among the different entities of the system.

We therefore call on the Secretary-General to further engage in a dialogue with Member States, paying particular attention to four issues: a) the need for a thorough

analysis of existing duplications and possible synergies; b) the clarification of the question of accountability and responsibility ; c) the strengthening of the field level capacities of the UN system to more effectively reach the development objectives related to gender equality and women's empowerment and d) the clarification of the coordination and leadership mechanism among the different entities of the UN and their respective gender related mandates.

Thank you