

December 8, 2010

RECOMMENDATIONS ON INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF UN WOMEN'S MANDATE

1. IWRAP Asia Pacific welcomes the initiative of the USG for UN Women to seek input from civil society on what measures can be taken in the entity's first 100 days to have a concrete impact on women's rights and illustrate how UN Women may go forward with its mandate in the future. IWRAP Asia Pacific urges the USG to prioritise in this regard activities which will focus on consolidation of UN Women's guiding principles and cohesion between UN Women and existing agencies and entities before embarking substantially on thematic activities.
2. IWRAP Asia Pacific believes that the most fundamental and pressing issue facing UN Women in its first months will be for it to set out clearly and directly the principles which will act as a framework for its work. UN Women must clarify publicly that it will proceed with all its functions on the basis that human rights, substantive equality and non-discrimination are the core elements informing all aspects of its mandate and functions. UN Women needs to show its full support for the universality of rights, their interrelated and interdependent nature and the principle that there is no hierarchy between rights: women need and are entitled to implementation of the full range of rights. The USG must set out unequivocally and explicitly what standards and instruments will underpin its work, with particular reference among others, to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The USG should highlight her awareness of the synergy between all the human rights treaties, their symbiotic relationship with the Beijing Platform for Action and the necessary complementarity between them and other UN procedures and mechanisms.
3. In order to do this the USG will need to convene, within the first 100 days, a meeting of the full Executive Board to arrive at consensus on these issues. The Executive Board must also develop clarity as to the standard setting function that UN Women will undertake at the international level and the methods by which that mandate will be operationalised at the national and regional levels. It must provide a clear account of what UN Women's role will be in relation to other UN agencies, prioritising a catalytical and capacity building role and how it will ensure that its functions are carried out in collaboration and coordination with other UN agencies, avoiding the creation of parallel systems and programmes. UN Women must strive to work towards complementing and strengthening mechanisms such as CEDAW and the new Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice. It should contribute to harmonisation of purpose and practice along with respect for the mandate and recommendations of these bodies. It must support a gender perspective and substantive equality approach in all Treaty Bodies.
4. Within its first 100 days UN Women must decide and convey to the UN system, States and civil society what form its engagement in capacity building, monitoring and other functions will take and how it will ensure that its framework principles are mainstreamed within the UN system in general. Its integration within the UN system must be clarified as a matter of urgency, including what authority it will have within that system. Further, it should build its own institutional capacity to provide technical assistance

to member states in the areas of data collection, priority setting, methodologies for ensuring compliance with international obligations, and effective institutional arrangements for implementation and monitoring, should there be requests for this.

Fundamental to the implementation of the above recommendations will be the creation of a concrete mechanism and permanent institutional procedure for engaging with and seeking input from NGOs and civil society.

5. IWRAW Asia Pacific therefore recommends to the USG that in the first 100 days she make a well publicised and substantive statement setting out the abovementioned points. IWRAW Asia Pacific suggests that the most appropriate forum for such a statement will be before the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York from 28 February to 4 March 2011.
6. IWRAW Asia Pacific calls on the USG to clarify in this statement before the UN agencies and Member States and civil society the following points:
 - It's commitment to human rights, substantive equality and non-discrimination as its framework principles;
 - What standards and instruments, including CEDAW, will underpin its work;
 - What the standard setting function of UN Women will be at the international level;
 - How that standard setting function will be operationalised at the regional and national levels;
 - How UN Women will interact and integrate with other UN agencies at all levels and what its authority will be in that context;
 - What form its capacity building and monitoring functions will take;
 - How it will mainstream its framework principles through the UN system; and
 - What mechanisms and institutional processes it has created to ensure on-going and effective engagement with NGOs and civil society.

Statement by IWRAW Asia Pacific