

## Summary Report of UN Women Structural and Funding Discussions

Date: July 30, 2026

Participants: Multiple stakeholders including representatives from NGOs, academic institutions, and international networks

### Core Message

Women's rights are fundamental human rights and must remain central to all UN reforms. Decades of progress

in establishing a global architecture for gender equality must be protected from dismantling or dilution.

While efficiency in organizational processes is valuable, the true measure of success is the positive impact on women and girls' lives.

Any structural changes require compelling evidence that they enhance outcomes; otherwise, they threaten to weaken visibility, leadership, and accountability.

The consensus emphasizes safeguarding UN Women's core principles, accountability, and visibility, regardless of structural changes.

Maintain a strong, independent women's voice as a cornerstone for global gender equality efforts.

### Main Concerns and Positions

#### 1. Funding and Budgetary Concerns

A key issue is the insufficient and unreliable funding from member states, with many countries failing to pay dues. The problem is historical - not new. The solution is securing sustainable, long-term commitments rather than organizational restructuring.

#### 2. Ineffective Mergers

Proposed mergers—particularly the idea of integrating UN Women with other agencies—are strongly opposed. The consensus is that such mergers risk weakening women's independent voice, reducing visibility, and diluting expertise. Instead, the focus should be on safeguarding UN Women's autonomy and core principles.

#### 3. Resource Diversification

Expanding funding sources, especially from the private sector, is crucial. Corporate partnerships and donations are viewed as legitimate and necessary complements to government contributions.

#### 4. Organizational Integrity

Maintaining UN Women as a standalone, autonomous entity is essential to uphold accountability, feminist principles, and women's leadership. S

#### 5. Language and Terminology

The use of inclusive, feminist language and terminology in discussions is vital to legitimize women's rights and foster transparency.

### Strategic Recommendations

#### Address Funding

Secure long-term, sustainable commitments from member states.

Rebalance financial contributions, especially from countries lagging in dues.

Engage the private sector through partnerships, tax incentives, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

#### Protect UN Women's Independence

Ensure UN Women remains a strong, autonomous entity within the UN system.

Maintain its mandates, accountability, and visibility, preventing dilution through mergers.

### Enhance Organizational Efficiency

Focus on back-office sharing, administrative efficiencies, and shared services without merging mandates that protect women's rights.

### Evidence-Based Reform

Refrain from implementing reforms lacking clear, substantive evidence of improving outcomes for women and girls.

Take time for all the consultations to take place without undue haste.

Develop scholarly, high-level reports to support advocacy efforts and inform decision-makers.

### Ensure Women's Leadership

Maintain women's representation at decision-making levels within UN and national institutions to keep gender equality a priority.

## **Position on Mergers**

The group rejects merging UN Women with other entities, citing risks such as:

- Loss of independent voice and visibility

- Reduced accountability

- Dilution of expertise and focus on women's rights

Support for merging UNFPA with WHO exists, given their closer alignment on health issues, but the preference remains for UN Women to operate independently, emphasizing that women's rights are non-negotiable human rights. There is a concern that UNFPA lacks a feminist perspective and is less aligned with women's rights.

Participants stressed the importance of evidence-based evaluation before any merger decisions are finalized.

## **Further discussion points**

### Centralization of Funding

A recurring theme was the proposal to centralize funding within a systematic framework. The idea is that all expenditures at the national and international levels, should be allocated directly to the relevant sectors.

### Payment Compliance

Significant concern was expressed over countries, not paying their dues. Strategies suggested include lobbying governments, applying sanctions under the UN Charter (Article 19), and campaigning to enforce payment, especially targeting large countries that lag behind. It was noted that this is not a new problem. The importance of tracking unpaid dues, ensuring sanctions are enforced, and transparency in fund allocation was underscored.

### Private Sector Engagement

There is a recognized need to expand funding sources beyond member states. Engaging corporations for support, possibly through tax rebates or partnerships, was identified as a potential avenue for increasing financial support to UN Women.

Recognizing corporate contributions as an essential funding source, with some noting successful collaborations within UN initiatives like the Global Compact.

### Funding Effectiveness

Questions were raised about how funds are utilized and whether they effectively support women and girls globally. There is a call to ensure funding priorities align with women's rights and gender equality outcomes.

### Gender budgeting

All MS should undertake gender budgeting

Emphasize gender-responsive budgeting and holding governments accountable for equitable funding commitments.

## Nationalism

We live on one planet and face global challenges, the solutions cannot be anything but global and transcend national boundaries. We therefore need to question the current UN system whereby MS appear to think of their best interests instead of the best interests of the whole of humanity.

## History

It was noted that women were also not considered when there was discussion on UN reform in the 2000s. However civil society across the world worked together to encourage the formation of a single entity at the UN merging the existing ones into UN Women.

## Status Quo

There were concerns over the too fast pace for this merger suggestion. There was a desire to speak out strongly for more consultation and time before any decision is made and question the authority to make it at this UNGA at all.

## Advocacy

Advocacy at the highest levels—UN Secretary-General, national governments, diplomats—is essential.

## 4. Protecting Women's Rights and Voice

### Avoiding Diminution of Gender Architecture

There is strong consensus that women's rights should not be compromised under the guise of efficiency reforms. The focus remains on protecting the mandates and visibility of UN Women.

### Data and Evidence

The need for scholarly research and data collection was highlighted to counter proposals that lack evidence of improving outcomes for women and girls.

### Representation

Maintaining women's representation at decision-making levels within UN and national structures is vital to ensure gender priorities remain central.

## 5. Terminology

Language matters - marginalizing women through exclusion of feminist terminology undermines legitimacy. There is a need to incorporate the terms feminism, power differential, women's human rights including abortion rights because using these means the system hears and sees these terms and is thus challenged to take responsibility to make decisions about what to do about their use.

It is vital that truth-telling transparency is created.

Power differential is foundational knowledge for achieving SDGs addressing women and girls equality and critical issues related to VAWGs.

## 6. Advocacy and Political Action

### Engagement with Governments

Participants emphasized the importance of lobbying national governments and diplomats, particularly through the Foreign Office and ministries responsible for human rights and gender issues.

### Campaign Strategies

Steps include increasing noise around issues like unpaid dues, gender budgeting, and women's representation. Mobilizing civil society and NGOs to advocate at multiple levels—national, regional, and international—is seen as crucial.

### Influence of Diplomats

Young diplomats within governments often support gender equality initiatives; engaging them could be pivotal in influencing policy.

## **Recommendations**

### **Funding**

1. Consider more centralised funding allocation based on global need rather than political priorities.
  1. Structures could include replicating countries fund allocated directly to causes that relate to their impact on the world.
  2. Ultimately, newer and stronger funding structures that provide a fair allocation of cost, to unify the aim of the United Nations to work for the betterment of the world, and not for individual countries interests.
2. Implement the use of traditional forms of fundraising strategies, such as engaging with corporate partnerships, major donors, and funds & grants. With a strong structure in place, stipulating mitigation of coercive influence from donation.
3. Ensure Member States pay and reduce voting rights if they do not.

### **Governance and Accountability**

1. Strengthen accountability and safeguarding of programmes that UN Women have implemented that provide a unique contribution to the United Nations and the worlds insights.
  1. UN Women aids MS on the development of laws, shape policies, and monitor progress. The UN Women's structures allow the dynamics towards the UN to be their principal gender policy adviser, such as the advocacy of CEDAW implementation, Beijing Platform for Action, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and monitoring SDGs.
  2. UN Women also holds all other UN agencies to account on gender equality, in the UN system-wide coordination, such as on programmes like UN-Swap, gender mainstreaming, and coordination across Resident Coordinators.
  3. UN Women hold the largest and strongest Civil Society relationships with governments regarding gender. The use of civil society in CSW acts as a normative role supporting and guiding the implementation of international gender commitments.
  4. UN Women focuses on women's economics, including Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), feminist economics, and care economics. Their research has a wide variety of areas including Gender-sensitive measurement, as well as data gaps, creating and establishing gender sensitive methodologies that innovate and help bring in stronger datasets. UN Women cover the nuanced of gendered implications in a wide variety of areas that help build the empowerment and structures to create forms of equality.
2. Ensure these unique attributes and characteristics of UN Women are protected, with strong protections in place.
3. Ensure Civil Society voice.
4. Clearly divide responsibilities between agencies to eliminate duplication. Introduce shared back-office services, similar to models used by many smaller NGOs.

### **Next Steps and Action Items:**

Prepare and circulate a comprehensive report capturing group discussions.

Develop a letter for UN Member States urging payment compliance.

Consider drafting a shadow report addressing the efficacy of proposed reforms.

Engage with governments and diplomats to advocate for a strong, well-funded, and independent entity at the UN for women and girls.

Continue advocacy for gender-responsive budgeting and increased visibility for women's rights issues.

Draft and submit a scholarly shadow report highlighting:

Women's participation in decision-making

The importance of resisting organizational mergers

The role of private sector funding

Amplify advocacy efforts by engaging civil society, NGOs, and supportive policymakers.

Coordinate with governments to sustain or increase funding, emphasizing the importance of gender equality.

Build alliances with diplomatic allies to influence upcoming UN decisions, especially at the General Assembly and CSW.

**Concluding thoughts**

The consensus affirms that women's rights are human rights. Any UN reform must prioritize impact over administrative convenience. The overarching goal is to empower women and girls, preserve their visibility and leadership, and safeguard the core principles that have advanced gender equality over decades. Protecting and strengthening UN Women's independence and influence remains paramount to ensuring continued progress globally. Structural reforms are important and funding challenges are significant. However civil society using evidence-based arguments must strive to influence the current debate, stop the proposed merger and ensure multi-level engagement to advance the rights of women and girls at every level.

Prepared by:  
Zarin Hainsworth  
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