

Dear Friends and Partners,

Today is a historic day. This afternoon, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously decided to establish [UN Women](#), the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The creation of a strong UN organization that will be a champion to promote and advance the rights of women and girls worldwide has been a goal we have been advocating for many years, and I know that you will join me in celebrating and embracing this momentous achievement.

As you will know, UN Women will merge UNIFEM with its three existing sister UN entities working on gender issues — the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). For many years, we have effectively worked with national, regional and global partners to generate a stronger public policy response to previously under-recognized women's rights issues, such as ending violence against women, increasing women's political participation, and prioritizing women's leadership in forging peace and security.



At the same time, we have faced serious challenges in our efforts to support countries to implement commitments to gender equality, in part because of inadequate funding and because there was no single recognized driver to lead the UN response for gender equality support. This is why we wholeheartedly joined UN Member States and women's rights advocates in the call to strengthen the UN system to render even stronger support to the advancement of gender equality.

Today marks a great new beginning, not an end. The kind of work that UNIFEM has supported will continue as we merge into an institution that will be more robust and coherent, better positioned and resourced than the sum of its constituent parts. I count on all of you to continue to be with us on this exciting journey. Your support throughout the years and your tireless engagement on behalf of the world's women has made this success possible.

UN Women will become fully operational on 1 January 2011. It is important to note that until then we will continue to be fully operational as part of the new entity. Agreements made with UNIFEM, whether in the context of partnerships, programmes or funding arrangements, will then be transferred to and honoured by UN Women.

Over the past decades, there have been many achievements in advancing the women's rights and gender equality agenda, yet much still needs to be done. We now know that we will be stronger in pursuing our joint efforts for women and girls globally. Let's seize this moment, and the momentum, and work with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

Inés Alberdi
UNIFEM Executive Director