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High-level UN forum stresses role of women in advancing global development



ECOSOC in session

2 July 2010 – The annual high-level meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) concluded today with Member States stressing the need for greater investment in women and girls and outlining concrete steps to advance gender equality and empower women.

In a ministerial declaration adopted at the end of its week-long meeting, the 54-member Council stressed the need to invest more in women and girls, which is essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) – the set of eight human development and poverty eradication targets with a 2015 deadline.

The Council's action comes on the same day that the General Assembly voted unanimously to create a single UN body tasked with accelerating progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

The new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – or UN Women – will merge four of the world body's agencies and offices: the UN Development Fund for Women ([UNIFEM](#)), the Division for the Advancement of Women ([DAW](#)), the [Office](#) of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women ([UN-INSTRAW](#)).

The President of ECOSOC, Hamidon Ali, welcomed the creation of UN Women, noting that gender equality and the empowerment of women remain at the very heart of the realization of the MDGs.

"In that context, UN Women will reinforce our UN development agenda and help us achieve the MDGs by 2015," he told a news conference in New York following the conclusion of the Council's high-level segment.

In today's declaration, the Council reaffirmed "the vital role of women as agents of development," and stressed that achieving MDG 3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women is essential to the achievement of all the Goals.

Member States also emphasized, among other things, the need to strengthen the full integration of women into the formal economy, boost national and international efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and improve access to health systems for women and girls.

As part of its current session, ECOSOC held a high-level panel today on "Gender and Biodiversity" at which Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro **stressed** that, all around the globe, women are central to preserving the incredible variety of life on Earth.

And yet, too often the gender component of development is overlooked, she noted.

"We need concrete targets and a new vision for conserving Earth's biological diversity for the benefit of all," she stated. "And that vision must encompass gender."

ECOSOC's week-long high-level segment featured the Development Cooperation Forum, which centred on development cooperation in times of crises, the Annual Ministerial Review, which focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and a policy dialogue on the state of the world economy.

The Council will continue its 2010 substantive session, which is scheduled to end on 23 July, with a coordination segment, an operational activities segment, a humanitarian affairs segment, and a general segment.

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