



# A New United Nations Entity for Women: Issues for Congress

(name redacted)

Specialist in International Relations

May 25, 2010

Congressional Research Service

7-....

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R41257

## Summary

In recent years, many in the international community have argued for elevating the status of women's issues within the United Nations (U.N.) system. They contend that the way in which the U.N. system addresses gender issues is fragmented, weak, and under-resourced. Moreover, they argue that such efforts lack clear leadership and coordination. These weaknesses, critics maintain, hinder the U.N. system's ability to promote and implement programs that enhance gender equality.

In September 2009, U.N. member states, including the United States, adopted a General Assembly resolution expressing strong support for the consolidation of four U.N. bodies addressing women's issues into one composite entity. The four entities selected for consolidation were (1) the U.N. Development Fund for Women, (2) the Division for the Advancement of Women, (3) the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and (4) the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. According to the United Nations, voluntary and U.N. regular budget contributions for these four bodies in calendar year 2008 totaled approximately \$247 million.

At this time, it is unclear how the new U.N. entity will be structured or whether it will prove effective in addressing global women's issues. U.N. member states are currently negotiating the structure, governance, and funding of the new entity. The timeline for the entity's establishment depends primarily on U.N. member states; many anticipate that the General Assembly could address the issue during its 64<sup>th</sup> session, which began in September 2009 and will end in September 2010.

Members of Congress have generally supported U.N. system efforts to address women's issues and may have an interest in the new entity. Areas of congressional focus could include (1) U.S. financial contributions to and participation in the new entity, (2) the role of the new entity in the context of U.S. foreign policy priorities, and (3) oversight of the efficiency and effectiveness of the entity.

This report discusses possible policy issues that may arise as the composite gender entity is established, including its funding mechanisms, the creation of an effective governance structure, the entity's possible impact on U.N. system in-country operational capacity, and the relationships and coordination between the entity and other U.N. system bodies. The report also discusses the entity in the context of broader U.N. reform efforts and examines the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Finally, it analyzes U.S. policy toward the new entity, including its possible role in U.S. foreign policy and the level and extent of U.S. financial contributions to existing U.N. system gender entities.

This report will be updated as events warrant.

## Contents

Setting the Context: Why a New U.N. Entity for Women? .....	1
Background and Current U.N. System Efforts .....	1
Existing Gender Structure .....	2
U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) .....	2
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) .....	2
Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) .....	3
International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) .....	3
Concerns and Criticisms .....	3
Findings of the High-Level Panel of System-Wide Coherence .....	4
General Assembly Action and the Secretary-General's Proposal .....	4
Possible Next Steps .....	5
Selected Policy Issues .....	6
Funding .....	6
Governance .....	7
Relationship with Other U.N. System Entities .....	8
In-Country Operational Capacity .....	9
Links to Civil Society .....	10
Gender Mainstreaming .....	10
Review and Evaluation .....	11
Obama Administration Position .....	11
Congressional Role and Considerations .....	13
The New Entity and U.S. Foreign Policy .....	13
Effectiveness and Oversight .....	13
Women's Rights or Human Rights? .....	14
U.S. Priorities and Resources .....	14
U.S. Contributions .....	14

## Tables

Table 1. U.S. Voluntary Contributions to UNIFEM and the Trust Fund, FY2006-2011 .....	15
---	----

## Appendixes

Appendix. Selected U.N. Activities Addressing Women .....	16
---	----

## Contacts

Author Contact Information .....	19
----------------------------------	----

## Setting the Context: Why a New U.N. Entity for Women?

In September 2009, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution expressing strong support for the consolidation of four U.N. bodies addressing women's issues into one composite entity. Current U.N. efforts to address the well-being of women are spread across various U.N. system programs, funds, and offices with no single leadership or coordination mechanism. As a result, U.N. bodies addressing women's issues have been criticized for being ineffective, incoherent, and underfunded. U.N. member states, including the United States, are engaged in ongoing consultations to consider the new entity's mission, functions, governance, and funding. At this time, it is unclear how a new U.N. entity will be structured and whether it will prove effective in addressing global women's issues.

Recent efforts toward the establishment of a new U.N. entity for women reflect a gradual shift in the international community's approach to prioritizing and addressing the needs of women. Many governments, including the United States, have recognized that the well-being of women is linked with national and international security, development, and economic stability.<sup>1</sup> More broadly, the possibility of a new entity raises the question of how the international community, and the United Nations in particular, can best address the needs of women globally. This fundamental issue underlies all aspects of the intergovernmental consultations regarding the creation of a U.N. women's entity.

Many Members of Congress have demonstrated support for global women's issues, as well as for U.N. efforts to address the needs of women and girls. Congressional interest in the new U.N. entity for women centers around several key issues, including

- possible U.S. funding and participation,
- support for global women's issues in U.S. foreign policy, and
- oversight of the new entity's efficiency and effectiveness.

This report discusses perceived weaknesses in the current U.N. system gender structure and recent steps taken by governments to address the issue. It examines U.S. policy toward the new entity, including to what extent, if any, the United States will fund the new entity, and the role the United States may play once the entity is established. It analyzes possible policy issues related to a new entity, including its role in U.N. field operations, proposals for its leadership and governance structures, and the nature of its funding mechanisms. It also discusses the entity in the context of broader U.N. system-wide reform efforts, its potential impact on the activities of other U.N. agencies, funds, and programs, and the involvement of other actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in its activities and governance.

## Background and Current U.N. System Efforts

During the past decade, the international community has increasingly recognized the need for a new U.N. entity to address issues related to women. This recognition was brought about in part

---

<sup>1</sup> In April 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized this view, stating, "... the subjugation of women is a threat to the national security of the United States. It is also a threat to the common security of our world, because the suffering and denial of the rights of women and the instability of nations go hand-in-hand." U.S. Department of State, Remarks at the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, Hillary Clinton, New York City, March 12, 2010.

by an organized grassroots campaign led by women's groups, NGOs, and other members of civil society to frame women's issues as a global priority and raise awareness of weaknesses in existing U.N. system efforts to address women's well-being. Advocates of a new U.N. women's entity argue that the existing U.N. system gender structures lack leadership and coordination, sufficient funding, visibility, and operational capacity—particularly when compared to other U.N. bodies that address specific segments of the world population, such as the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the U.N. Development Program (UNDP). Supporters argue that this dearth of leadership and coherence has made women's issues a low priority in the U.N. system.

## **Existing Gender Structure**

The following sections briefly summarize the structure and objectives of the four U.N. gender entities that will be consolidated into one composite entity—the U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). See the **Appendix** for examples of other U.N. bodies, initiatives, and agreements that either directly or indirectly address the well-being of women.

### **U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

UNIFEM is a U.N. fund that was established as a separate and identifiable entity in “autonomous association” with UNDP.<sup>2</sup> Its goal is to support the implementation of existing international commitments to advance gender equality at the national level by focusing on (1) women's economic security and rights, (2) violence against women, (3) reducing levels of HIV and AIDS in women, and (4) advancing gender justice in democratic governance. To achieve its goals, UNIFEM provides funding and technical assistance to activities that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries. It is funded through voluntary contributions by U.N. member states, NGOs, and others. Total UNIFEM contributions in 2008, the last year for which data are available, were \$121.4 million.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, UNIFEM administers the U.N. Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women, which provides grants to government, United Nations, and NGO efforts to combat violence against women on the local, regional, and national level. The Trust Fund relies on voluntary contributions from national governments, NGOs, and the private sector.

### **Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)**

DAW, which is part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the U.N. Secretariat, advocates the advancement of women through formulating policy, researching global standards and norms, promoting the implementation of international agreements, and mainstreaming gender perspectives in the U.N. system. DAW's key responsibility is servicing the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the main U.N. intergovernmental policymaking body on women's issues.<sup>4</sup> DAW is funded through the U.N. regular budget.

---

<sup>2</sup> U.N. document, A/RES/39/125, December 14, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), *UNIFEM Annual Report 2008-2009*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> CSW, established in February 1946, is a functional intergovernmental commission under the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is composed of 45 member state representatives elected by ECOSOC members (other states serve as observers) who meet annually at U.N. Headquarters. For more information, see the **Appendix**.

## **Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)**

OSAGI, which is part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the U.N. Secretariat, is headed by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.<sup>5</sup> It works to “promote and strengthen” the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action agreed to at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.<sup>6</sup> OSAGI also provides oversight and policy guidance to DAW in its work supporting the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and CSW. Moreover, it develops new strategies and programs to enhance gender equality and women’s empowerment. Like DAW, OSAGI is funded through the U.N. regular budget.

## **International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)**

INSTRAW is a U.N. system research and training institute mandated with developing research and training programs on women’s empowerment and gender equality. It promotes applied research, information sharing, and capacity building among U.N. member states, civil society, academia, the private sector, and others. Governments, academia, and NGOs provide voluntary contributions to INSTRAW.<sup>7</sup>

## **Concerns and Criticisms**

Experts contend that weaknesses in the current U.N. system gender structure have contributed to significant gaps between U.N. member state commitments to women’s equality and the implementation of these commitments.<sup>8</sup> These apparent weaknesses center around several key organizational issues—coordination and cohesion, governance, and resources and capacity.

- **Leadership and coordination.** Critics argue that lack of leadership and coordination is one of the primary deficiencies in the existing U.N. system gender structure. For example, UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI, and INSTRAW share many similar objectives, and in some cases their work may run parallel to each other or even overlap. Yet for the most part they act independently with no single authority or coordinating mechanisms to unify their work. Critics hold that this lack of leadership and cohesion affects the status of women’s issues in the U.N. system, as well as its effectiveness in addressing the needs of women.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> The current Special Adviser is Rachel Mayanja of Uganda. For more information, see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> U.N. member states have sought to address women’s equality and gender empowerment through four World Conferences addressing issues related to women. For more information, see the **Appendix**.

<sup>7</sup> INSTRAW is one of five U.N. research and training institutes; others address issues such as crime and justice, social developments, and disarmament research. More information is available at <http://www.un-instraw.org/>.

<sup>8</sup> International commitments made by some member states include the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); U.N. Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, and 1888; and the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, which was agreed to by 185 countries at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. For more information on these commitments, see the **Appendix**.

<sup>9</sup> DAW and OSAGI are led by an Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Economic and Social Affairs. The USG is responsible for the follow-up to the major U.N. summits and conferences, and services the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, as well as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Given this wide range of responsibilities, some might argue that the mission and priorities of DAW and OSAGI may be overshadowed by (continued...)

- **Governance.** Some experts have criticized the governance of existing gender entities. Many, for instance, express concern with what they view as UNIFEM's secondary status in the U.N. system. Unlike specialized agencies with their own governance and in-country operations, UNIFEM is autonomously associated with UNDP. It is led by an executive director, while the UNDP administrator is accountable for UNIFEM's management and operation. UNIFEM requires involvement from UNDP, specialized agencies, and others when planning and implementing projects. Many argue that this places UNIFEM at a financial and operational disadvantage, hindering its ability to promote and implement programs that enhance women's equality and empowerment.
- **Resources and capacity.** Many analysts contend that existing U.N. gender entities lack the financial and human resources necessary to achieve their goals, particularly at the country level. To support this view, critics point to the budgets of other U.N. entities focused on specific segments of the world's population. For example, total voluntary and regular budget contributions for UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI, and INSTRAW in 2008 were approximately \$247 million.<sup>10</sup> By comparison, for the same period, the total income for UNICEF alone was over \$3.3 billion.<sup>11</sup>

## Findings of the High-Level Panel of System-Wide Coherence

In 2006, efforts to establish a new entity gained momentum when then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed a High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence (the Panel) to examine how the U.N. system can work more effectively. The Panel's recommendations regarding the U.N. system gender structure reflected many of the aforementioned concerns voiced by women's groups and governments. The Panel found that "there is a strong sense that the United Nations system's contribution [to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment] has been incoherent, under-resourced and fragmented."<sup>12</sup> It recommended that the United Nations establish one entity focused on women's equality and empowerment. According to the Panel, the new entity should be a consolidation of existing U.N. gender entities; have a strengthened operational, normative, and advocacy role; and be "fully and ambitiously funded." At the same time, the Panel emphasized that commitment to gender equality should remain the mandate of the entire U.N. system.

## General Assembly Action and the Secretary-General's Proposal

The Panel's recommendation and the ongoing efforts of women's groups to establish a new U.N. gender entity laid the groundwork for the adoption of U.N. General Assembly resolution 63/311 in September 2009.<sup>13</sup> The resolution, which was agreed to by consensus after two years of intergovernmental negotiations, expressed member state support for the consolidation of four

---

(...continued)

other economic and social issues addressed by the USG.

<sup>10</sup> U.N. document, A/64/588, December 22, 2009, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), *UNICEF Annual Report 2008*, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> U.N. document, A/61/583, *Delivering as One, Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel*, November 9, 2006, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> U.N. document, A/RES/63/311, September 14, 2009. The resolution addresses strengthening U.N. system-wide coherence as a whole; provisions related to a new U.N. women's entity are included under the heading "Strengthening the institutional arrangement for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women."

existing U.N. bodies into one composite entity to be led by a new Under-Secretary-General. It requested Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to produce a comprehensive proposal addressing the new entity's mission statement, organizational arrangements, funding, and governance for U.N. member state consideration.

In response to the General Assembly's request, in December 2009 the Secretary-General submitted a report to the General Assembly, *Comprehensive Proposal for the Composite Gender Equality Entity* (hereafter referred to as the "Secretary-General's proposal").<sup>14</sup> The proposal recommended that the new entity combine the mandates and assets of the four existing gender entities and work to fill existing gender gaps in the U.N. system. It would aim to ensure "universal coverage" of gender equality issues. To achieve this, the proposal suggested the establishment of both an operational and normative entity addressing women at the regional, national, and global level.<sup>15</sup> The normative work would be guided by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), while the operational work would be governed by an executive board. Similar to UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA, the entity would be a subsidiary body of the General Assembly that reports to the Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Ban emphasized that a new entity would not relieve any other parts of the U.N. system from their responsibility to address women's equality or gender empowerment.

The Secretary-General proposed that the new entity be led by an Under-Secretary-General who would be a member of all senior U.N. policymaking bodies. Its funding would be derived from a combination of assessed and voluntary contributions. Specifically, the report proposed a total of \$500 million for the entity's "start-up" phase. This included \$125 million per annum for basic staff, operating costs, and capacity at the country, regional, and headquarters level, as well as \$375 million to respond to country level requests for U.N. programmatic support. It would operate in both developed and developing countries.<sup>16</sup>

## Possible Next Steps

U.N. member states are currently considering the Secretary-General's proposal and negotiating the structure and governance of a new entity.<sup>17</sup> Issues that need to be resolved include

- how to efficiently and effectively merge the four existing gender entities,
- the appointment of a new Under-Secretary-General,
- how the entity will be governed and funded, and
- the role of a new entity in-country.

---

<sup>14</sup> U.N. document, A/64/588, December 22, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Examples of normative work could include establishing methodologies and criteria for research, creating and maintaining global databases and information systems, and setting policy-oriented norms and standards for relevant issue areas and international agreements. Operational activities could include capacity building, managerial support, and technical assistance at the country and regional level; establishing practical guidelines and advice based on normative standards; and supporting studies and proposals for direct application within a specific project or program.

<sup>16</sup> Member state and NGO responses to specific aspects of the Secretary-General's proposal are discussed in the "Selected Policy Issues" section. For further examination of funding issues related to the new entity, see the "Congressional Role and Considerations" and "Funding" sections.

<sup>17</sup> Negotiations or discussions may take place among various countries or group of countries (both formally and informally), and may occur in U.N. fora or in bilateral consultations.



The timeline for establishing the new entity is largely dependent on U.N. member states. It is expected that the General Assembly will address the Secretary-General's proposal during its 64<sup>th</sup> session, which began in September 2009 and will end in September 2010.<sup>18</sup>

## Selected Policy Issues

The U.N. General Assembly is composed of 192 member states with different national priorities, attitudes toward gender, and perspectives on the role of the U.N. system. As a result, negotiating the scope, structure, and funding of a new composite gender entity will likely be a significant challenge. This section examines policy issues that may be considered during negotiations. Many of these issues—particularly those regarding accountability, funding, and coordination—may be areas of congressional concern once the new entity is established.

### Funding

A key issue facing U.N. member states during negotiations will be funding the composite entity.<sup>19</sup> Debate will likely focus on how the entity should be funded and its overall budget, including start-up costs. U.N. member states are currently considering the financial structure proposed by Secretary-General Ban, who recommended a \$500 million annual budget for the start-up phase. This includes \$125 million annually for staff and operating costs, and an additional \$375 million per year in the initial phase to respond to country requests for U.N. program support.<sup>20</sup> According to Ban, the composite entity would be funded through a combination of voluntary contributions and the U.N. regular budget. Voluntary contributions would fund operational and programming activities, while normative functions, such as support to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), would be funded through the regular budget. The entity's main funding source would be voluntary contributions from governments, NGOs, and the private sector. Contributions from the regular budget would make up a small percentage of the entity's total funding but, according to Ban, would be important to ensuring substantive support for the intergovernmental process.

The response of governments and NGOs to the Secretary-General's funding proposal has been mixed. Both generally support the Secretary-General's suggestion that the composite entity be funded by a combination of assessed and voluntary contributions. They also support his recommendation that the new entity have its own financial rules and regulations. However, during intergovernmental consultations, some member states reportedly expressed worry with what they viewed as the entity's initial reliance on voluntary contributions from governments.<sup>21</sup> In addition, many NGOs contend that the proposed \$500 million budget "falls short" of what is needed to achieve system-wide gender mainstreaming and effective gender equality programming at the country level. Some hold that an annual budget of "no less than \$1 billion" would be necessary for the composite gender entity to have substantial impact on the lives of women.<sup>22</sup> Many

---

<sup>18</sup> U.N. publication, *Establishment of a New Composite Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Key Messages, Background, and Current Status*, March 9, 2010, at [http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/united\\_nations/c496?theme=alt2](http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/united_nations/c496?theme=alt2).

<sup>19</sup> The final budget and finances for the composite entity will be determined by U.N. member states through the standard U.N. budgetary approval process. For more information on U.N. system funding, see CRS Report RL33611, *United Nations System Funding: Congressional Issues*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

<sup>20</sup> U.N. document, A/64/588, December 22, 2009, pp. 17-19.

<sup>21</sup> "Gender Architecture: Some States Ready to Set Up New Entity," *ReformtheUN.org*, February 19, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> "GEAR Campaign Response to the Report of the Secretary-General—Comprehensive proposal for the composite gender equality entity," Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR), revised February 2010. For more information, (continued...)

women's groups also emphasize that the composite entity's funding should be sustained and consistent so that it can attract and maintain top experts in women's equality and empowerment.

## Governance

Governments and NGOs have recognized that the existing U.N. gender-related structure lacks strong governance. Accordingly, in General Assembly resolution 63/311, U.N. member states called for the new composite gender entity to be led by a new Under-Secretary-General who reports directly to the Secretary-General. The entity would be governed by an executive board to oversee the entity's operational activities.<sup>23</sup> Supporters emphasize that these actions would elevate the importance of women's well-being in the U.N. system, increase accountability on U.N. system approaches to gender, and enhance the visibility of women's issues among U.N. leadership.

Secretary-General Ban made several recommendations related to the composite entity's governance structure. He suggested that entity have a "tiered" approach that reflects the operational and normative work of the composite entity. Specifically, the CSW would guide the normative activities and operations of the entity, whereas an executive board would oversee its operational activities.<sup>24</sup> In his proposal, Ban presented two options to member states regarding the possible structure of the executive board:

- **Join the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board.** The General Assembly could establish an "autonomous segment" of the UNDP/U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) Board, which would ensure "close collaboration" between the new entity and the two organizations, providing a "strong link" between gender equality and development. According to Ban, this could be established immediately.
- **Establish a new executive board.** The General Assembly could create a new executive board, similar to the UNICEF or UNDP/UNFPA boards. This would require the establishment of a board secretariat, which would have additional financial costs. According to the Secretary-General, the creation of a new board could take "considerable time," possibly delaying the establishment of the new entity.

Ban recommended that for reasons of "coherence, cost and expediency," member states may wish to consider the first option of joining the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board.<sup>25</sup> Some governments, however, have argued that the entity should have its own board. They are concerned that becoming part of the UNDP/UNFPA executive board could result in a "loss of focus" regarding the new entity's mission.<sup>26</sup>

---

(...continued)

see "Ambitious Funding Will Ensure and Effective New U.N. Gender Equality Entity," European GEAR Campaign Working Group, July 23, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> According to resolution 63/311, the Under-Secretary-General shall be appointed by the Secretary-General, in consultation with member states, on the basis of equitable geographical representation and gender balance.

<sup>24</sup> The Secretary-General proposed that CSW and the executive board could cooperate by engaging in the following activities: (1) CSW and the board could convene joint sessions, (2) the executive board could be invited to address CSW and vice-versa, and (3) the executive director could be directed by the General Assembly to submit an annual report on the activities of the executive board and the CSW.

<sup>25</sup> U.N. document, A/64/588, December 22, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> U.N. publication, *Establishment of a New Composite Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Key* (continued...)

## Relationship with Other U.N. System Entities

Member states and women's organizations have raised questions regarding the new gender entity's impact on the activities of other U.N. bodies addressing women. For instance, some countries—including the United States—have cautioned against possible duplication between the new composite entity and other bodies such as UNDP, the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, and the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>27</sup> Others have expressed concern that the establishment of a new U.N. gender entity would cause other U.N. bodies to abandon their work addressing women's equality and empowerment.<sup>28</sup> According to the Secretary-General, other U.N. bodies would continue their normal activities and programs related to gender. He emphasized that the new entity would “enhance, rather than replace” them and “sharpen and focus” the impact of the gender equality activities of the entire U.N. system.<sup>29</sup>

Many expect that the new composite entity will engage with other U.N. bodies more frequently than the current U.N. system gender entities, such as UNIFEM and DAW. At the global level, the Secretary-General proposed that the entity be more involved in high-level U.N. system policymaking and coordinating bodies such as the U.N. Development Group (UNDG) and Chief Executives Board (CEB).<sup>30</sup> At the regional level, the entity would have a staff presence at U.N. regional operational support and oversight hubs and work as a member of regional directors teams that provide quality assurance, advice, and support to U.N. country teams. At the country level, the entity would, depending on the country, work as a full member of U.N. country teams to lead and coordinate U.N. system actions

### **U.N. Country Teams and Resident Coordinators**

U.N. country teams (UNCTs) operate in 136 countries, covering the 180 countries where U.N. programs are implemented. Each UNCT is composed of the U.N. system entities operating in a country that address development, emergency, recovery, and transition. UNCTs aim to ensure interagency coordination and decision-making at the country level by providing a mechanism for individual U.N. entities to plan and work together to ensure results for the host government's development agenda.

Each UNCT is led by a U.N. resident coordinator (RC) who is the designated representative of the U.N. Secretary-General. RCs are charged with advocating the interests and mandates of the U.N. system while drawing on the support and guidance of all U.N. entities. They are funded and managed by the U.N. Development Program and report to the Secretary-General through the Chair of the U.N. Development Group.

---

(...continued)

*Messages, Background, and Current Status*, March 9, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Statement by Laurie Phipps, Adviser, General Assembly Interactive Meeting on Institutional Arrangements in Support of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY, June 8, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Paula Donovan, *Gender Equality Now or Never: A New U.N. Agency for Women*, Office of the U.N. Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, July 2006, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> U.N. document, A/64/588, December 22, 2009, and U.N. publication, *Establishment of a New Composite Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Key Messages, Background, and Current Status*, March 9, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> The Chief Executives Board (CEB) aims to enhance coordination and cooperation on a range of substantive and management issues facing the U.N. system. It regularly brings together the executive heads of U.N. system organizations under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General. It is supported by three High-level Committees: the High-level Committee on Programs (HLCP); the High-level Committee on Management; and the U.N. Development Group (UNDG). UNDG was established by then-U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1997 as an instrument for U.N. development reform. UNDG aims to improve the effectiveness of U.N. system development activities at the country level by bringing together operational U.N. agencies that work on development.

on gender equality. Some NGOs and governments, however, have raised questions regarding the new gender entity's role in U.N. country teams as outlined in the Secretary-General's proposal.<sup>31</sup>

## **In-Country Operational Capacity**

The nature and extent of the composite gender entity's operational capacity at the country level has generated debate among governments and women's organizations. According to critics, a significant weakness in current U.N. system gender activities is the lack of gender perspectives and programming in U.N. country teams.<sup>32</sup> Some argue that for the composite gender entity to meet its objectives, it should over time establish a presence in every country in which the United Nations operates and fully participate in U.N. country teams, overseeing and coordinating gender-related programming and activities.<sup>33</sup> Others, including the United States, maintain that the composite entity can effectively address women's equality and empowerment at the national level without establishing a new U.N. office in all countries.<sup>34</sup>

The Secretary-General's proposal stated that the capacity to implement and monitor progress toward gender equality at the national level should exist in all countries. He recommended that the new entity lead and coordinate U.N. system actions on gender equality at the country level. The entity would be a member of the U.N. resident coordinator system, with its work varying from country to country, depending on national needs and priorities. It would, if needed,

- support national efforts to promote and enhance gender equality,
- advocate issues critical to gender equality,
- support governments in implementing and monitoring gender-related resolutions and agreements,
- act as a hub for knowledge and experience on gender equality, and
- provide capacity development and training on women's equality and empowerment.

The entity would also work with U.N. country teams to strengthen the accountability of U.N. system efforts to achieve national gender equality priorities and offer technical support and policy advice to governments and U.N. bodies. In addition, it would help country teams align their gender equality programs with U.N. system-wide policies on gender mainstreaming.

NGO responses to the Secretary-General's proposal have been mixed. Many express support for the universal country presence recommended for the entity, as well as its diverse approach to countries based on individual needs and priorities. At the same time, many are concerned that the proposal does not adequately address country-level programming capacity for women's empowerment and rights. Some contend that the proposal's language, if adopted by U.N. member

---

<sup>31</sup> For more information, see the "In-Country Operational Capacity" section.

<sup>32</sup> The U.N. system established mechanisms—including Gender Focal Points in the U.N. Secretariat and Gender Theme Groups at the country level—to enhance and coordinate gender equality and women's empowerment in U.N. country operations. Some have criticized these mechanisms for being insufficient and ineffective. See Paula Donovan, *Gender Equality Now or Never: A New U.N. Agency for Women*, Office of the U.N. Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, July 2006, pp. 13, 37-38.

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, GEAR Campaign, *Women's Entity Field Presence*, at <http://www.wedo.org/learn/campaigns/governance/statements-key-points-and-recommendations-of-the-gear-campaign>.

<sup>34</sup> Statement by Laurie Phipps, Adviser, General Assembly Interactive Meeting on Institutional Arrangements in Support of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY, June 8, 2009.

states, could “weaken or downplay” the importance of the entity’s operational capacity in the field. Portions of the text, for example, state that the entity will “assist” or “help” U.N. country team members with various gender-related activities. Some argue that this language implies that the entity is a subsidiary body, appearing to contradict the Secretary-General’s recommendation that the composite entity “lead and coordinate” U.N. system actions on gender equality.<sup>35</sup>

## Links to Civil Society

The level and extent of civil society’s involvement in the new composite gender entity will likely be a key area of discussion during intergovernmental consultations. Many maintain that for the entity to be effective, civil society, especially women’s organizations, must have “systematic and meaningful” participation in the work of the entity.<sup>36</sup> Secretary-General Ban’s proposal to member states suggests that the composite entity build effective partnerships with civil society. Specifically, he recommends the establishment of an advisory board composed of civil society and women’s organizations to enhance the entity’s efforts to address gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Many women’s groups argue that the Secretary-General’s proposal does not adequately incorporate civil society into the structure and mission of the new composite entity. They contend that NGOs with expertise and a history of working on gender issues can add significant value to the new entity and should have a more formal role than what is outlined in the Secretary-General’s proposal. The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a network of over 300 global NGOs, holds that NGOs should be full participants on the entity’s executive board (similar to the Joint Program on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) model). It further maintains that civil society advisory councils should be established on the country, regional, and headquarters level, and that NGOs should be able to participate in meetings related to the entity’s budget, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and policy formulation.<sup>37</sup>

## Gender Mainstreaming

The goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality by incorporating gender perspectives into U.N. system programs, policies, and actions at all levels.<sup>38</sup> During negotiations, member states will likely take into account the role and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in the U.N. system—including how it may be incorporated into the mission and activities of a new composite entity.

Gender mainstreaming was first introduced as a U.N. system strategy in the mid-1990s at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.<sup>39</sup> Since then, with the support of U.N. member

---

<sup>35</sup> For more information and other examples, see Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, *GEAR Campaign Response to the Report of the Secretary-General—Comprehensive Proposal for the Composite Gender Equality Entity*, revised February 2010.

<sup>36</sup> GEAR Campaign, *GEAR Campaign Response to the Report of the Secretary-General—Comprehensive Proposal for the Composite Gender Equality Entity*, revised February 2010.

<sup>37</sup> For more information, see (1) GEAR Campaign, *Recommendations on Civil Society Participation in a New Women’s Entity*, May 2009, and (2) U.N. Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), *Strengthening the U.N. Gender Architecture: New Momentum behind Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, NGLS Roundup 138, March 2010.

<sup>38</sup> For more information, see U.N. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, *Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*, New York, 2002, and <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> For more information on the World Conference, see the **Appendix**.

states, the U.N. Secretary-General and U.N. agencies, funds, and programs have attempted to incorporate it into U.N. activities and programs, with varied results. Many agree with the overall concept of gender mainstreaming and recognize its importance—however some contend that ongoing efforts have been unsuccessful due to a lack of accountability and limited awareness and understanding of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the U.N. system. This apparent lack of knowledge, some argue, has affected U.N. efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into the U.N. system and also hindered its ability to assist national governments in implementing their own gender mainstreaming initiatives.<sup>40</sup>

Secretary-General Ban's proposal recommends that the new composite gender entity play a key role in U.N. gender mainstreaming efforts. Specifically, the entity would lead and coordinate U.N. system actions on gender equality and women's empowerment and strengthen the accountability of the U.N. system on gender equality and mainstreaming.<sup>41</sup> It would provide substantive support to U.N. bodies where commitments, norms, and policy recommendations on gender mainstreaming are discussed. It would also work with other U.N. bodies to refine policies and strategies for strengthening implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy. Many observers and women's groups support the Secretary-General's proposal in principle. Some emphasize, however, that if U.N. member states decide to make gender mainstreaming part of the new entity's mission, they should ensure that the entity has the authority and financial resources to carry out its responsibilities.

## **Review and Evaluation**

Many governments, experts, and organizations, including the United States, have emphasized that U.N. member states should ensure there are mechanisms in place to review the efficiency and effectiveness of the new entity after its establishment. As such, the Secretary-General's proposal recommends that member states "may wish to undertake a review of the functioning of the composite entity after three years," and make any adjustments based on this review. The Secretary-General also recommends that a review of the entity's executive board arrangements be undertaken after three years to ensure the entity has an "appropriate" executive board and to make any adjustments to align the entity's governance structure with system-wide coherence discussions.<sup>42</sup> It is unclear how governments will evaluate or measure the work of the composite gender entity.

## **Obama Administration Position**

In the past decade, the United States has increasingly acknowledged the importance of women's well-being to development and international security. It has also generally supported U.N. funds, programs, and activities that, either whole or in part, address the well-being of women. Many U.S. policymakers appear cautiously optimistic regarding the creation of a new U.N. entity for women. Ultimately, however, future U.S. policy toward the new gender entity will likely depend on whether the United States views the entity's future work as effective and efficient.

---

<sup>40</sup> For instance, see U.N. document, E/2006/CRP.1, June 15, 2006 which states, "Implementation [of] and accountability [for gender mainstreaming] are lagging behind policy, interfering with achieving concrete progress on the ground...." Also see Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), *Gender Mainstreaming: Can it Work for Women's Rights?*, No. 3, November 2004, <http://www.wda.org.au/genmainstream1.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> U.N. document, A/64/588, December 22, 2009, and U.N. publication, *Establishment of a New Composite Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Key Messages, Background, and Current Status*, March 9, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> U.N. document, A/64/588, December 22, 2009.

The Obama Administration has expressed support for the establishment of a new U.N. entity for women—reflecting its broader efforts to address the well-being of women worldwide. At the State Department, for example, the Administration created the post of Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues. The Ambassador, who reports directly to the Secretary of State, heads the Office of Global Women’s Issues (GWI), which is charged with coordinating and supporting State Department foreign policy activities relating to the political, economic, and social advancement of women worldwide. According to Administration officials, this newly established Ambassadorship “reflects the elevated importance of global women’s issues for the President....”<sup>43</sup>

Within the U.S. government, the responsibility for negotiating the scope and structure of a new U.N. entity for women in U.N. fora lies primarily with the State Department. The Obama Administration has made a number of statements in U.N. fora setting forth its vision for a new U.N. gender entity. However, its position will likely evolve as intergovernmental negotiations move forward. In a June 2009 General Assembly meeting, an Administration official stated:

We envision this hybrid entity as a central repository of expertise, analysis, and research on issues such as gender equality, women’s political participation, women’s economic opportunities.... The composite entity would not only draft reports on these issues, but would deploy staff into the field to serve a catalytic role to raise these issues within country teams, and work with operational agencies to ensure that their work takes due account of gender aspects of their projects....<sup>44</sup>

In the same statement, the Administration recommended that the new entity should have a strong field presence but emphasized that it did not expect that new U.N. offices would be established in all countries. It foresaw the entity as having a small branch that would organizationally be part of the U.N. Secretariat to support the Under-Secretary-General.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the Administration proposed that the new entity’s Under-Secretary-General have two primary responsibilities: one as the executive head of the normative and operational aspects of the entity and another as a member of the U.N. Secretary-General’s team of department heads. Unlike existing U.N. bodies, a new entity would have an equal voice on U.N. senior-level consultative mechanisms, such as the Chief Executives Board and the U.N. Development Group.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the Administration recommended that an entity be funded primarily through voluntary contributions, but with part of the budget coming from assessed contributions to the U.N. regular budget to cover the cost of the Under-Secretary-General’s office in the Secretariat. To ensure the composite entity would operate as effectively as possible, the Administration suggested that it be reviewed by member states after three to five years.

---

<sup>43</sup> The current Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues is Melanne Verveer. Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, “President Obama Announces Key State Department Appointments,” March 6, 2009. GWI consolidated two previous State Department Offices under the Bush Administration: the Office of the Senior Adviser to the Secretary for Women’s Empowerment and the Office of International Women’s Issues, both of which reported to the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs.

<sup>44</sup> Statement by Laurie Phipps, Adviser, General Assembly Interactive Meeting on Institutional Arrangements in Support of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY, June 8, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> The Administration stated that ideally the office of the Under-Secretary-General would operate within existing resources or by “savings brought about by streamlining and the elimination of duplication.”

<sup>46</sup> According to the Administration, the Under-Secretary-General would participate in the Secretary-General’s Senior Policy Committee. Other U.N. leadership mechanisms include the High-Level Committee (HLC) on Programs and the HLC on Management. For more information, see the “Relationship with Other U.N. System Entities” section.

In a more recent statement in February 2010, the Administration elaborated on its position, making several recommendations that were similar or identical to the Secretary-General's December 2009 proposal to the General Assembly. For example, the Administration suggested that the new entity be a "vigorous actor, with resources to command and programs to carry out," and reemphasized that at the same time the entity may not be able to provide support to all women in all areas. The Administration also supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the new entity be jointly governed by an executive board and the Commission on the Status of Women. Moreover, it recommended that the Under-Secretary-General position should be on the same institutional level as the heads of other major funds and programs, as well as other Under-Secretaries-General heading major departments within the Secretariat.<sup>47</sup>

## **Congressional Role and Considerations**

Members of Congress have generally supported U.N. system activities that address the well-being of women, and may demonstrate an interest in the new gender entity.<sup>48</sup> Members may focus on several issues, including (1) U.S. funding of and participation in the new entity, (2) the relevance of the entity to U.S. foreign policy, and (3) oversight of the entity's efficiency and effectiveness after it is established. To address these issues, Congress could use a range of legislative options, including authorizing, appropriating, or prohibiting U.S. financial contributions to the entity; enacting "sense of the Congress" resolutions; and holding oversight hearings on the entity's effectiveness once it is established.

### **The New Entity and U.S. Foreign Policy**

Since the United Nations was created, Members of Congress have used U.N. mechanisms to further U.S. foreign policy objectives and priorities. Increased attention to global women's issues, coupled with the possible establishment of a new U.N. gender entity, points to heightened congressional interest in what role, if any, the entity should play in U.S. foreign policy and to what extent the United States will support and participate in it. As negotiations move forward and the gender entity begins its work, Congress may wish to consider the following issues.

### **Effectiveness and Oversight**

With the United States as the largest financial contributor to the U.N. system, Members of Congress have demonstrated an ongoing interest in ensuring the United Nations runs as efficiently and effectively as possible. Therefore, Congress may conduct oversight on the new entity to ensure it is successfully addressing the well-being of women. This raises the broader question of how, if at all, U.N. member states, including the United States, can measure or evaluate the entity's overall effectiveness, or its improvement, if any, over the previous U.N. gender structure. This is a challenge shared by many governments and organizations that aim to enhance development, human rights, and the well-being of women through their own programs and initiatives.

---

<sup>47</sup> Statement by John Sammie, Deputy U.S. Representative to ECOSOC, on System-wide Coherence: Composite Gender Equality Entity, in Informal Consultations of the General Assembly, U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY, February 16, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, H.Rept. 111-336 to accompany H.R. 3288 (P.L. 111-117, Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2010), December 8, 2009, p. 1491. ("The Conferees support efforts at the U.N. to address the needs of women and girls....")



## **Women's Rights or Human Rights?**

Some experts argue that women's rights should be addressed in the context of existing international human rights and development mechanisms. Supporters of this view contend that rather than creating a new stand-alone U.N. gender entity focused specifically on women, U.N. member states should work to fully integrate gender issues into U.N. system activities such as UNDP, UNICEF, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, and others.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, they argue that the creation of a new gender entity would be an unnecessary expense for U.N. member states. For this reason, some have suggested that the United States withhold U.S. contributions to the new composite gender entity.<sup>50</sup>

## **U.S. Priorities and Resources**

When examining the possible role of the new entity in U.S. foreign policy, Members of Congress may wish to consider the entity's priorities in the context of existing U.S. efforts and priorities to address global women's issues—including violence against women, women's health, and women's political participation. Many experts contend that providing financial assistance or technical support to the new composite gender entity may benefit the United States because it allows the U.S. government to share costs and resources related to global women's issues with other governments and organizations. Others, however, maintain that the U.S. government should focus on its own efforts to address international women's issues; they note that U.N. gender-related activities may not always match U.S. foreign policy or assistance priorities.

## **U.S. Contributions**

In the coming months, U.N. member states are expected to transfer the mandates of existing U.N. gender entities—UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI, and INSTRAW—into a composite entity. When this occurs, Members of Congress may consider whether to provide U.S. contributions to the new entity.

The nature and type of the level of U.S. contributions have not yet been determined; U.N. member states are currently negotiating whether the entity will be funded by the U.N. regular budget, by voluntary contributions, or by a combination of both. If the new entity is funded through the U.N. regular budget, the United States would be legally obligated to provide assessed contributions under Article 17 of the U.N. Charter.<sup>51</sup> (The United States is currently assessed at 22% of the U.N. regular budget.) However, if the entity is financed through voluntary contributions, the United States is under no legal obligation to fund the entity; each individual country determines whether or not to make voluntary contributions.<sup>52</sup>

The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations have recognized that the establishment of a new U.N. entity for women would affect annual appropriations. In the conference report

---

<sup>49</sup> See the "Relationship with Other U.N. System Entities" section for further discussion.

<sup>50</sup> Grace S. Melton, *CEDAW and the New U.N. Gender Office: The U.S. Can Do Better*, The Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder No. 2856, April 6, 2010, pp. 2-3.

<sup>51</sup> Assessed contributions would be funded from the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account in the state department section of the annual Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. voluntary contributions for the new entity would likely be financed through the International Organizations and Programs (IO&P) account in the annual foreign operations appropriations section of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act.

accompanying H.R. 3288, for example, conferees noted the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 63/311 establishing a new U.N. gender entity, and directed the State Department to consult with the Committees on Appropriations “prior to providing funds to this new entity or providing any funds appropriated for a United States contribution to UNIFEM or the UNIFEM Trust Fund to this new mechanism.”<sup>53</sup>

Many policymakers and experts suggest that when determining U.S. funding levels for the new entity, consideration should be given to U.S. contributions to the existing gender entities that will be consolidated. Most of the U.S. funding for existing U.N. gender entities is provided through voluntary contributions to UNIFEM and the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women (Trust Fund), which is administered by UNIFEM. In many instances, Congress appropriated contributions to these funds higher than the amounts requested by Administrations.<sup>54</sup> Both UNIFEM and the Trust Fund are financed through the IO&P account in annual foreign operations appropriations (see **Table 1**).

**Table 1. U.S. Voluntary Contributions to UNIFEM and the Trust Fund, FY2006-2011**  
(In millions of U.S. dollars financed through the IO&P account)

U.N. FUND	FY2006 (actual)	FY2007 (actual)	FY2008 (actual)	FY2009 (actual)	FY2010 (est.)	FY2011 (request)
<b>UNIFEM</b>	3.218	3.218	3.571	4.500	6.000	6.00
<b>UNIFEM Trust Fund</b>	1.485	1.485	1.785	2.500	3.000	0.00

**Source:** Foreign operations appropriations and congressional budget justifications.

In FY2010, the United States contributed \$6 million to UNIFEM and \$3 million to the Trust Fund, for a total of \$9 million. Total UNIFEM income in calendar year (CY) 2008, the last year for which data are available, was \$215.3 million, while expenditures were \$118.25 million. For comparison, in fiscal year FY2008, the United States contributed \$3.571 million to UNIFEM.

DAW and OSAGI are financed through the U.N. regular budget (the United States assessment is 22%). The 2008-2009 biennium budget for both offices was \$13.748 million (approximately \$6.87 million per year).<sup>55</sup> The United States has decided not to contribute to INSTRAW (which is funded by voluntary contributions) in recent years. In CY2008, the Institute’s core budget and expenditures were \$1.133 million.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> H.Rept. 111-336 to accompany H.R. 3288 (P.L. 111-117, Division F, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2010, of the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2010), December 8, 2009, p. 1491.

<sup>54</sup> For example, the U.S. government has contributed to the Trust Fund since 2005, with funding levels ranging from \$990,000 in FY2005 to \$3.0 million in FY2010. The George W. Bush Administration did not request funding for the Trust Fund from FY2005 through FY2009, and the Obama Administration did not request funding for FY2010.

<sup>55</sup> DAW and OSAGI are funded through the same subprogram of work in the regular budget, “Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women.” See U.N. document, A/64/6 (Sect. 9), March 31, 2009, p. 26.

<sup>56</sup> U.N. document, INSTRAW/EB/2009/R.8, August 14, 2009, Table 2.

## **Appendix. Selected U.N. Activities Addressing Women**

This section describes selected U.N. system entities, initiatives, or commitments that directly address issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **I. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**

CSW, established in February 1946, is a functional intergovernmental commission under the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is the only U.N. intergovernmental policymaking body that specifically addresses issues related to women. It is composed of 45 member state representatives elected by the council (other states serve as observers) who meet annually at U.N. Headquarters. CSW observes, monitors, and implements measures for the advancement of women. It also reviews and supports gender mainstreaming in the U.N. system. CSW is funded through assessed contributions to the U.N. regular budget. The United States is a CSW member; its term expires in 2012.

### **II. U.N. World Conferences on Women**

U.N. member states have sought to address women's equality and gender empowerment through four World Conferences specifically addressing issues related to women. The first conference, held in 1974 in Mexico City, inaugurated the U.N. "Decade on Women," which spanned from 1976 to 1985. The second conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1980, and the third was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985. The conferences addressed and expressed member states commitments to achieving (1) equality between men and women, (2) the integration of women into development, and (3) recognition of the participation of women in achieving world peace. The conferences also focused on women's health, work, and education.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, sought to build on commitments made at previous conferences. The conference had two outcome documents: the *Beijing Declaration* and the *Platform for Action*, which were adopted by consensus (185 governments). The *Beijing Declaration* reaffirmed member state commitments to equal rights for men and women and the empowerment and advancement of women. Governments also expressed their determination to intensify efforts to ensure full human rights for women and girls, eliminate discrimination against women, promote sustainable development and education, combat violence against women and girls, and ensure equal access to economic resources. The *Platform for Action*, described in its mission statement as an "agenda for women's empowerment," reaffirmed the human rights of women and girls and called for strong commitments by U.N. member states to take specific actions to address issues affecting women, including poverty, education, health, violence against women, armed conflict, decision-making, environment, and economic inequality.

The United States was a key participant in the Fourth World Conference and played a significant role in drafting the *Declaration* and *Platform for Action*. In December 1995, the U.N. General Assembly, including the United States, adopted resolution 50/45 endorsing both documents.

### **III. The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

CEDAW (the Convention) is the only international human rights treaty that specifically focuses on the rights of women.<sup>57</sup> It calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of life. This includes equality in legal status, political participation, employment, education, health care, and the family structure. Article 2 of the Convention specifies that States Parties should undertake to “embody the principle of equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation ... to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle.”<sup>58</sup> As of April 29, 2009, 186 countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention. The United States is the only nation to have signed but not ratified CEDAW. To date, the treaty has not been considered for advice and consent to ratification by the full Senate.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (the Committee) was established in 1982 as a mechanism to monitor the progress of the Convention’s implementation. It is composed of 23 independent experts who are elected at a meeting of States Parties to the Convention by secret ballot. The Committee is responsible for reviewing the reports on national CEDAW implementation submitted by States Parties. Countries are required to submit an initial report within the first year of ratification or accession, followed by a report every four years. The reports identify areas of progress as well as concerns or difficulties with implementation. The Committee engages in an open dialogue and exchange of ideas with the reporting country and compiles recommendations and conclusions based on its findings, which include general recommendations on cross-cutting issues of concern.

### **IV. U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA)**

UNFPA, established in 1969, is the world’s largest source of population and reproductive health programs and the principal unit within the United Nations for global population issues.<sup>59</sup> In 2008, the organization provided services in some 158 developing and transition countries, with funds totaling \$845.3 million, drawn primarily from voluntary contributions made by nations and some foundations. UNFPA does not focus exclusively on women. However, because it addresses family planning and reproductive health, the majority of its activities directly affect the lives of women and girls.

In the past 25 years, there has been continuing and contentious debate within the United States, especially among Members of Congress, as to whether the United States should financially support UNFPA. This debate has centered on the extent to which, if any, UNFPA aids China’s coercive family planning programs and policies. In 16 of the past 26 years, the United States did not contribute to the organization as a result of executive branch determinations that UNFPA’s program in China violated the “Kemp-Kasten” amendment, which bans U.S. aid to organizations

---

<sup>57</sup> This section is drawn in part from CRS Report R40750, *The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Issues in the U.S. Ratification Debate*, by (name redacted).

<sup>58</sup> Women’s rights and the equality of the sexes are addressed in general terms in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, among others.

<sup>59</sup> Parts of this section are drawn from CRS Report RL32703, *The U.N. Population Fund: Background and the U.S. Funding Debate*, by (name redacted).

involved in the management of coercive family planning programs.<sup>60</sup> From FY2002 through FY2008, the George W. Bush Administration found UNFPA ineligible for funding under the Kemp-Kasten amendment. In March 2009, President Obama expressed his support for UNFPA, and in December 2009 signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-117), which directed that \$55 million shall be made available for the organization.

## **V. U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

UNICEF works to protect children's rights, provide for their basic needs, and expand their opportunities.<sup>67</sup> As part of its mission, UNICEF aims to promote equal rights for women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities.<sup>61</sup> UNICEF programs seek to reduce gender-based violence, ensure equal access to water, enhance gender equality in education, and protect women and girls from child marriage. UNICEF is funded primarily from voluntary contributions from governments. In FY2010, the United States contributed \$132.25 million to the organization.

## **VI. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, and 1888**

On October 31, 2000, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 relating to women, peace, and security.<sup>62</sup> The resolution, which is strongly supported by the United States, addresses the impact of war and conflict on women and highlights the need for protection of women and girls from human rights abuses. Specifically, the resolution calls on all parties to armed conflict to "take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict."<sup>63</sup> It also urges U.N. member states and the U.N. Secretary-General to work toward increased representation and participation of women in all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions that address conflict resolution, management, and prevention. U.N. efforts in this area have intensified since 2003 and 2004, following media reports on sexual abuse and exploitation of vulnerable civilians by U.N. peacekeeping personnel.

In June 2008, when the United States served as president of the Security Council, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice participated in an open thematic debate on "women, peace, and security: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict." After the debate, Security Council members unanimously adopted Resolution 1820, marking the first time the Security Council adopted a resolution on women and violence since Resolution 1325. Resolution 1820 "demands the immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict in all acts of sexual violence against civilians with immediate effect."<sup>64</sup> It reaffirms commitment to Resolution 1325 and notes that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide. It further requests that the Secretary-General establish training programs for all peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel deployed by

---

<sup>60</sup> The provision has been included in annual foreign operations appropriations legislation since FY1985. It is included in Division F of P.L. 111-117, December 16, 2009, under the "Global Health and Child Survival" heading (123 STAT. 3324).

<sup>61</sup> For more information, see <http://www.unicef.org/gender/index.html>.

<sup>62</sup> This section is drawn from CRS Report RL34518, *United Nations System Efforts to Address Violence Against Women*, by (name redacted).

<sup>63</sup> U.N. document, S/RES/1325 (2000), October 31, 2000.

<sup>64</sup> U.N. document, S/RES/1820 (2008), June 19, 2008.

the United Nations, and encourages troop and police contributing countries to take steps to heighten awareness of and prevent sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

On September 30, 2009, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1888, which demanded that all parties to armed conflict “take appropriate measures to protect civilians, including women and children, from all forms of sexual violence.”<sup>65</sup> It reaffirmed that sexual violence, when used as a tactic of war or as part of a widespread attack against civilian populations, can exacerbate armed conflict situations and may impede the restoration of international peace and security. The resolution called on the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative to provide leadership to address sexual violence in armed conflict, and to rapidly deploy a team of experts to situations of particular concern. The United States, which served as Security Council President for October, strongly supported the adoption of the resolution, with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton serving as Chair of the Council meeting when the resolution was adopted.

## **VII. Interagency Network on Gender and Women’s Equality (IANWGE)**

IANWGE is a network of designated gender focal points from all U.N. agencies, offices, funds, and programs.<sup>66</sup> It aims to promote gender equality in the U.N. system as a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and works to monitor and coordinate gender mainstreaming in the U.N. system. It also supports and monitors the implementation of gender-related recommendations from U.N. General Assembly special sessions, conferences, and summits. Moreover, IANWGE has established issue-specific ad hoc working groups to address priority issue areas such as violence against women, women, peace, and security, and gender and trade.

## **Author Contact Information**

(name redacted)  
Specialist in International Relations  
[redacted]@crs.loc.gov, 7-....

---

<sup>65</sup> U.N. document, S/RES/1888 (2009), September 30, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Gender Focal Points are selected to support senior managers in carrying out gender mainstreaming in the U.N. system. Being a Focal Point is not a full-time position; staff selected for the position typically have other areas of responsibility and may or may not be specialists in gender issues. For more information, see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gmfpdrafttors.htm>. Additional information on IANWGE is available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/index.html>.

# EveryCRSReport.com

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a federal legislative branch agency, housed inside the Library of Congress, charged with providing the United States Congress non-partisan advice on issues that may come before Congress.

EveryCRSReport.com republishes CRS reports that are available to all Congressional staff. The reports are not classified, and Members of Congress routinely make individual reports available to the public.

Prior to our republication, we redacted names, phone numbers and email addresses of analysts who produced the reports. We also added this page to the report. We have not intentionally made any other changes to any report published on EveryCRSReport.com.

CRS reports, as a work of the United States government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

Information in a CRS report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to members of Congress in connection with CRS' institutional role.

EveryCRSReport.com is not a government website and is not affiliated with CRS. We do not claim copyright on any CRS report we have republished.