

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session, 27 February – 10 March 2006**

Draft Agreed Conclusions

Enhanced participation of women in development: An enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which emphasize that women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace,¹ as well as the need to ensure the full integration and full participation of women as both agents and beneficiaries in the development process;²
2. The Commission also reaffirms the Political Declaration adopted by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in which Member States committed to strengthening and safeguarding a national and international enabling environment, *inter alia*, through promoting and protecting all human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and promoting the full participation and empowerment of women and enhanced international cooperation;³
3. The Commission further reaffirms the Declaration adopted by the Commission at its 49th session, in which Member States pledged to undertake further action to ensure the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;⁴
4. At the 2005 World Summit, Member States reaffirmed that gender equality and the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are essential to advance development, peace and security.⁵
5. The Commission recalls that the preamble of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) stresses that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields. Article 7 requires States parties to ensure that women have the right to participate in political and public life, including in elections, government policy formulation, public office and in non-governmental organizations.
6. An enabling environment would allow women to be active participants as well as beneficiaries of development processes by a) improving their capabilities, including through education and health; b) increasing their access to and control over opportunities and resources,

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I, para 13

² *Ibid.*, para 231

³ S-23/2, para 8

⁴ E/2005/27-E/CN.6/2005/11, p.1, para 2

⁵ A/60/L.1, para 12

such as employment, land and economic assets; c) enhancing their agency and leadership roles;⁶ as well as d) protecting and promoting their human rights and e) ensuring their security.

7. The creation of an enabling environment for women's enhanced participation in development requires a systematic, comprehensive, integrated, and multi-sectoral approach, with policy, legislative and programmatic interventions;

8. Challenges to the creation of an enabling environment which need to be specifically addressed include the lack of coherence between national development policies and gender equality policies and strategies, the lack of time-bound targets for implementation of gender equality policies and strategies, the under-representation of women in decision-making, insufficient protection and promotion of women's human rights, discriminatory socio-cultural practices and attitudes, insufficient recognition of the contributions of women to the economy and all areas of public life, and persistent violence against women. Institutional challenges include a lack of political will and resources, inadequate implementation of gender mainstreaming; and insufficient mechanisms for monitoring and accountability;

9. The Commission on the Status of Women urges Governments, and as appropriate, the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, other international and regional organizations, civil society, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, and other relevant stakeholders, to take the following actions:

a) Incorporate gender perspectives into all national planning and reporting processes and mechanisms relating to national development strategies, including strategies focused on the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), fully utilizing existing gender equality policies and strategies;

b) Make efforts to mitigate the effects of excess volatility and economic disruption resulting from globalization and liberalization, which have a disproportionately negative impact on women, and to enhance trade opportunities for developing countries in order to improve the economic situation of women;

c) Utilize the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in all efforts aimed at the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

d) Incorporate a gender perspective in all policies and programmes on international migration, including, inter alia, for the protection of women migrants from violence, discrimination, trafficking, exploitation and abuse;

e) Increase understanding of and capacity to utilize gender mainstreaming, including by, inter alia, requiring the use of gender analysis as the basis for all policy and programme development and implementation, in particular in the areas of health, education and employment;

⁶ Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, *Taking action: Achieving gender equality and empowering women*, 2005, p. 3

- f) Disseminate and replicate innovations in gender mainstreaming approaches, such as gender-responsive budget processes, and ensure the application of lessons learned;
- g) Develop effective monitoring mechanisms, including through the collection, compilation and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics, and the development and use of appropriate indicators, including process indicators;
- h) Ensure adequate funding for gender-sensitive development policies and programmes and for national mechanisms for gender equality, through national, regional and international resource mobilization and gender-responsive budget processes in all sector areas;
- i) Encourage enhanced coordination and collaboration between all national mechanisms for gender equality, including inter alia women's ministries, gender equality commissions, ombudspersons and gender focal points in line ministries, as well as with women's groups and networks;
- j) Reinforce the linkages between the implementation of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
- k) Integrate targeted measures to eliminate violence against women in all national development policies and strategies;
- l) Take measures to ensure the elimination of gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and practices;
- m) Develop strategies to increase the involvement of men and boys in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, through, inter alia, promoting responsible sexual relations, the sharing of household work and care, and the elimination of violence against women;
- n) Increase women's equal access to and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) through training and infrastructure provision; involvement in the production of content; and participation in management and decision-making positions in ICT regulatory or policymaking bodies;

10. In the areas of education, health and employment, the Commission on the Status of Women urges Governments, and as appropriate, the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, other international and regional organizations, civil society, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, and other relevant stakeholders, to take the following actions :

Education

- a) Require all educational institutions to put in place policies aimed at preventing violence and harassment of girls and women, which include complaints mechanisms, and monitor the effectiveness of such policies;

- b) Provide training for teachers on gender stereotypes, and work with communities to address the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination;
- c) Eliminate gender bias in curricula, methodologies and teaching practice that perpetuate gender inequalities and develop specific curricula and materials on gender equality for both boys and girls at all levels of education;
- d) Increase the access of girls and women to education and training on science and technology, including on ICT;

Health

- e) Incorporate gender perspectives in health sector reforms and pay attention to women's specific needs and priorities, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health;
- f) Develop strategies to increase consultation with and involvement of women, including through national mechanisms for gender equality and women's groups and networks, in the planning, implementation and monitoring of health policies and programmes, to ensure increased attention to the health priorities and needs of women across the life-cycle, in particular in relation to sexual and reproductive health;
- g) Develop a comprehensive health sector response to the various impacts of violence against women, using the potential of the reproductive health services as entry points for identifying women in abusive relationships and for delivering referral and support services; and addressing amongst other challenges, the reluctance of many abused women to seek assistance;
- h) Ensure that health education addresses women's needs and priorities throughout the life-cycle, including sexual and reproductive health;

Work

- i) Eliminate occupational segregation and gender wage gaps, including by increasing opportunities for women and girls to work in non-traditional sectors, inter alia through technical education and vocational training;
- j) Develop or strengthen strategies to enhance women's participation in managerial positions in both formal and informal sectors, and collect data on a regular basis to monitor progress;
- k) Ensure access by women entrepreneurs to economic opportunities and resources, such as land, credit, education and training, information, and ICT;
- l) Initiate or strengthen existing measures, and provide incentives for innovative action to promote work-life balance for both women and men, for example, promoting parental leave for women and men, childcare facilities and gender-responsive health insurance and pension schemes.