



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
Ambassador Hjalmar W. Hannesson
Permanent Representative of Iceland
to the United Nations**

**on behalf of the Nordic Countries
Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**

Informal Consultations on System-Wide Coherence

Sixty-second Session of the General Assembly

7 February 2008

Iceland

**First time candidate to the
Security Council 2009-2010**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland.

Let me begin by congratulating the Ambassador of Ireland, Mr. Paul Kavanagh, and the Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr. Augustine P. Mahiga, on their appointment as the co-chairs of the System-wide Coherence deliberations during the 62nd General Assembly, and assure you of the Nordic countries' strong support in this important process.

As was indicated in the Co-Chairs letter to member states, the purpose of today's meeting is to focus on the current opportunities and challenges, taking a forward looking approach to the way ahead.

We think this is a very constructive approach, and would like to take this opportunity to address an important subject, namely the need to strengthen the United Nation's work in the area of gender.

The Nordic countries view the UN as playing a crucial role in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. We attach great importance to effective gender mainstreaming in UN's policies and programmes, and strongly support country-owned and demand driven gender-specific programs at the country level.

However, although considerable progress has been made in fulfilling the 2005 World Summit commitment to strengthening the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender, we believe that more needs to be done. In our view, the UN's work on gender is under-funded and frequently characterised by fragmentation and lack of coordination and accountability. Unfortunately, this means that the United Nations is often not sufficiently capable of supporting member states in their efforts to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Nordic countries support the recommendation of the High Level Panel to strengthen UN activities on gender equality. We agree that measures need to be taken to develop a UN system that is more responsive, coherent and accountable at all levels. In doing so, we think that the guiding principle should be that form follows function, and that focus must be on country delivery and results on the ground.

For that reason we think it is important that the next steps in our pursuit to strengthen UN's work on gender is to identify the gaps in delivery at the country level, and based on such an analysis, thoroughly examine the ways with which the UN can best address those gaps.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me emphasise, that for the UN to succeed in strengthening its work on gender, a strong dedication and leadership on behalf of senior management is crucial, as well as the Membership's sustained commitment. The importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to reach the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, has been recognized by all, and international commitments have been emphasised, and re-emphasised, on a number of occasion.

We sincerely hope that these commitments on gender will be reflected in the next steps we will take following our discussion here today, and that we will move forward on this important issue during this 62nd General Assembly. We look forward to working with other delegations in ensuring that this will indeed be the case.

Thank you