

**ACTSA Press Release**  
**7<sup>th</sup> July, 2009**

**ACTSA welcomes Government commitment for UN Women's Agency and requests clarity on amount pledged**

ACTSA welcomes the British Government's commitment to a powerful, visible UN Women's Agency in the Department for International Development's (DFID) white paper, requests clarification on funding pledged but remains concerned that countries such as Swaziland remain marginalised by DFID.

The British Government yesterday published its latest white paper on international development, "Building our Common Future". The paper includes a commitment to:

*"Push hard to conclude negotiations on the creation of a single, powerful UN agency for women with high level leadership, a broad mandate and first-class expertise ... The UK will at least double its core funding for the UN's work on women's equality through this new body...Support will be conditional on old structures being merged into the new agency, so that we reduce, not add to, the overall number of UN bodies".*

ACTSA welcomes this commitment from the British Government. It encourages Britain to continue to provide leadership on this issue and push other countries to also support the establishment of a UN Women's Agency with adequate resources.

ACTSA is concerned however that the criteria DFID uses to allocate its aid ignores inequality and issues of human rights and democracy in many countries. As a result there is no DFID country programme for Swaziland, which has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world and what is probably the world's longest state of emergency of over 35 years. In order to access British aid funding for development work in Swaziland organisations have to package their work as part of a wider regional programme. This naturally reduces the opportunity for local organisations to access DFID funding to support their work with communities.

ACTSA Director Tony Dykes commented, "There is much we welcome in the white paper and commend DFID and the British Government for. We welcome the clear commitment to a UN Women's Agency. We do need however to establish precisely what level of support is being pledged. It is important the UN Women's Agency is properly resourced. We welcome increased support for and recognition of the role of civil society groups including trade unions. We welcome support for fair trade and regional trade but are concerned that DFID continue to support the European Union's damaging Economic Partnership Agreements which many African countries have been pressurised into signing and will damage regional trade. We are also concerned that countries such as Swaziland seem to be marginalised by DFID."