

Sign on: Adhoc Letter on UN80 Initiative

We are facing an important moment in United Nations history. The UN Secretary General's UN80 initiative will impact our work at the CSW and the lives of women and girls globally. The UN's ability to effectively address gender equality and empower women and girls is at stake. Our united voice is crucial now. Let's take action and let the UN know where we stand on gender equality.

The following letter was written by an ad hoc group of concerned gender advocates. NGO CSW/NY endorses this letter and we encourage you and/or your organizations to sign on. This is just the first step. Stay tuned for more on UN80 this summer.

Reach out to your local UN Women offices. They need to hear from you.

[Guterres prioritizes reform at 'UN80 Initiative' launch](#) (25 March 2025)

[Secretary-General, Briefing on UN80 Initiative](#) (12 May 2025)

OPEN LETTER (copied to Guy Ryder, Amina Mohammed, Sima Bahous):

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

We are writing to urge you to make strengthening the UN's gender equality work central to the UN80 reforms.

We are organizations and individuals working for gender equality and women's rights. We advocated for and supported the creation of UN Women in 2010. We engage annually with the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and many of us have worked with different UN organizations to improve the system's capacity and reach in advancing gender equality.

This is a time of retreat by some governments on gender equality, supported by well-financed transnational anti-gender networks, threatening to undermine commitments Member States have made to the SDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, and other areas of normative progress. In the face of this ferocious backlash against gender equality, the UN must ensure that it strengthens its capacity to be a consistent and staunch defender of women's human rights, gender justice, and women's leadership.

The process of creating UN Women is an important example of how Member States and gender equality advocates within and outside of the UN system can— with more than a million gender equality advocates joining the Gender Equality Architecture (GEAR) campaign to advocate for this transformation— work together to envision a more coherent approach to a pressing challenge. Lessons learned from the pioneering experience of bringing four UN organizations together could inform current thinking about reform.

The upgrade of the gender architecture that the UN started in 2010 with the formation of UN Women is incomplete. We need an even stronger UN gender architecture that can respond to the political realities of this era by supporting women's struggles on the ground to fight gender-based injustices.

We are putting forward four concrete proposals and will continue to circulate this to women's networks worldwide to build support. We hope UN80 will:

- 1) Re-organize in a way that significantly strengthens the UN's gender equality work, leveraging its collective power to protect and promote the rights of women and girls in all their diversities, allocating substantial resources to this work, and facilitating greater cooperation between UN organizations and women's rights networks in every region and country. Ensure full support for UN Women's unique triple mandate – bringing together normative, operational and coordination work – to create a far more powerful backbone for the UN's collective impact on gender equality.
- 2) Ensure that in any UN80 cost-saving efforts, no capacity or autonomy will be weakened or lost in those UN organizations that champion and advance the lives and rights of women and girls, which is for the betterment of the entire society, including men and boys. Strengthening every part of that gender architecture must be a high priority. This must include ensuring that country-based support is available and that the reform of the humanitarian system fortifies efforts to deliver emergency aid with a strong gender lens and active participation by women's groups.
- 3) Require that gender equality expertise is 'at the table' for decisions about UN reform. The considerable gender expertise in different parts of the UN system must have leadership roles in the UN80 Task Force and the Working Groups on UN80 so that reform efforts sustain the UN's core commitment to diversity. Also, ensure consultations with women's civil society groups around the world on the UN 80 process, and guarantee transparency and clear communication between the leaders of the UN80 process and representatives of women's civil society groups.
- 4) Preserve and expand the important gains made via your 2017 Gender Parity Strategy. Staff with less secure contracts or shorter tenure at the UN are likely to be more vulnerable to termination in cost-cutting efforts. Young women tend to be over-represented in entry-level jobs that are not on permanent contracts. Any reforms that involve contractions in the personnel of UN entities should be governed by a commitment to continue the drive for gender parity.

Furthermore, as Member States and women's rights networks advance the CSW revitalization process called for in the Pact for the Future, we need concurrent efforts to guarantee that a powerful dedicated UN entity for gender equality – UN Women – and a coherent network of gender experts across the system with open and transparent processes for engaging with women's civil society organizations can steward needed reforms.

Mr. Secretary-General, women's organizations from across the world are paying attention and have legitimate expectations to be consulted and heard in this process. In March 2025 you

rightfully proclaimed, “gender equality is the foundation of sustainable development and lasting peace. And it is essential for humanity.” We count on your commitment to keep gender equality at the center of all reform efforts.