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## **Commission on the Status of Women**

### **Fifty-fourth session**

1-12 March 2010

Item 3 (a)

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to sharing a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals**

## **Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regards to gender equality and empowerment of women**

### **Moderator’s summary**

1. On 9 March 2010, the Commission on the Status of Women convened an interactive expert panel in preparation for the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council on the theme “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regards to gender equality and empowerment of women”. Mr. Garen Nazarian, Chair of the Commission, moderated the discussion. Opening statements were given by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro and Mr. Hamidon Ali, President of the Economic and Social Council. The panellists were: Ms. Gita Sen, Professor, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore/Adjunct Professor, Harvard University; Ms. Agnes Quisumbing, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute; and Ms. Leymah Roberta Gbowee, Executive Director, Women, Peace and Security Network, Africa. An issues paper prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women provided the framework for the discussion.

2. The year 2010 holds significant importance for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women as it marks the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 10-year



review of progress achieved in the Millennium Development Goals and the 10-year review of implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The annual ministerial review to be held in June/July provides an opportunity to bring greater attention to the constraints on development due to gender inequality and gender-based discrimination. In 2010, and at all future annual ministerial reviews, the Council should enhance commitments and accelerate implementation of concrete actions and strategies to realize gender equality as a central requirement to ensure that the internationally agreed development goals are met.

3. Several current trends and emerging issues in the international economic policy framework constitute areas of concern for promoting and ensuring sustainable development and achieving goals on gender equality and empowerment of women. While globalization provides many opportunities to increase economic empowerment of women, concrete measures are required to increase opportunities in international trade especially for women entrepreneurs in developing countries. Commodities booms and lack of incentives to invest in food production and similar sectors can lead to investment volatility and reduced food security, a concern that disproportionately affects women and increases hunger. Greater attention is needed to prevent post-conflict countries from reverting to war, with a particular emphasis on the link between development and sustainable peace. International and national macroeconomic policies and frameworks should promote the participation of women as full partners in development and equal beneficiaries of economic growth.

4. Women continue to be disadvantaged in access to and control of economic and financial resources. Existing gender inequalities have exacerbated the adverse impact on women of the recent crises. Proposed solutions that depend upon pro-cyclical fiscal policies in developing countries coupled with disincentives from international financial institutions and donors for countercyclical social expenditures limit the capacity of developing and aid-dependent countries to alleviate the adverse impacts of the crises, including those on women. Domestic resource mobilization should be matched by international assistance and partnership for those countries that require greater assistance than their own resources can provide.

5. Common tools to combat poverty and increase women's economic empowerment have included conditional cash transfer programmes and microcredit or microfinance programmes, which have commonly targeted women and girls. While conditional cash transfer programmes have been successfully implemented mainly in middle-income countries, microcredit and microfinance programmes are increasingly common in developing countries. In order for such programmes to be successful, they need to be complemented by an expansion of social protection, decent work and full-employment policies and to respond to local conditions and build community support for their effectiveness and sustainability.

6. Women continue to have unequal access to political and economic decision-making processes and constitute a minority in most national, regional and global decision-making bodies at all levels. Urgent measures are necessary to address these concerns. A range of innovative strategies and good practices are available to increase women's participation in all areas of decision-making. Quotas and other temporary special measures, such as reserved seats, have played a significant role in increasing the number of women in public life in a number of countries. These have

often been complemented by measures such as awareness-raising campaigns on women's equal participation in public life, leadership training, demand-driven capacity-building, and transparent selection systems. For strategies to be effective they need to be backed up by political support and the removal of discriminatory laws and practices that prevent women from seeking to participate in decision-making.

7. Of particular concern is women's continued conspicuous absence from formal peace processes. As a consequence, the needs and priorities of women and girls continue to be overlooked in peace agreements, at donor conferences, in post-conflict legal reform and in policy and programme development, a fact that may prevent the establishment of sustainable peace and be an impediment to development. Concrete action is required to enhance the role and involvement of women as key stakeholders in all stages of peace processes, including as mediators and equal participants in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict development. Good practices for increasing women's representation in local, national and international conflict-resolution and peacebuilding bodies should be more widely disseminated and consistently implemented.

8. Improved strategies and mechanisms are needed to strengthen collaboration, coordination and partnerships between different stakeholders, including Governments, civil society and international actors, for the effective implementation of Security Council resolutions related to women and peace and security (1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009)). Mechanisms for institutionalizing consultations with women's groups and organizations should be developed. Training, information-sharing and opportunities for women's groups to exchange experiences, including at the local level to strengthen their effective participation at all stages of peace processes should be systematically implemented.

9. Strong institutional mechanisms are key to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels and should be effectively integrated in the broader institutional framework and governance of countries. Sufficient human and financial resources must be guaranteed to such mechanisms so that they can effectively support and advocate for the implementation of global and national commitments to gender equality. Increased capacity is needed in a number of areas, including the collection and analysis of gender-sensitive information and sex and age-disaggregated data, and the use of gender-responsive budgeting. Institutional mechanisms also have an important role to play in forging stronger partnerships with key stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector.

10. Concrete steps are needed to incorporate international norms and standards on the promotion and protection of the rights of women into national legislation. Women's equal rights and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex are included in many national constitutions, and legislation and regulations are in place on a range of areas, including those pertaining to women's equal rights to use, own and inherit property. However, the coexistence of multiple legal systems in some countries continues to prevent the effective implementation of international obligations. A range of actions should be taken to ensure the full implementation of international standards and national law, at different levels, such as review of discriminatory laws; training programmes for civil servants, judicial and law enforcement personnel; national campaigns to raise awareness of, and support for,

women's human rights; efforts to strengthen community support for laws; and legal literacy campaigns targeted at women to raise awareness of their rights.

11. Enhanced accountability must be an integral part in the realization of internationally agreed goals and commitments in regards to gender equality and empowerment of women. The gap between political intention and action must be addressed, and incentives as well as more effective enforcement mechanisms within governments, institutions and organizations are needed. Accountability for outcomes should be firmly embedded into policies and programmes through use of tools such as results-based management and third-party evaluations. National action plans on gender equality with clear goals and indicators can strengthen accountability and transparency. Gender-responsive budgeting can significantly contribute to advancing gender equality as it enables an assessment of the different needs and contributions of women, men, girls and boys, and can guide the adjustment of budget revenue, expenditure and allocation policies to benefit all groups. Independent watch-dog bodies and civil society organizations have a key role in strengthening accountability for implementation of commitments to gender equality. Having in place specific targets and benchmarks can improve accountability for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Regular gender audits of all institutions and processes responsible for implementation of internationally agreed development goals could be carried out to accelerate progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women.

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