

Any merger must follow a principled stand, recognising women's rights as human rights. UN80 reform and financial crisis strictures should not undermine the importance of entities that serve over 50 per cent of the world population. Efficiency matters, but that which matters even more is empowering women through gender-transformative systems and structures.

When considering how to vote on merging UN Women and UNFPA, States must take account of the following:

- are mergers genuinely the best way out of a financial mess? Is not pressure to have UN dues paid better; and use of Charter's Article 19 on voting restrictions for non-payers.
- is it because of the backlash against women's rights that these two entities have been singled out for merger?
- what other merger options have been considered e.g. with WHO, UNAIDS, IOM?
- are the "savings" data/graphics that have been prepared scientifically reliable for persuading a vote in favour of the merger e.g. premises savings should have been achieved with the One UN measures years ago? Will the projected savings (over 3 years after a merger) be directed to women's rights or absorbed into other UN budget shortfalls?
- If the merger proceeds, the title of UN Women must remain, and its mandate as the lead entity for gender equality preserved, subsuming the specific SHSR mandate of UNFPA. Do not reinvent the wheel.
- a stronger awareness/marketing strategy is required for UN Women's successes to be better known & respected, and UN Women's field structure must be better coordinated with UN Country Teams and Regional Programs.
- UN Women should be endowed with a more visible leadership role for women's rights across the UN system, while respecting gender mainstreaming in the mandates of all funds, programs and specialised agencies which could report more frequently through e.g. a coordinating council, or within the CEB annual meetings.
- on funding, we recommend a gender budgeting exercise to be undertaken in all Member States so that a genuinely clear picture of how national budgets address women's rights can be ascertained, with results tabled before the General Assembly in the interests of transparency and honesty.
- on civil society organization (CSO) involvement, if the merger proceeds: existing and new partnerships must be forged and strengthened so that the benefits of normative and developmental measures truly reach all women e.g. by giving CSOs better visibility in governance structures such as the coordinating council suggested above; and by directing funds directly to local CSOs.