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June 15, 2010

United Nations  
Office of the Secretary General  
New York, New York 10017

Re: Safeguarding partnerships and programming during the transition to a stronger United Nations organization in support of gender equality and women's empowerment

H. E. Ban Ki Moon:

We appreciate the commitment to the world's women you have provided through your support of reforming and strengthening the four UN organizations concerned specifically with gender equality and women's empowerment (UNIFEM, OSAGI, DAW, and INSTRAW). The consolidation of these four existing mechanisms to create a single operational women's entity is a significant step and one which we support. In light of the anticipated 25 June 2010 vote on the Resolution regarding UN System-wide Coherence we would like to express some priorities around which we hope you will exercise leadership.

We are deeply concerned that language provided by the UN Secretariat in Revision 2, 10 June 2010, paragraphs 67-68 of the Resolution concerning UN System-wide Coherence, proposed the immediate dissolution of UNIFEM and INSTRAW. This proposal is premature and detrimental to the transition process and the ultimate effectiveness of the establishment of the new gender entity. We hope that you, Mr. Secretary General, will provide clear guidance to the team that is working on this process to ensure that these entities continue to exist until the leadership (USG) of the new gender entity is established and the new gender entity is fully and effectively operational, in keeping with principals of good governance. Only then will it be appropriate to transfer the assets of UNIFEM and INSTRAW to the new entity. Women in developing countries worldwide depend on the work of both UNIFEM and INSTRAW and would pay the highest price for bureaucratic decisions that are made without due regard for their interests or well-being.

We urge you, Mr. Secretary General, to make a clear commitment to ensuring that the transition process is not disruptive to the close collaboration and partnerships that have been established by UNIFEM and INSTRAW to advance women's empowerment in scores of countries, regionally and globally, and to the important advances that countries are able to register because of this support. We hope that you make this very clear to the many advisors and staff that are guiding this transition through the UN system.

We also urge you, Mr. Secretary General, to ensure that the transition phase of consolidation to cohesion and greater coherence build upon the already existing and well-recognized work of the four United Nations gender equality mechanisms. In this regard, UNIFEM, with its 300 regular and 500 project staff (the majority based in country and sub-regional offices), its development-oriented structure, its positions as leader or partner in more than 90 joint UN programmes worldwide, and as co-ordinator of many UN Country Team

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thematic groups and the UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality, is positioned to provide the basis for the entity. By retaining optimum operational flexibility through UNIFEM, the new entity would be equipped to deliver and hopefully expand on the ground support to countries and UN partner organizations.

We rely on you, Mr. Secretary General, as the reform process proceeds and the new gender entity is established to ensure continuity by insisting that the new gender entity incorporates the strengths of each of the four existing gender related mechanisms, and prioritizes flexibility in responding to the challenges and interests of women worldwide. This would be strategic, cost-effective and respectful of the interests of women and girls. In this regard, ensuring that the partnerships and programmes that UNIFEM has already established on the ground are able to continue and expand should be of the highest priority.

Respectfully submitted,

CC: United Nations Deputy Secretary General Asha Rose Migiro

H.E. Susan Rice, United States Mission Ambassador to the UN

H.E. Melanne Verwee, United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues

Altrusa International, Inc.

Associated Country Women of the World

ECPAT, USA

International Federation of Settlements & Neighborhood Centers

International Federation of Women in Legal Careers

International Federation of Women Lawyers

Pan Pacific & South East Asia Women's Association

UNA-USA

United States National Committee for UNIFEM

Women of Reform Judaism

World Union for Progressive Judaism

Zonta International