

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**8 March 2008**

At the 2005 World Summit, Governments of all nations agreed that “progress for women is progress for all”. Yet the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action revealed a serious gap between policy and practice in many countries. A lack of political will is reflected in the most telling way of all: lack of resources and insufficient budgetary allocations. That is why the theme of this International Women’s Day is “Investing in Women and Girls”.

This failure of funding undermines not only our endeavours for gender equality and women’s empowerment as such; it also holds back our efforts to reach all the Millennium Development Goals. As we know from long and indisputable experience, investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity and sustained economic growth. No measure is more important in advancing education and health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as likely to improve nutrition, or reduce infant and maternal mortality.

We do have some progress to build on. Financial resources have been mobilized in increasing women’s employment, enhancing the role of microfinance, advancing credit for enterprises for women, and driving public finance reforms. More than 50 countries have launched gender-responsive budgeting initiatives. The private sector is scaling up efforts to finance women’s economic empowerment, and women’s funds and foundations are emerging as innovative sources of financing.

But we must do more. All of us in the international community -- Governments, multilateral Organizations, bilateral institutions and the private sector -- need to calculate the economic costs of persistent gender inequality, and the resources required to remedy it. We need to create mechanisms for tracking investments in gender equality. We need to monitor and report resource allocations on a regular basis. We need to adjust domestic budgets as well as international aid flows to real needs, and ensure that they are sustained.

In the United Nations family too, we need to better match demands with resources. The resources available for gender mainstreaming must be made more sustainable and predictable -- particularly at the regional and country levels. And to make a real difference, our gender-specific machinery needs funding that is commensurate with the challenges. I firmly believe that one dynamic and strengthened gender entity, consolidating resources currently scattered among several structures, would attract better funding from the donor community. By mobilizing forces of change at the global level, and inspiring enhanced results at the country level, such an entity would better advance our cause to empower women and realize gender equality worldwide. I urge Member States to muster the political will to bring the consultations on this issue to a successful conclusion.

This year we find ourselves at the mid-point in the race to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. Only by investing in the world’s women and girls can we expect to reach our destination. On this International Women’s Day, let us resolve to unite in this mission.