



**DAWN Statement on the Launch of UN Women
CSW 55, New York, February 2011**

Women's movements and women's rights advocates have reason to cheer and celebrate the launching of the UN Women. In the entire history of the United Nations, it is the only entity that was primarily created in response to the worldwide clamor and mobilization of women's movements!

Nevertheless, the timing of the launch cannot be more challenging. The world remains gripped by a long-drawn global economic crisis and the United Nations has been told to be more efficient in its operations. We reiterate that funding for UN Women is a critical concern and Member-States must ensure that its funding is significantly scaled up so that both normative and operational functions can be effectively realized. We are particularly concerned that sufficient funding is secured for programs and presence at regional as well as country levels.

Will the UN Women be doing things differently or will this be just a difference in name? For one, there still appears to be a clear divide between the normative and the operational functions, which need to be held together more organically so as to create synergy between the two. We cannot simply have an aggregate of what existed before. Moreover there is the question of its working relationship with the women's movements. In the past, many of us in civil society provided free labor to one or the other existing entities on women. What will be its new ways for doing things differently?

As the CSW55 formal meetings and numerous events happen in New York, the UN Women is rushing through its national and regional consultations throughout the world. We encourage women's organizations to participate in these consultations but we question the haste and abruptness of it all. We also raise the issue of how some feminine bureaucrats and gatekeepers from the women's movements that have been allocated representational status may arise in the process. We must engage but we also need to be vigilant and to break this process open!

We strongly believe a mechanism for Civil Society engagement with UN Women must be both at normative and operational levels. This will ensure an impact on UN Women's governance, program and accountability to women's organizations. While UN Women seeks to engage experts and stakeholders in expert group meetings, at the operational level this engagement must be established through effective mechanisms whereby local and regional expertise is both sought and represented. In this manner local and regional expertise will not be ad hoc in nature but will be built into the operational structures of UN Women.

Together with other women's organizations, DAWN is deeply concerned about the absence of a CSO member on the Executive Board. Pragmatism tells us that a call for a non-voting CSO member already gives us an important foothold in the overall governance of UN Women. But this cannot be a stand-alone demand or it will easily descend into tokenism. We need multiple processes and representations to make our engagement with UN Women more meaningful and vibrant.

As we celebrate the launch of the UN Women let us not forget –

UN Women is there FOR us but it is NOT us! It is a UN entity that we still have to hold to account and be answerable to us!!!