

ADVANCE UNE

1. At its 10th meeting, on 4 March 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women held a panel discussion followed by a dialogue on “Presentation of the review and appraisal processes at regional level -- achievements, gaps and challenges”. The panellists were: Josephine Ouedraogo, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission of Africa (ECA); Patrice Robineau, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE); Alicia Barcena-Ibarra, Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Thelma Kay, Chief, Emerging Social Issues Division, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); and Fatima Sbaity-Kassem, Director, Centre for Women, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). An issues paper prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women provided the framework for the discussion.
2. The panelists summarized the regional review processes and high-level regional meetings which had been supported by the regional commissions. They provided inputs to the 10-year global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly¹. These reviews had provided detailed insights into the situation of women, evaluated progress and identified challenges and areas requiring intensified efforts. They had highlighted region-specific issues, thus responding to the respective regional context. ECA’s primary focus had been on combating poverty. In the ECE region, particular attention had been paid to women in the economy, institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality, and trafficking in women. ESCAP’s review process had covered all critical areas of concern. ECLAC’s main focus had been on women’s poverty, economic autonomy and gender equality, and empowerment, political participation and institution-building. ESCWA had paid special attention to peace, and also addressed issues such as women’s illiteracy and poverty. The meetings had resulted in a reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the respective regional Platforms, and had stressed commitment to their full implementation. Implementation of the Beijing and regional Platforms also contributed to the implementation of other United Nations conferences and events, and towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
3. Panelists suggested that the process of implementing the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action at regional level had been characterized by strengthened cooperation between governments and civil society. Networks and partnerships had been established or strengthened among different stakeholders, and alliances among different groups of women had

¹ E/CN.6/2005/CRP.7 and Add. 1 to 5.

been reinforced. The regional commissions had played a catalytic role in bringing together different actors, including entities of the United Nations system.

4. While in general there had been progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, results varied from region to region and among countries, and in regard to various critical areas of concern. Panelists, for example, noted that in the area of participation in decision-making, women in Rwanda held a record 48.5 per cent of the seats in Parliament. In the ESCAP region, more than 20 per cent of parliamentarians were women. Women had also made significant gains in the ESCWA region, albeit from a very low base. The increasing number of women in local government especially through quotas and other affirmative action measures was an encouraging development.

5. National machineries and other institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women had been established or strengthened in all regions, although not uniformly or systematically. The important role of Parliament had been emphasized. The past decade had also witnessed women's successful and increased use of information and communications technologies and new media for policy advocacy and increased networking within countries and across borders.

6. In all regions, adherence to international human rights instruments of particular relevance to women had increased, and more attention was being paid to women's enjoyment of human rights. Laws had been adopted to eliminate discrimination against women and support women's equality in many areas, although conflicts persisted between customary, statutory and religious laws. Efforts to tackle violence against women had become more systematic.

7. Several panelists highlighted progress in girls' and women's education, noting that girls' enrolment rates were now equal to, and in some cases exceeded those of boys. Some regions where girls had lagged behind were well on the way to achieving the goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education. Panelists noted that particular attention had been given to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other health issues as they related to women, through awareness-raising, and in prevention and treatment. In some regions, visible progress had been made in improving female life expectancy and reducing maternal mortality rates, and more attention was being paid to women's sexual and

