

STATEMENT BY THE NGO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, GENEVA Coordination Without Consolidation: Strengthening the UN's Commitment to Women and Girls

Position Statement on the UN80 Proposal on Institutional Restructuring of UN Women and UNFPA

Background

In response to ongoing discussions surrounding a proposed merger of UN Women and UNFPA, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva encouraged members to hold consultations on the situation and provide actionable solutions.

This initiative yielded 15 comprehensive output documents. While participants brought different perspectives, a strong common thread emerged: the UN's commitment to all women and girls must be strengthened, not diluted, and the mandate and institutional capacity of UN Women must be protected.

Introduction

The report below consolidates key insights and recommendations stemming from the NGO CSW Geneva consultations on 31 July 2026. The collective feedback underscores the necessity of a robust, coordinated and adequately funded UN system that can deliver effectively on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Participants emphasized that reform should address the underlying challenges, particularly the funding crisis, implementation gaps and coordination weaknesses, rather than introduce structural change that could weaken established mandates or create further disruption.

There was a strong message that a merger of UN Women and UNFPA is not an option. A robustly funded single entity for all women and girls is vital for global governance. Therefore strengthening implementation, coordination, accountability and sustainable financing must take place.

Key Recommendations and Actionable Solutions

1. Protect the institutional mandate and strengthen delivery

There is broad agreement that the mandate of UN Women should be protected and strengthened. Opening the mandate to renegotiation might weaken UN Women rather than result in a stronger mandate. The importance of departments for women and girls in all UN entities was highlighted.

The principal concern is not only what might ultimately be decided, but the risk inherent in opening the question at all. Reopening the mandate signals that its core commitments are negotiable. Once opened, there is no guarantee that it can be closed again without changes that could weaken the normative and operational framework for all women and girls.

At a time when women's rights and gender equality are under increasing political and financial pressure, institutional certainty is particularly important.

2. Core Financial Realities Over Structural Duplication

The fundamental challenge facing the UN system is the persistent shortfall in Member State contributions and the resulting liquidity crisis, not institutional duplication between UN Women and UNFPA.

The current debate provides all stakeholders with the chance to strengthen the work for all women and girls. All participants in the discussions we initiated highlighted the need for this strong single entity whilst recognising the need for Member States and civil society to be able to reflect on its work.

Structural consolidation does not address the underlying cause of the current crisis. Priority should be given to secure predictable, adequate and sustainable financing for the UN's work on women and girls. Whilst the June 2026 decision not to return credits to Member States was a positive step and provided some temporary relief, it does not resolve the structural funding problem. Temporary financial relief cannot substitute for a sustainable financing solution.

Addressing the root cause of the financial crisis is critical and a long term solution, rather than treating institutional restructuring as a means to solve a more fundamental problem.

When Member States do not fulfil their agreed contributions to the UN, this signals a concern over the work of the UN itself. This is not a new challenge. The current situation serves as a timely opportunity for Member States to consult on their underlying concerns. There has never been a more urgent time for strong global governance and solidarity to assist humanity in facing the growing challenges of climate crisis and conflict. Yet the current system maintains national sovereignty as a primary concern over the well-being of the world.

3. Strengthening Civil Society Voices and Space

The consultations highlighted that citizens enable national and international governance mechanisms and civil society is a driving force, operational partner and accountability mechanism for global commitments. Any structural overhaul should strengthen, not diminish, formal avenues for NGO engagement. Any reform framework must treat NGOs as partners in policy delivery working within the UN system for women and girls and provide strong mechanisms for their full engagement. UN Boards should include civil society membership.

4. Questioning the Process

A key element raised in the civil society consultations was the speed and manner of the proposed merger discussions. It was felt that there has been insufficient time for full collection of evidence and data. Furthermore, some felt that feminist perspectives have been lacking in the process and this is one of the reasons why the UN is not as effective as it could be: the feminist voice should be given more value, not less.

One clear element is that any assessment of proposed restructuring must distinguish clearly between who bears the costs and who receives the projected savings.

The projected annual savings associated with restructuring accrue to the UN system as a whole, rather than directly to UN Women or UNFPA. At the same time, the costs of reorganization, transition and institutional disruption would be borne by the entities themselves and could affect their programs, personnel and delivery capacity.

This creates an important question of cost-benefit distribution: savings cannot be considered meaningful if they are achieved at the expense of the operational capacity required to deliver for all women and girls.

Any financial case for restructuring should therefore be based on transparent, independently verifiable and sufficiently detailed data, including transition costs, implementation costs, potential program disruption and the actual destination of projected savings.

Most importantly, savings should not become an end in themselves. Resources released through genuine efficiencies should be reinvested in advancing the rights and empowerment of all women and girls.

5. A Constructive Path Forward

The central message emerging from the discussions is clear:

Strengthen implementation and coordination of UN work for all women and girls. Protecting the existing normative framework and finding practical ways to improve delivery, coordination and accountability within it must be paramount. The desire for greater efficiency, stronger coordination and better results is legitimate. These objectives can be achieved without merging UN Women and UNFPA. Any discussion of possible conditions or safeguards that might apply if restructuring were nevertheless pursued should not become the headline position or be presented as an invitation to negotiate the mandate.

Conclusion

The consultations demonstrate a strong conviction in support of a more effective, coordinated and accountable UN system for all women and girls. The answer, however, should not be to weaken or reopen the mandate of the UN entity specifically established to advance gender equality.

The immediate priorities are clear: address the structural funding crisis, protect UN Women's mandate, strengthen implementation in the field, improve coordination and accountability, and ensure that efficiency gains translate into greater, not reduced, investment in all women and girls.

The objective should be coordination without consolidation, efficiency without dilution, and reform that strengthens rather than destabilizes the UN's commitment to the rights and empowerment of all women and girls.

Signatories

Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development
FAWCO (Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas)
Silver Lining for the Needy Initiative
Make Mothers Matter
Mothers Legacy Project
Widows for Peace and Democracy
International Alliance of Women (IAW)
NAWO (National Alliance of Women's Organizations UK)
Kernow Soroptimists, SIGBI, UK
Dr Jocelynne A Scutt, Chair and Trustee, WWAFE (Women Worldwide Advancing Freedom and Equality)
SecurityWomen
Council of Women's Organisations in Israel
Swadeka AHSUN, CSO/CEO, Gender, Peace & Security (in consultation with UNDESA)
Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights - Council of Women's Organisations in Portugal
International Council of Women (ICW-CIF)
National Council of Women of Canada
Mulher Século XXI – Associação de Desenvolvimento e Apoio às Mulheres
Graal Portugal
Dignidade
EOS - Associação de Estudos, Cooperação e Desenvolvimento
FCF - Fundação Cuidar o Futuro
AMCV - Associação de Mulheres Contra a Violência
Akto - Direitos Humanos e Democracia
APEM - Associação Portuguesa de Estudos sobre as Mulheres
ADDIM - Associação Democrática de Defesa dos Interesses e da Igualdade das Mulheres
ASM - Associação Ser Mulher
OVO PT – Observatório de Violência Obstétrica Portugal
MA - Associação Mulheres na Arquitectura
ACF - Associação Contra o Femicídio
National Council of Women of New Zealand
Cooperativa SEIES – Sociedade de Estudos e Intervenção em Engenharia Social
AMUSEF - Associação Mulheres Sem Fronteiras
United Voices For Global Impact
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN SOCIETIES (NCWS) NIGERIA
MEN Non - Association of Women of Sao Tome & Prince in Portugal
Indonesian Women's Congress (KOWANI)
Union des Femmes Monégasques
Netherlands Women Council, Nederlandse Vrouwen Raad (NVR)
Conseil national des femmes françaises (CNFF)
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National Council of Women Australia
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Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI)
Graduate Women International (GWI)
Widows Rights International (WRI)
Universal Peace Federation
ADVANCE

National Council of Women of Great Britain (NCWGB)
International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF)