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## **ICN calls for a sound plan to ensure the new UN Women's Agency will work for women and gender equality**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 10 March 2010** – On the occasion of International Women's Day, the International Council of Nurses is expressing concern that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's comprehensive proposal for the new Women's Agency falls short of a sound plan to address women's rights and gender equality. "From the outset ICN, along with other key non-governmental and governmental representatives, has maintained that the new women's agency be led by a qualified Under-Secretary General and staffed in every country with the authority, expertise and budget 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. Unfortunately, the plan presented by the Secretary General in January this year does not propose a structure nor the required budget of at least initial funding of USD1billion," stated David Benton, ICN's Chief Executive Officer.

The Secretary General's Report "*Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women*", can be accessed here [www.icn.ch/waa.htm](http://www.icn.ch/waa.htm) . A critique of the *Report* by Stephen Lewis and Paula Donovan, co-Directors of AIDS-Free World, is also posted on [www.icn.ch/waa.htm](http://www.icn.ch/waa.htm). ICN supports this critique.

ICN is particularly concerned in relation to 3 critical points:

**1. *That the Women's Agency be staffed in every country with the authority and expertise to carry out targeted programmes:***

The functions and staffing arrangements proposed the Secretary General's Report paint the picture of a Women's Agency with a purely advisory role: a cobbling together of existing and until now ineffective UN gender programmes (UNIFEM, DAW, INSTRAW and OSAGI). The new agency must have sufficient resources, authority and country operational capacity to address the serious weaknesses of the gender programmes of all UN agencies.

**2. *That the Women's Agency have sufficient budget to carry out targeted programmes in every country:***

The USD 375 million suggested in the *Report* for the first year of the agency's operational work is simply not sufficient. Compared to the estimated USD 5.5 billion for Unicef in 2010-11 or the USD 10.3 billion the World Bank suggests will be needed to achieve MDG 3 – to promote gender equity and empower women, it is more than modest.

In addition the Report states that country-level activity will depend on the resources available. How can effective country programmes be possible without predictable funding?

### **3. When and how will the new Under Secretary-General be chosen?**

The Resolution to establish the new gender entity was passed on 16 September 2009, but the process to recruit the best possible person to lead the agency is still unclear and un-started. ICN is calling for a global, fair and transparent process, without preferred consideration to UN insiders or the candidates put forward by special interests.

#### **Editor's note**

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, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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