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Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year Review
of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
14-15 December 2004

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1. At its fifty-ninth session the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) decided to convene a meeting at the intergovernmental level, at the request of the General Assembly, in order to provide a regional assessment for the 2005 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
2. The UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was held in Geneva from 14-15 December 2004.
3. It was organized in partnership with the Council of Europe, European Commission, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and OSCE. Preparations for the Meeting were also made in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in order to ensure the link between this regional review and the global review process.

Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, and Uzbekistan.

6. Representatives of the Holy See participated under Article VIII of the Commission's terms of reference. A representative of the Republic of Korea participated under the provisions of Article XI of the Commission's terms of reference.

7. Representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental organizations were in attendance.

8. The meeting was attended by 646 participants, including 316 representants from 157 non-governmental organizations.

9. The list of participants is available at the UNECE website: www.unece.org.

II. OPENING SESSION (agenda item 1)

10. The Meeting was opened by the UN ECE Executive Secretary, Ms. Brigita Schmögnerová and by Ms. Rachel N. Mayanja, Assistant Secretary General, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (agenda item 2)

11. The following officers were elected:

Chairperson: Ms. Florence Ievers, (Canada)

Vice-Chairpersons: Prof. Feride Acar (Turkey), Mr. Karel van Kesteren (Netherlands), Ms. Mominat Omarova (Azerbaijan), Ms. Patricia Schultz (Switzerland),

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK (agenda item 3)

12. The Meeting adopted its agenda and organization of work (E/ECE/AC.28/2004/1).

V. REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS (agenda item 4)

A. High-level Panel

13. A high level panel, which reviewed the regional progress and challenges, was chaired by Ms. Florence Ievers, (Chairperson). Panellists: Ms. Tamar Beruchashvili, Deputy Chairman of the Governmental Commission on Gender Equality Issues, Minister on European Integration, Georgia; Ms. Aiticul Samakova, Minister, Ministry of Environment and Head of Gender Machinery, Kazakhstan; Ms. Valentine Dovzhenko, Minister, Family, Children and Youth Affairs, Ukraine; Ms. Magdalena Sroda, Undersecretary of State, Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality, the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Poland; Mr. Rimantas Kairelis, State Secretary, Ministry of Social Security and Labour and Head of Gender Equality, Lithuania; Ms. Eugenia Tsoumani, General Secretary for Gender Equality, Greece.

B. International support to the implementation of the Beijing Platform

14. Chaired by Ms. Brigita Schmögnerová, UNECE Executive Secretary. Panellists: Ms. Marta Requena, Head of Equality Division, DG II-Human Rights, Council of Europe; Ms. Luisa Pavan-Woolfe, Director, DG Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission; Mr. Jafar Javan, Head of the Policy Support and Programme, UNDP Regional Center, Bratislava; Ms. Joanne Sandler, Deputy Director, UNIFEM; Mr. Goran Svilanovic, Chair Working Table I, Stability Pact; Ms. Beatrix Alttinger Colijn, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, OSCE.

VI. THEMATIC DEBATES

15. The Meeting was organized around the three substantive issues on the agenda. Each session or sub-session was introduced by three or four panellists consisting of at least one representative from a Government, one from an NGO as well as one independent expert on the relevant subject. Each introduction was followed by country statements and open debate. Two representatives of NGOs presented conclusions and recommendations from the NGO Forum at each substantive session.

A. Women and the economy (agenda item 5)

(a) Employability

16. Chaired by Ms. Patricia Schulz, (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists: Ms. Marta Turk, President, Economic Commission of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia; Ms. Jirka Marinova, KARAT Coalition; Ms. Jill Rubery, Professor, Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, United Kingdom; Ms. Eva Fodor, Professor, Central European University, Hungary.

(b) Social protection and pensions

Human Beings, Sweden; Ms. Kateryna Levchenko, La Strada NGO, Ukraine; Ms. Larissa Kapitsa, Professor, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Russian Federation.

VII. ROUND TABLE ON EMERGING ISSUES (agenda item 8)

20. Chaired by Ms. Patricia Schulz (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists: Ms. Diane Elson, Professor, University of Essex, UK; Ms. Charlotte Bunch, Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, USA.

ANNEX

CHAIRPERSON'S CONCLUSIONS

1.

women and girls, as recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action, need to be specifically addressed, particularly with respect to varying degrees of empowerment, disadvantage and enjoyment of their human rights.

6. Consequently, there is a need for each region and each country to develop specific actions tailored to the problems at hand in line

need to fully implement the Cairo/ICPD agenda, ensuring that sexual and reproductive health and rights are an essential component of HIV and AIDS prevention and ensuring that AIDS prevention and sexual and reproductive health and rights activities are integrated.

12. Even though some countries reported a decrease in the number of women living in poverty, others signalled relatively high female poverty rates, thus highlighting the importance of the creation of an enabling environment for poverty reduction and economic growth. Particular attention was brought to the needs of disadvantaged groups, especially single mothers, girl-headed households and older women, who are particularly at risk of poverty due to factors such as discrimination in the labour market, in access to resources, to goods and services and social protection, gender wage gaps or their work in the informal sector and their unpaid work in the household. As statistics on women's poverty are inadequate, there is an urgent need to improve gender equality indicators and sex disaggregated statistics, especially those related to the feminization of poverty.

13. The need to implement fully Security Council Resolution 1325 was stressed, emphasizing the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building activities and especially the need for women's equal participation in peace building processes at the national and international levels. The reports also recognized the need for governments and the United Nations system to take further steps to ensure the integration of gender perspectives and the full and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making and implementation in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict peace-building activities and to ensure that efforts to strengthen the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict situations, incorporate gender perspectives with a view to achieving gender equality in constitutional, legislative and judicial reform.

II. WOMEN AND ECONOMY

A. Employability

Challenges and Areas Requiring Intensified Efforts

14. Through the information provided in country reports and statements, a number of challenges were highlighted with the overall goal of achieving gender equality within a productive and high employment society. These included:

- Engendering macroeconomic policies, inter alia by integrating gender equality in trade-related capacity-building programmes, to enhance women's opportunities and participation, including in countries with PRSPs;
- Reversing negative trends in women's employability in Eastern Europe and CIS;
- Enhancing labour standards and decent paid income to ensure the economic independence of women;
- Eliminating de facto discrimination against women in the economy in access to economic resources such as access to land, credit and financing, in hiring and in career development;
- Designing and implementing policies in close cooperation with the social partners to eliminate the gender pay gap, inter alia by regularly monitoring wage gaps, revising job classifications systems, and making pay levels and job evaluation systems transparent;

particular disadvantages in the labour market. Supporting indigenous women's employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship was identified by several countries. Practices also indicated how entrepreneurship can play a role in empowering women to support themselves economically as well as contributing to their participation in the political and social spheres. Strengthening these types of initiatives, including micro-credit schemes and women's business centres, is particularly important for some sub-regions, such as South Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

17. To better recognize the importance of care giving and to support the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, member States initiated innovative pilot studies, experiments and policies in areas such as flexible working hours, new forms of child care, small-scale businesses in care for children and for the elderl

20. Although social security schemes have been an important area of policy reforms throughout the UNECE region during the last decade, so far gender equality has been of only marginal consideration in those reforms. Evidence shows that there is a need to protect and promote public social protection measures to support women's economic independence and security.

21.

Good Practices and Lessons Learned

23. Several members either reviewed and strengthened or created equality acts or similar legislation and initiatives to enhance their legislative frameworks and improve accountability for achieving gender equality results. Some enacted legislation in policy areas where there were gaps in order to contribute to gender equality and this legislation sometimes included enforcement mechanisms. Many countries referred to the importance of developing government plans of action for achieving gender equality, especially for those who have recently developed

- Ensuring national implementation of international obligations and support/promote regional recommendations;
- Ensuring the full enjoyment of the human rights of all women migrants, including women migrant workers documented and undocumented, and their protection against violence and exploitation;
- Introducing measures for the empowerment of documented women migrants, including women migrant workers; facilitating the productive employment of documented migrant women and girls through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and credentials, and facilitating their full integration into the labour force;
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective into national immigration and asylum policies;
- Building awareness at policy levels, in the media and public opinion at large on the continually high number of women being trafficked from Eastern Europe and CIS countries to North America and most of Europe;
- Paying attention to trafficking as linked to prostitution, sexual exploitation, and child sex tourism, as well as its links to illegal and forced labour;
- Giving more attention to economic root causes of trafficking and the emerging feminization of migration and including measures to improve women's employability into national plans of countries of origin;
- Incorporating social, cultural, political and other root causes in the development of further action;
- Improving penal legislation and its implementation and ensuring that all involved offenders are penalized according to the severity of the offence;
- Giving special attention to the trafficking of women and girls in programmes aimed at fighting organized crime;
- Information-sharing regarding challenges, lessons learned, and best practices in implementing international commitments to eliminate trafficking including the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking Protocol;
- Improving coordination among the stakeholders involved in anti-trafficking activities (police, justice, migration authorities, social workers and NGOs) to prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers and protect victims.
- Developing victim protection schemes, including, as appropriate, provisions to allow legal residence status to foreign victims of trafficking, for example, at least for a stabilization period and during the legal proceedings, as well as specialized assistance, protected shelters, access to health services, including for reproductive health, and aid rehabilitation, return or social and economic integration;
- Promoting cooperation between countries, including between countries of origin, transit and destination, supported by the international community and inclusion of respective assistance measures for countries of origin

affairs to more comprehensively address the many dimensions of trafficking. Public awareness campaigns and ways of assisting victims of trafficking, such as a hot line, have also been featured.

29. Lessons learned include the importance of meeting the particular needs of migrant women, such as providing services in minority languages, and addressing the root causes of trafficking in order to prevent and reduce women's vulnerability.

30. As with good practices in the other themes, collaboration with women's organizations and other civil society partners was key to many initiatives related to trafficking as well as those related to violence against women more generally, to the overall situation of migrant women and to the situation of the women who are trafficked within their own borders.

V. EMERGING ISSUES

31. The Beijing Platform provides a comprehensive framework for working in partnership to promote gender equality. However, during the past ten years a number of new issues emerged due to technological progress, new economic thinking, social changes and geopolitical developments in the region.

32. Some of the issues identified are longstanding issues that are addressed in the BPfA and are surfacing in new configurations, sometimes with new language and new challenges.

33. There is also the need to continually work on improving methods of gender-based analysis, gender mainstreaming and monitoring change, in order to identify and address evolving patterns and trends and effectively work towards gender equality.

34. Challenges:

- Mainstreaming gender into economic policies, including macroeconomic policies, public budgets, fiscal policies and trade liberalization policies;
- Increasing women's participation in economic decision-making and improving the understanding of all economic decision makers of the relevance of gender to their responsibilities;
- Broadening and deepening the scope of gender responsive budgeting to take into account diversity, and to include interactions with ke 1 Tf1.7eroadi10.3(t)56ch3(acco)-.3(w)-6.e(m)11.6(in)-5p(l)
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- Ensuring ongoing attention for gender equality and women and girls' rights in countries that integrate gender equality policies in broader policies addressing multiple inequalities;
- Further involving youth in awareness building, advocacy and policy dialogue on how to address key challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
- Addressing opportunities and challenges in terms of gender equality as new trends and patterns emerge.
