



Volume No. 2, Issue 1 January 2001

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UNEDITED VERSION

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A letter from the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

Dear Colleagues,

The first-ever open discussion of the Security Council on the theme Women, Peace and Security was held on 24 and 25 October 2000. This event marks a historic step forward in the area of women and peace. We hope that the discussion in the Security Council and the following resolution 1325 will help to encourage the inclusion of gender equality aspects more effectively in the implementation of the Brahimi Report. The efforts to restructure peace support

operations should lead to an atmosphere of greater gender sensitivity and increased numbers of women serving in peace support missions at all levels. I am pleased to report that the Secretary-General has decided to form a Senior Appointments Group to oversee the formulation of recommendations for the selection of senior personnel and my office has been invited to participate in its work.

I would also like to mention resolution 55/69 adopted by the General Assembly on 4 December 2000. This resolution supports the Organization's efforts to monitor gender balance targets in departments through gender action plans and the special measures. The resolution calls for the creation of a gender-sensitive working environment in the form of more flexible working arrangements and information on spousal employment opportunities.

The General Assembly also strongly encouraged Member States to provide more women candidates for positions in the intergovernmental, judicial and expert bodies as well as in the peacekeeping missions.

One of our most immediate challenges that we hope to address in the new year is to update our approaches to dealing with harassment, including sexual harassment in the workplace. We would encourage you to send in your views and suggestions in this regard.

Angela E. V. King

Around the UN ...

Women's Optional Protocol enters into force

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women entered into force on 22 December 2000. 15 Member States have now ratified it and 63 have signed it. The Protocol represents a further milestone in securing women's fundamental rights and freedom.

Security Council's first open discussion on Women, Peace and Security on 24 October 2000

With women and children accounting for over three quarters of the 40 million people displaced worldwide by armed conflicts and civilian wars, the Security Council held its first debate on women's experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations. The discussion aimed to address the needs of women in all UN peace operations, as well as the broader issue of women's role in building and maintaining peace.

In his statement, the Secretary-General said that women are often better equipped than men to prevent or resolve conflict. "For generations, women have served as

peace educators, both in their families and their societies," Mr. Annan said, stressing that they had proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls. He urged the Council to do everything in its power to protect women and girls in conflict situations and to include them in peace negotiations.

While efforts are being made in the UN to recruit more women for peacekeeping and peace-making missions, the potential contribution of women remains "severely under-valued," Mr. Annan said, adding that women are still "grossly under-represented" at the decision-making level. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. Angela E.V. King pointed out that the socio-economic fabric of a country had to be the "major focus of attention" during peace negotiations, and that groups, especially women's groups, should be a part of all stages of the process.

Referring to the findings of the recent DPKO/DAW study "Mainstreaming a gender perspective in multidimensional peace operations", Ms. King said women's participation in missions had the effect of encouraging local women to become involved in the peace process. Women were found to be less hierarchical in dealing with local communities, while local women were more likely to confide in women peacekeepers about rape and other sexual violence. Ms. King stressed that more should be done to encourage women to serve on peacekeeping missions, and that future operations should include gender equality aspects.

Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, recommended that the Security Council improve women's protection in conflict and support their role in peace building by ensuring that human rights verification, observer missions and peacekeeping operations focus on gender-based violations and women's human rights. The Council could also request that all peacekeeping personnel be trained in their responsibilities to women and children, and call for the elaboration of a code of conduct and the establishment of clear reporting on sexual violence in a peacekeeping environment.

A Special welcome to ...

- Ms. Thoraya Obaid of Saudi Arabia who heads the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) effective 1 January 2001. She is the first Saudi national to be appointed head of a United Nations agency. Ms. Obaid was previously the Director of the Division for Arab States and Europe at UNFPA, a position she has held since December 1998. Prior to joining the Fund, she was Deputy Executive Secretary for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) from 1993 to 1998. She was the Chief of the Social Development and Population Division from 1992 to 1993 and Senior Social Affairs Officer, with various responsibilities, from 1975 to 1992.
- The Secretary-General appointed Ms. Mervat Tallawy of Egypt, as Executive

Secretary for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), at the level of Under-Secretary-General. She takes up her post in February 2001.

Ms. Tallawy has previously served as Secretary-General of the National Council for Women in Egypt and Minister for Insurance and Social Affairs of Egypt (1997-1999). She has also had a long and distinguished career in foreign affairs and public service, which included representing Egypt as Ambassador to Austria and Japan.

In her diverse work within the United Nations, she has played a special role in population and gender issues. She has held several leadership positions in the United Nations intergovernmental processes, including the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, as well as its five-year review. She has also served as a Deputy Director to the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

Recognition to ...

Dr. Nafis Sadik is retiring after 14 years as Executive Director of UNFPA. We wish her every success in her new activities.

Network to the Top - a letter from Dr. Nafis Sadik

Network asked Dr. Nafis Sadik to share some of her experiences from her years as a senior woman and Executive Director of the UN Population Fund. She served as the head of the only agency in the UN system to achieve and maintain the target of 50 per cent women and men staff at all levels. Here is her message to the women of the UN.

First of all, let me briefly recall how the series of international conferences and events of the 1990s has placed women's rights and empowerment at the forefront of the world's agenda. A shared vision of development emerged from these activities, starting with the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and continuing with the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the International Year of the Family, the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and Habitat and the World Food Summits in 1996.

Women themselves played a major role in shaping the emerging global consensus on the importance of women's empowerment. Women from all over the world came to Rio to participate in and influence the drafting of Agenda 21.

Building upon this momentum, women and women's NGOs participated in unprecedented numbers in all successive conferences.

At one of the ACC meetings, on the initiative of the Secretary-General, issues related to the status of women were specifically addressed and the Committee unanimously adopted an important statement on the status of women in the secretariats of the UN system. It reaffirmed a strong commitment to ensuring that the advancement of women is a policy priority within all organizations in the system and to increasing women's participation at all levels, and notably at senior levels. Specific proposals were made to facilitate recruitment of women and to encourage women's mobility.

How can this be done?

In order to make a case for gender balance, the key is to let it be known that women are to be considered as well as men. This information should be conveyed to all governments and to all agencies within the United Nations system. An effort should be made to identify competent women, and not just a woman - this makes a big difference. In making a selection, choose the best person for the job. If there are two candidates - a man and a woman, who are equally qualified, then select the woman.

When planning a career, a woman should not only be competent, but also be credible and assertive. She must be able to do the job and be prepared to do all the tasks that men do. She must be able to speak up and make herself heard.

I know that it works from my own personal experience. When I first came into the system, I was really taken aback by the atmosphere at the UN; it was not very forthcoming as far as women were concerned. At meetings, in order to be heard, I had to repeat myself aggressively. An idea would be considered if a male in a meeting presented it, even though, many times, I had already said the same thing, but was ignored. However, my forcefulness soon remedied that situation. When I became Executive Director in 1987, no extra assertiveness was required. I was the only woman in the group and I got special attention paid to what I said. After a year, other people would talk about population issues or women's issues and then they would look at me to see if I heard them.

At UNFPA, we stand out as an example, in terms of the high proportion of women among our professional staff (50 per cent) and in senior level positions (28 per cent); 50 per cent of the Division Chiefs are women. This is the result of very explicit and concerted efforts in terms of recruitment, promotion and management, and leadership assignments. These efforts have included gender sensitivity training for all UNFPA staff, as well as the setting up of an Advisory Panel on Gender, Population and Development, composed of external experts, who have also looked at UNFPA's own policies in regard to women's status within the Fund. It has also included a careful strategy which was proposed by an internal committee on the situation of women at UNFPA and vigorously implemented and

monitored at all levels of the organization.

We are often asked to explain the success of our efforts. My experience is that, first, strong and ongoing personal commitment at the highest level and among senior staff responsible for human resource development is absolutely essential. Second, there should be an aggressive implementation of policies and targets established; this definitely calls for a change in the organizational culture and in the attitudes of many decision makers - most of whom are men and who are often afraid of being pushed aside as a result of new hiring and promotion policies and strategies.

If we achieve this at UNFPA, other agencies in the UN system can also be as successful. As I mentioned, all it takes is a strong commitment by senior management and the ability to seek out competent women candidates. And they do exist; it is just a matter of going out, letting it be known that you are looking for capable women candidates and you will find them.

Women and peacekeeping - A follow-up

The Situation of Women at MINURSO

by Rashida Abdulkarim, Leyla Khalfallah, Sophie Bennett, Focal Points for Women

Much has been written on the importance of the role of women in peacekeeping. As women working in the field for MINURSO, we are convinced that peacekeeping is as much of concern to women as it is to men. We sincerely hope that the establishment of focal points in missions across the UN will help to increase the number of women involved -- in particular, at decision-making levels - - and also to improve the conditions under which we work, at all levels.

When the three of us were assigned the role of focal point at MINURSO, we were astonished to find out that the female to male ratio for civilian personnel in the mission is one to four. If one includes the military component, the ratio is one woman for every eight men. One of the reasons suggested for this is that less women apply to work on missions than men. We wondered if this was a valid reason, and why this should be the case. We decided to ask all our female colleagues what led them to join the mission.

Based on extensive interviews, we found that the motives of women for working on a UN peacekeeping mission did not differ substantially from those of men. Our female colleagues had chosen to work at MINURSO for various reasons: to be involved in peacekeeping; to advance their careers or to open new career paths; to help pay for their children's education fees, or for keeping their families in their home countries. Some felt that mission work would pose challenges and stretch their personal capabilities. Others wanted to experience another country by living

and working in a politically and socially challenging environment.

At MINURSO, women are still grossly under-represented at higher levels. Our leadership above the P4 level is relentlessly masculine despite the concerns voiced within the UN about the low participation of women in decision-making. The ratio at this level is one woman to every nine men. At the lower end of the scale in particular those doing secretarial work and cleaning are mainly female.

During the informal discussions with women colleagues at all levels, we sought to identify areas they believed to be of particular concern. With one or two exceptions, almost all women felt that their level did not reflect their qualifications and experience. They felt that they could be doing better, although they were not clear about the sort of training that might help them further their careers. Most women had no clear understanding of what gender awareness means. Most agreed that some changes could be made to improve the working environment. Few were able to clearly define what constituted sexual harassment, although most agreed it was more serious when it came from superiors. Most were not aware of existing UN policies on career advancement, nor did they have a clear idea of the sort of policies that they would like to see implemented.

We received very positive feedback from the women who took part in the discussion groups. Most felt that they had gained a sense of solidarity and a common interest; and a number offered to give their time, skills and experience at the disposal of other colleagues -- such as counseling, knowledge of legal and personnel matters and editorial experience. We are delighted with the positive response we have had from our leadership in the mission and the support they have given us so far, particularly in terms of providing office space, equipment and additional time to pursue our work. We note with pleasure that the mere fact that the focal points exist has already produced a palpable change of heart among our leadership. Already we have begun to see a greater number of women involved in more responsible tasks at higher levels and to see the tremendous contribution that women can make to peacekeeping.

Article

Gender affairs in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

by Hanne T. Laugesen, Focal Point for Gender issues, ITU

Since the adoption of Resolution 70 at the Plenipotentiary Conference held in Minneapolis in 1998, which gave ITU a mandate to include a gender perspective in all aspects of its work, a number of activities were initiated and are now becoming part of the every day work of ITU.

Much emphasis has been put on a review of the distribution of staff by gender at

all levels. More women than men were recruited as professionals in both 1998 and 1999, which brought the total number of women from 50 at the end of 1997 to 70 at the end of 1999, corresponding to 23% of total staff in the Professional and higher categories. Particular attention is being paid to women at the higher levels. The percentage of women at the P5 level has increased from 5% to 11%. There is only one woman at the Director (D-1) level in ITU, recruited in 1997, as compared to 13 men at that level and 6 at the D2 level. A few departments in the General-Secretariat of ITU have reached an equitable gender balance in the Professional and higher categories.

Problems still exist, and will exist for some time, in the substantive sectors which require highly educated and skilled telecommunications engineers and where the number of women at the Professional level is very low. Although difficult, progress is being made also here. The main problems that have been identified remain the lack of women at the senior management level, (D1/D2 and above) and the need for more men at the General-Service level where women constituted, at the end of 1999, 70% of total staff.

Gender training and publicity

Efforts are being made to stage special events, drawing attention to gender issues, during major conferences of ITU and in particular during the Council session. For instance, at the World Radiocommunication Conference in May 2000 and at the World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly in October 2000, a women's breakfast was organized under the auspices of the private sector members of the ITU. They brought together women representatives to the conferences and staff involved in gender issues in ITU.

This ties in with the capacity building efforts which are currently being undertaken as part of gender mainstreaming in ITU. The strategy adopted was to train the members of the Group on Gender Issues (GGI) first and then gradually spread the learning to managers and staff over a two-year period. A consultant was recruited to prepare and deliver ITU-specific gender training modules in April 2000. A briefing session for senior managers is still on the agenda, as is training for middle managers and subsequently all staff. Although the issues in question concern everyone, the challenge still lies in increasing the interest level of staff in general, and of men in particular who occupy 75% of ITU managerial positions. Like any management development project, the role of senior management is key to enlisting staff commitment.

Mainstreaming gender in development

The work of ITU on gender in the Development Sector was also initiated in 1998 with the adoption of Resolution 7 of the World Telecommunications Development Conference in March 1998, which has led to the constitution of the ITU Task Force on Gender Issues composed of ITU Member States, private sector members, UN

organizations, NGOs and academia. The Task Force held its third meeting at ITU Headquarters in Geneva on 9 and 10 October 2000 and adopted a number of recommendations for the coming year, in particular for the on-going projects. Some of these include:

- A training curriculum on gender perspectives in telecom policy for the policy makers and telecommunication regulators.
- A rural access project for the creation of telecentres to forge partnerships to ensure the full implementation and creation of pilot telecentres owned and operated by women in communities that will most benefit from those services.
- Preparation of guidelines for ITU delegations on how to include gender issues in their briefs for ITU meetings, workshops and conferences as well as how to promote women for leadership positions in those activities.
- Expansion of the gender training workshops already carried out for the trainers in the institutes in Dakar and Nairobi.

Gender awareness is becoming more and more widespread in ITU and real efforts are being made to improve gender balance and to include a gender perspective in strategies, work programmes and projects. Considering that the effort took off only about two and a half years ago, one can say that tremendous progress has already been made. However, a heavy work program remains in front of the small group of dedicated people in ITU dealing with gender issues with more than enough issues to tackle in the coming years. We are confident, nevertheless, that real progress will be made and that we can comfortably build on what has already been achieved over the past two years.

Small notes

The following is an excerpt from a speech by Ms. Shirley Brownell on Staff Day, 25 September 2000 recounting her experiences of an ambush during her service in UNOSOM in 1993.

The date of November 13, 1993, is carved, indelibly, in my mind, for my life was changed for ever that Saturday morning. At 6:25 a.m., I left my residence in Mogadishu, on my way to UNOSOM headquarters to prepare for the morning briefing of the Special Representative and senior officials. Less than 30 minutes later, I was sitting, dazed and shoeless, at the side of a dirt road, bleeding profusely from a gaping bullet wound to my left arm, having flung myself from a moving vehicle as it was being commandeered by a Somali gunman. In the middle of the road lay Kai Lincoln, dying from a bullet which had shattered his insides; and hobbling around, with a gunshot wound to his leg yet trying to take control of the situation, was Lars Andersen, our driver and security officer.

What had happened? My colleagues and I were ambushed by Somali gunmen, simply because they wanted the vehicle in which we were riding, and they were

prepared to kill all of us to get it. Their reason: to turn the vehicle into a "technical". Why had it happened? Because the UN had been thrust into a situation where there was no peace to keep, where the security was non-existent and its staff were at the mercy of gunmen masquerading as security guards. What I do know about that day is that men we believed to be UNOSOM security guards, namely, non-uniformed gun-toting Somalis, were assigned to escort international staff; that at a certain point along the route they abandoned us; and that moments later our vehicle was surrounded by four gunmen bent on killing us.

I, for one, don't recall undergoing any training in safety procedures before I went off to Somalia, and I most certainly received no counselling after what happened to me there. My self-administered therapy was to block out the incident from my mind, and to get on with the work I had gone there to do. What struck me as particularly tragic at the time, however, was that the UN administration seemed more interested in recovering its stolen vehicle and teaching Somalis that they couldn't get away with such theft, than in showing any caring and concern about the pain, suffering and death of the staff members caught up in a vicious fratricide.

When the plastic surgeon who operated on me first examined my arm, he said, incredulously: "You went there to help those people, and this is what they did to you?" Our Secretary-General echoed similar sentiments last week, after the attack in Guinea, when he said: "What is unacceptable and really appalling is that these young men and women who go to these areas to help - to assist - then become targets. They are not at war with anyone. They went because they wanted to help, they went because they have compassion, they went because they understand the human condition and want to do whatever they can to help. It is unforgivable that these human beings would then become targets of either rebels or government forces which are at war with each other".

Since 1994, a box has sat in the corner of my office, unopened. It contained medical papers and other correspondence relating to my injury - all reminders of a period that I preferred to forget. But two weeks ago, as I was packing to move to a new office, I opened the box, and the memories came streaming back. Among its contents was this copy of Secretariat News, dated December 1993, with the headline "AMBUSH" and a photo of our slain colleague. The day after I opened the box, I was asked to speak, on Staff Day 2000, about my ordeal in Somalia. I saw the two events as more than a coincidence, and rather as an opportunity to finally come to terms with what happened in Somalia by sharing my experience. And so, here I am.

In your interest

A/Res/55/69 of 4 December 2000 "Resolution on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system". Here are some highlights:

- The General Assembly welcomes the progress made in improving the representation of women at some levels of the Secretariat, but expresses concern that progress in improving the representation of women at the senior and policy-making levels has slowed and that there are currently no women acting as special representatives or envoys;
 - Reaffirms the urgent goal of achieving 50/50 gender distribution in all categories of posts within the United Nations system;
 - The Resolution welcomes the inclusion of the objective of improving gender balance in action plans on human resources management for individual departments and offices, and encourages further cooperation between heads of departments and offices, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Office of Human Resources Management;
 - Welcomes the designation of focal points for women in peacekeeping operations, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the focal points are designated at a sufficiently high level and enjoy full access to senior management in the mission area;
 - Expresses concern that, in five departments and offices of the Secretariat, women still account for less than 30 per cent of staff;
 - The General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to continue to monitor closely the progress made by departments and offices in meeting the goal of gender balance and to ensure that the appointment and promotion of suitably qualified women will not be less than 50 per cent until the goal of 50/50 gender distribution is met, inter alia through full implementation of the special measures for women and the further development of monitoring and assessment mechanisms to meet targets for improving women's representation;
 - Requests the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to create a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, including the development of policies for flexible working time, flexible workplace arrangements and child-care and elder-care needs, as well as the provision of more comprehensive information to prospective candidates and new recruits on employment opportunities for spouses and the expansion of gender-sensitivity training in all departments, offices and duty stations;
 - Encourages Member States to support the efforts of the UN and the specialized agencies to achieve the goal of 50/50 gender distribution, especially at senior and policy-making levels, by identifying and regularly submitting more women candidates for appointment to intergovernmental, judicial and expert bodies; identifying and proposing national recruitment sources that will assist in identifying suitable women candidates, in particular from developing countries and countries with economies in transition; and encouraging more women to apply for positions within the Secretariat, the specialized agencies and funds and in the field of peacekeeping and peace-building.
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Special programme on flexible work schedules by the Group on Equal Rights for Women (GERWUN)

More than 60 staff members gathered in November 2000 to hear two speakers from Catalyst, a non-profit research and advisory organization working to advance women in business, to discuss the results of their recent survey on flexible work schedules in the private sector. Dr. Marcia Brumit Kropf, Vice President, Research and Information Services; and Ms. Meredith J. Moore, Senior Associate, Research and Advisory Services, recently concluded a two-year study called "A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation".

Ms. Marcia Brewster, President of GERWUN briefed the participants on a proposal developed by the JAC Task Force on Work/Life Issues on flexible working arrangements for UN staff. In this proposal it is recommended that the Secretary-General implement a more flexible and expanded part-time work programme which would include a greater choice of work schedules running from 50 to 90 per cent of normal working hours. Staff members would be responsible for proposing the arrangement to their managers, including the percentage/working hour time frame, length of the planned period of part-time employment, and a revised workplan.

The Catalyst speakers discussed the effectiveness of part-time work arrangements in the private and service sector organizations they studied. Corporations are facing pressure to increase flexibility at work due to evolving business needs, for example, the need to provide 24-hour coverage; technological advances that facilitate working from home, and a much larger percentage of women entering the workforce. The benefits to the company of flexible work schedules include: the ability to attract and retain talented employees; a higher level of staff commitment and loyalty to the organization; reduced absenteeism and tardiness; a reputation for commitment to work/life issues; and improved customer services, productivity and teamwork.

They admitted that there is resistance by some managers who believe that work-hours are an indicator of productivity and part-time employees are stereotyped as being less committed to work. Accommodations must be made in the workplan of part-time employees. Flexible work schedules also can create stress for the employee and resentment on the part of colleagues. However, a successful flexible plan can help the employee maintain professional visibility, while attending to important family matters.

The representatives from Catalyst cautioned that when considering flexible work arrangements employees should understand what is available and recognize the trade-offs; whereas supervisors should realize that there are benefits to both the organization and the employee.

FLASH FLASH FLASH...

- First Summit meeting of Arab First ladies in Cairo, 18-20 November 2000: The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. Angela E. V. King participated in this meeting organized by the League of Arab States, the National Council of Women of Egypt and the Al-Hariri Foundation of Lebanon.

The First Ladies or directors of national machineries for women's advancement spoke on the main themes of the summit: women and information technology, economic empowerment, stereotypical attitudes towards women and women's role in peace. All the speakers expressed deep concern about the escalating violence and loss of life particularly among children in the Middle East. Many speakers referred to the Beijing Platform for Action and Beijing+5 and spoke of the challenges of poverty, illiteracy, peace, traditional attitudes and violence against women.

- First woman has been appointed to head a UN police contingent from New Zealand. Inspector Ms. Paula Stevens will head a team of 14 officers to UNTAET/East Timor for a six-month deployment.

Contributions from readers

Network receives regularly requests from different duty stations and field offices of UN agencies to receive copies and to be put on the email list. Thank you for your continued support.

Dear Readers ... If there is any manager--female or male--that you would like to recognize as someone who shares our commitment to improving the status of women in the Secretariat, let us know. We will highlight her/his work in our next issue.

Read Network on-line at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/fpnetworks.htm>

NETWORK--The UN Women's Newsletter

Editor-in-Chief: Fatma Ashour, Focal Point for Women

Design and Layout: DPI

Production team: Johanna Klinge and Rosemarie Waters, OSAGI/DESA

Printed by the UN Department of Public Information, New York

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