

**Concept Note for an ESCWA Annual Award for
Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
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I. Background

A UN policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women was endorsed by the Chief Executive Board (CEB) for Coordination in October 2006. Members of the CEB requested the establishment of a system wide action plan with clear timelines and allocation of a responsibility and accountability mechanism to operationalize the policy. In response to the CEB policy, the UN System Wide Action Plan (SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women was developed to provide an overarching framework for the UN. In 2012 the UN Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution to welcome the development of the SWAP and to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations System¹.

The SWAP is organized into six elements namely: accountability, results based management, oversight, human and financial resources, capacity, and coherence, knowledge and information management. The six elements are composed of fifteen performance indicators along which progress is measured as either “missing”, “approaches requirements”, “meets requirements” and “exceeds requirements”.

Results of the 2013 SWAP progress report showed that ESCWA reported “approaches requirements” for seven indicators, “meets requirements” for six indicators and did not “exceed requirements” for any indicators. For the remaining two indicators, ESCWA reported “missing”.

In order to advance progress towards the implementation of the SWAP in 2014, ESCWA identified several indicators for which activities can be implemented. One such indicator is “gender responsive performance management” under the “accountability” element. ESCWA is currently rated at “meets requirement” on this indicator since “respect of diversity and gender” is integrated into the core values and competencies of the organization. In addition, ESCWA Senior Manager’s Compact includes an objective to “accelerate efforts to advance the agenda for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women”. The Manager’s Compact also identifies a performance measure for “full compliance with UN SWAP baseline reporting requirement.”

In order to exceed requirements on “gender responsive performance management”, and “program review performance indicator” ESCWA will launch a system of recognition for outstanding and innovative work promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. The UN SWAP technical notes suggest that the recognition system could be in the form of a gender equality award, or allocation of resources to units which display excellent performance.

¹Resolution E/2012/24

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2012/24

The proposed award system is in line with ECOSOC Resolution 2006/36 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, which “calls on the UN system to strengthen accountability systems for both management and staff, through, inter alia, the inclusion of objectives and results related to gender mainstreaming in personnel work-plans and appraisals”². The award system is also at the heart of the UN accountability framework that encourages the establishment of a reward and sanction system. Accountability was defined by the Secretary General as “the obligation of the organization and its staff members to be answerable for delivering specific results that have been determined through a clear and transparent assignment of responsibility, subject to the availability of resources and the constraints posed by external factors. Accountability includes achieving objectives and results in response to mandates, fair and accurate reporting on performance results, stewardship of funds, and all aspects of performance in accordance with regulations, rules and standards, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions”³.

The Secretary General’s definition clearly sets obligations to the UN to establish and enforce an award system for outstanding performance and a sanction system for poor performance. To operationalize the concept of accountability in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women and to adhere to SWAP requirements, ESCWA will launch a reward system in this field.

II. Award for Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

The “***Award for Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women***” will be granted to a staff member or a team who contributed to the advancement of gender equality within ESCWA or member countries. The goal of the award is to recognize, acknowledge and motivate staff members who were able to contribute to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The award will be in the form of a recognition letter signed by the Executive Secretary and addressed to an ESCWA employee(s) who has/have excelled in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The award will be publically handed to the winner in a brief ceremony. A copy of the letter of recognition will be placed in the HR file of the award-winning and an announcement will be circulated via broadcast. In addition, a notation of the selection will be advertised on ESCWA’s webpage as a good practice for the organization in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

²ECOSOC Resolution 2006/36

<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2006/resolution%202006-36.pdf>

³Towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat Report of the Secretary-General. <http://www.un.org/en/strengtheningtheun/pdf/A-64-640.pdf>

III. Nomination Process

Nomination for the 2014 “*Award For Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*” will be submitted via email to Ms. Mehrinaz El Awady, SWAP Senior Coordinator (elawady@un.org) no later than September 1st, 2014.

Any staff member on the professional or the General Service level can nominate himself/herself or a team within the division or in another division. This can include managers nominating their subordinates or staff nominating their managers. Staff submission for nomination should be in the form of a maximum of two pages describing an initiative/programme/publication/activity that contributed to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Submission could be in Arabic or English and should answer the following questions:

- Describe the initiative/programme/publication/activity
- Why is it an outstanding activity?
- What has been the direct contribution/involvement of the nominee(s) to this activity?
- What are the challenges facing the implementation process, if any?
- How did the staff member / team overcome these obstacles?
- What is the impact of this activity on ESCWA and/or Member States?

IV. Review and Selection Process

A comprehensive and transparent review process will take place to ensure the selection of the best candidate. A panel will be formed comprising of the following members: Mr. Johannes Kratzheller, Chief HR and Ms. Mehrinaz El Awady, Senior SWAP Coordinator, and Mona Fattah, as an observer from the staff council. In addition, Ms. Asma Kurdahi, Assistant Representative, UNFPA will also serve as an external panel member.

The panel will meet several times to review the applications and propose two nominations for the Executive Secretary. Main responsibilities of the panel are as follows:

- Review and finalize selection criteria for the award on “Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”;
- Review staff applications;
- Recommend two nominations for the award;
- Prepare the certificate of recognition for the award-winner; and
- Advise the Executive Secretary on the process and make recommendations to strengthen it.

Selection will be based on meeting at least two of the following criteria:

- Innovative approach within the specific area of work of the division to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- Ability of the candidate/team to overcome financial and human limitation to advance the agenda of gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- Activity that supported or led to advancing gender equality within ESCWA;

- Activity that positively impacted policies / strategies developed by member countries in any socio-economic field;
- Activity that widely raised awareness on a specific gender issue.

V. Timeline

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| 1. Announce the launch of the award | Mid July 2014 |
| 2. Receive nomination | Beginning of September 2014 |
| 3. Hold panel meetings to review applications | Beginning of September – End of September |
| 4. Send nominations to the ES with a letter of recognition | Beginning of October 2014 |
| 5. Announce the award-winner | End of October 2014 |