



Open Letter to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Geneva, 29 April 2010

Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

In September, the Millennium Development Goal Review Summit will assess progress towards achieving the MDGs. Of particular concern to us is MDG 3, on gender equality.

Progress has been visible. We congratulate you on your efforts to increase the number of women in senior positions in the United Nations. We welcome your strong statements on gender equality, women's empowerment and gender-based violence. Together with the development of the new women's entity, this shows your commitment to the international instruments which promote and protect women's human rights, among these CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, much work is still needed.

The Beijing Platform for Action calls for governments to "aim at gender balance in the lists of national candidates nominated for election or appointment to United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other autonomous organizations of the United Nations system, particularly for posts at the senior level" (§190). Human Rights Council Resolution 6/30 calls for an "improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system,... towards the goal of fifty/fifty gender distribution in the very near future and to guarantee the full participation of women in higher levels of decision-making in the Organization".

These targets are still far from being realized. The recent decision to appoint an all-male Advisory Board on Climate Change Financing is a key example.

In order to achieve gender equality, the United Nations must take stronger action. Governments should be urged to strive for gender balance in all nominations to UN committees, task forces and working groups, with the ultimate aim of gender equality at all UN levels of appointment by 2015.

We believe a gender quota policy is needed, urging governments making nominations to propose one woman and one man for all positions in the UN system.

The undersigned organizations respectfully submit this recommendation for your action. We believe such a step would be a significant move towards gender equality within the United Nations and would serve as a model for States to follow.

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