



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
Ambassador Hjálmar W. Hannesson
Permanent Representative of Iceland
to the United Nations**

**On behalf of the Nordic Countries,
Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**

**Informal consultations on System-Wide Coherence
- Gender -**

8 September 2008

iceland

**First time candidate to the
Security Council 2009-2010**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**www.iceland.org/un/nyc
www.iceland.org/securitycouncil**

**The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations
800 Third Ave. 36th fl. - Tel 212-593-2700. - Fax 212-593-6269**

I have the honor to take the floor on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland.

As we are in the final days of this 62nd Session of the General Assembly, let me begin by thanking the Co-Chairs for their excellent efforts during the Assembly's informal consultations on System-wide coherence. We also appreciate their comprehensive report, the recommendations of which we can broadly support.

The Nordic countries are particularly content with the consultations we have had so far on an issue of primary importance: namely the work of the UN in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment. In our view, the process on this issue, following the appointment of the Co-Chairs in January, has been exemplary: it has been characterized not only by openness and transparency, but also by the ambition and the sense of urgency it deserves.

We have come far since our first meeting in January. The important role of the United Nations' system in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment has been recognized by all. However, it has been made clear to us that gaps in coherence, accountability, authority and resources have plagued the system, rendering it incapable of living up to expectations of Member States. We have been presented with four options on how to address those gaps, and we warmly thank the Deputy-Secretary General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro for her document on *Institutional Options to Strengthen UN's Work on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*.

The time is ripe for the Member States to take concrete steps to strengthen the UN's work on gender equality and women's empowerment. In the Nordic countries' view, status quo is not an option. We believe that the best outcome would be achieved by merging the present gender units to one UN entity headed at USG level. Option four – the composite entity – seems to best address the current gaps and challenges.

We believe that for further deliberations in the General Assembly, it is important that Member States receive guidance from the UN System on what institutional arrangement the practitioners themselves, the experts, view as being best suited to optimizing the UN's work on gender.

We would therefore encourage the Secretary General to develop a concrete proposal in this regard, based on the ongoing consultations within the system, as well as with Member States, to be presented to Member States during the 63rd Session of the General Assembly.

The importance of strengthening the United Nations system's work on gender equality and women's empowerment is indisputable. We have made considerable progress so far, and it is our strong conviction that we need to build upon the current momentum, with the aim of taking an informed decision on this important issue during the 63rd session of the General Assembly. The five Nordic countries look forward to working with all towards that end.