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The UN Secretary-General retreats under pressure

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## UN Secretary-General Retreats Under Pressure

AIDS-Free World welcomes the UN Secretary-General's reversal of his appointment of 11 men and 3 women to a high-level panel. The panel was struck to review the UN's peace operations. The number of women on the panel has now been doubled, following our [letters and statements of protest](#) and mobilization of women's rights advocates.

Today's announcement was made to the media *"in response to questions on the composition of the Secretary-General's High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, announced on the last day of October, and the expressions of concern regarding the lack of sufficient gender representation within the panel's membership."*

AIDS-Free World called on proponents of gender equality to join forces: "Let's refuse to condone sexism at the highest level of the UN. Let's send a message back: Until you correct the gender imbalance of this panel, we refuse to cooperate with it. We pledge to ignore the panel's work, and we protest its very credibility."

Women's rights advocates responded to our call, uniting behind the decision not to cooperate with the panel, and gathering names of qualified female candidates to be forwarded to the Secretary-General.

A UN spokesperson told the media at noon today that, *"The Secretary-General has listened to these concerns and has appointed three additional women to the Panel..."* In addition, he has now appointed one of the six women panelists to serve as Vice Chair.

We are heartened to know that the voices of civil society were heard. We were encouraged by further evidence of that last week, when the Secretary-General appointed a separate high-level panel, and took pains to note that it comprised five women and five men. In recognition of today's positive action, we have now

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progress, we must also stress that it falls far short of gender parity—an internal UN goal that should have been reached by the year 2000.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon's continuing repudiation of full equality for women was underscored today by his spokesperson's closing remarks: *"The Secretary-General is confident that the addition of three eminent women and the role Ms. Haq will play as Vice-Chair will not only bring gender balance to the Panel but also enrich its work, particularly on issues relating to women, peace and security."*

An 11-man, 6-woman panel, with a man as chair and a woman as vice-chair, does not "bring gender balance" by anyone's reckoning. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations will be monitored closely by civil society. Transparency will be expected in every aspect of its work. The Secretary-General said that he must "do better." The world's women will hold him to account.



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