



The International Council of Nurses applauds the success of the Resolution to establish a UN Agency for Women

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 September 2009 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) welcomes and applauds this week's UN General Assembly unanimous decision* to create a new United Nations (UN) agency for women, mandated to vigorously strengthen UN work on gender equality and women's empowerment and giving Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon authority to immediately appoint an Under Secretary-General to lead it. The decision comes after three years of negotiations following the strong recommendation from the UN High Level Coherence Panel delivered to the Secretary General in 2006**. The Resolution and other related statements can be accessed here www.icn.ch/waa.htm.

"ICN calls upon the Secretary General to move swiftly in appointing a qualified Under-Secretary General, and rapidly initiating all process to have the agency functioning this year", declared David Benton, ICN's Chief Executive Officer. "The new agency must be staffed in every country with the expertise to carry out targeted programmes and to provide the assistance that governments and the whole UN system require to effectively mainstream gender into every policy, plan and programme. And if gender equality is to be elevated from an ideal on paper to a reality on the ground, the new agency will require initial donor funding of USD1billion. We ask everyone who is concerned with the health of families and communities and the improvement of the human condition to pull out all the stops in getting the new agency up and running"

ICN wants to also highlight and commend the extraordinary contribution of civil society, including individual nurses and nurses' organisations at country, regional and international level, during the past three years of work towards the new women's agency. The informed and consistent advocacy on the part of civil society has brought UN representatives to understand the urgency of reform in the gender structures of the United Nations, identify gaps and barriers and focus their deliberations. It is essential that this critically important dialogue continue during the process of implementing the resolution and once the women's agency is operational.

"There is much work for this new UN agency. Women and girls and indeed all citizens and communities can wait no longer for the UN to address the unacceptable gender inequity which leads to poverty, poor access to health care, inadequate education, exposure to violence and a host of social, economic, political and cultural factors that adversely affect the health and well-being of women and girls worldwide", Mr Benton elaborated. "The healthy development of all citizens and communities is inextricably tied to the education and empowerment of women and the strengthening of their health. Where women participate on an equal footing, societies flourish, conflicts are minimised and economies strengthen. The absolute importance of gender equity in all realms of life and areas of social and economic development cannot be understated."

Editor's Notes

****Selected points from the Resolution on System Wide Coherence on gender adopted by the UN General Assembly:**

1. *Strongly supports* the consolidation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), the Division for the Advancement of Women

(DAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the advancement of Women (INSTRAW), into a composite entity, taking into account the existing mandates;

2. *Supports* that the composite entity shall be led by an Under-Secretary-General, who will report directly to the Secretary-General, to be appointed by the Secretary-General in consultation with Member States, on the basis of equitable geographical representation and gender balance:

****Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System Wide Coherence Recommendation 8:** A dynamic UN entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment should be established.

Three existing UN entities (UNIFEM, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women) will be consolidated into one enhanced and independent gender entity. It will have a stronger normative and advocacy role, combined with a targeted programming role. The gender entity will be fully and ambitiously funded. Gender equality will be a component of the One UN Country Programme, and remain the responsibility of all UN organizations.

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally since 1899 ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.

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