

Introduction by George Okoth-Obbo, Director, Division of International Protection Services (DIPS) of EC/59/SC/CRP.14, “Report on Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming”

Thank you Mr Chairman.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning.

Yesterday, several delegations underscored the importance they attach to the efforts of UNHCR for the protection of women and girls. Some of the speakers were interested to receive information on the actions the Office is taking in these respects.

The paper you have before you for this agenda item, EC/59/SC/CRP.14, the “Report on Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming” provides an update on one of the most important institutional policy, programmatic and operational frameworks the Office has established to address objectives in this area of work. This is the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Approach, or AGDM in short. The AGDM is not an instrument uniquely applicable for only the protection, assistance or solutions needs of refugee women and girls. However, as the first part of the report, which provides a brief background as to its origins shows, it was elaborated as a major part of the response to evaluations in 2001 to 2003 which showed that the implementation by UNHCR of its policies on women, children and community services needed critical improvements. Thus, as summarized briefly on pages 1 and 2 of the report, a key objective of the AGDM, whose overall objective is to ensure gender equality and the enjoyment by persons of concern of their rights, regardless of age, gender and background, is to identify targeted action to address inequalities and support the empowerment of discriminated groups, in particular women and girls at risk.

Having been rolled out now in over 100 operations, the report summarizes between pages 2 and 3 some of the achievements of the AGDM, many of which have been referenced in the discussions yesterday, for instance the changes in the Office’s policies, planning and operational tools to reflect the essential requirements of the approach. For those delegations which, in their statements yesterday, indicated interest to continue supporting UNHCR’s work in this respect, pages 3 through to 5 of the report provide specific discussion points in that respect. Here, the Office has highlighted six main challenges which we continue to face in driving forward the objectives of AGDM, including a further consolidation required in the attitudes, leadership and accountability of,

particularly, managerial staff; the importance of co-ordination and partnership with other stakeholders, particularly NGOs; the need for more telling targeted actions; the further institutionalization of the AGDM strategy across the Office, for which a three year ACTION plan has been devised; building up the capacity of the Office; and the proposition that, so as to ensure availability and predictability in the resources required to support the objectives of AGDM, they should be programmed, provided and protected, or firewalled, in a non-negotiable way. As I have said, UNHCR will be interested indeed to hear the feedback of the membership on these issues.

Meanwhile, Mr Chairman, as delegations will know, the AGDM has an accompanying Accountability Framework whose implementation is overseen by the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection. First rolled out in May 2007, the first comprehensive analysis of performance has just been completed for those managers both at Headquarters and in the Field to whom it has been applied thus far. A side event has been scheduled for tomorrow, Thursday 26 June 2008, at which the Office will be pleased to share with States the results of this analysis. The event will take place in Conference Room XXVI from 13h30 to 14h30. We very much look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you Mr Chairman.