

## **Roundtable 4: Contributions of the United Nations Development System in response to the Crisis**

### **Contribution by the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development Read by Josefa Francisco, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era**

It is clear to everyone that this High Level Conference on Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development is a process led at the level of the United Nations Inter-governmental system. It is here in the United Nations General Assembly of representatives of states and governments where the political framework and concrete commitments on development are made and sealed. This, in turn guides the actual programming work of the United Nations Development System. We know only too well that these development programs are implemented in the developing world while funding pledges are largely made by the traditional donors.

We also know that the agencies of the UN Development System in their effort to sustain their programming have had to compete with more and more difficulty for both assessed and voluntary contributions, much like the developing countries that often need to go around the capitals of the developed economies or knock on the doors of the OECD-DAC, IMF and the WB for concessional grants, emergency loans, including fast track funding and now SDRs, whose funds tend to be increasingly inadequate and their provision marked by extreme conditionalities. We know for instance, that the ongoing UN Reform Process is very much about costs and cutbacks in so-called duplicate programs, and to a large extent is strongly influenced by how much or how less money will be made available to the UN Development System by the donor community.

If this is more or less an accurate picture of the state of financing for development within the UN Development System, it is rather surprising, in fact quite disappointing that most of the agencies in the UN Development System had opted to be largely on the sideline when the financial and economic crisis and its impact on development was being animatedly debated within the United Nations inter-governmental system. The fact that their partner NGOs and civil society organizations from the South were in the midst of the UNGA debates, did not seem to matter much. Could it be that the UN development agencies were more concerned with seeing that this Conference remains simply a pledging conference even as states and governments decided to act decisively on financial, systematic and structural issues? Has development work become so technicalized as to insulate it from political discussions of governance?

For women's rights organizations, the commitment of many UN development agencies to gender equality and rights-based approach to development is crucial in ensuring that our work on the ground and in policy spaces continues. While we support UN development agencies in their effort to acquire increased funding for women's programs (and also lament the decision of development agencies to close down gender offices as cost-cutting measure), we strongly hope that UN development agencies will be emboldened to question funding priorities where more money goes to military objectives and that they become more creative in promoting a more democratized global governance system that this UN conference had tried to place once more on the table of UN political discussions.