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**Commission on the Status of Women**

**Forty-ninth session**

28 February – 11 March 2005

Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” (c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: (i) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”; (ii) Current challenges and forward looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls**

**Economic Commission for Europe**

**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.
4. Prior to the Meeting, an NGO Forum was held from 12-13 December 2004.

## I. ATTENDANCE

5. The meeting was attended by representatives from 53 UNECE member States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, 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 representatives from 157 non-governmental organizations.
9. The list of participants is available at the UNECE website: [www.unece.org](http://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

17. Chaired by Ms. Mominat Omarova (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists: Ms. Olga Sharapova, Director, Medical and Social Problems of Family, Maternity and Childhood, Russian Federation; Ms. Kirsti Kolthoff, President, European Women's Lobby (EWL); Ms. Silke Steinhilber, Expert, Germany.

B. Institutional Mechanisms to promote gender equality (agenda item 6)

18. Chaired by Ms. Prof. Feride Acar (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists: Ms. Florence Richard, Special Adviser to the Minister on Equal Opportunities, France; Ms. Jemma Hasratyan, President, Armenian Association of Women with University Education; Ms. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Professor, Bar-Illan University, Israel.

C. Trafficking of women in the context of migratory movements (agenda item 7)

19. Chaired by Mr. Karel van Kesteren (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists: Mr. Mark Lagon, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, US State Department; Ms. Gunilla Ekberg, Special Adviser to the Government on Trafficking on 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.

VIII. CLOSING SESSION AND CHAIRPERSON 'S CONCLUSIONS  
(agenda item 9)

21. The chairperson presented the Chairperson's conclusions. The meeting decided to forward the Chairperson's conclusions, together with the report of the meeting, to the Commission on the Status of Women. The Chairperson's conclusions will serve as the UNECE region's input to the Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the UN General Assembly, to

be held during the forty-ninth Session of the Commission in the Status of Women from 28 February to 11 March 2005 in New York. The Chairperson's Conclusions are annexed to this report.

22. The meeting agreed also to attach the report and conclusions from the NGO Forum as an Annex to this report.

## ANNEX 1

### CHAIRPERSON'S CONCLUSIONS

1. The Member States of the UNECE reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the UN General Assembly (Beijing +5) and stress the importance of strong, sustained political will and commitment at the national, regional and international levels for achieving their full and accelerated implementation as well as the need to undertake further action to this effect, inter alia through the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstreaming gender perspectives into all policies and programmes and promoting the full and equal participation and empowerment of women and enhanced international cooperation.
2. The meeting emphasized the strong links between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It further emphasized that the full and effective implementation of both the Platform for Action and CEDAW is essential for advancing the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration and achieving internationally agreed-upon poverty reduction and development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. In that regard, the meeting underlined that a gender perspective should be fully integrated throughout all follow up processes of United Nations conferences, including in the Review of the Millennium Declaration in September 2005.
3. The meeting also emphasized the importance of closely collaborating with respective UN and regional institutions, in particular with the CEDAW Committee, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the recently appointed UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, and the OSCE Special Representative on Trafficking in Human Beings. The meeting appreciated regional efforts to strengthen measures to combat human trafficking and protect victims of trafficking, namely the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, and the European Convention on action against trafficking in human beings which is currently being developed at the Council of Europe.
4. At the regional level, the meeting acknowledged the importance of the Agreed Conclusions from the Beijing plus 5 review in 2000, which includes priority areas of concern for the UNECE region and actions to be taken by Governments and other stakeholders (E/ECE/RW.2/2000/7). Recognizing the importance of their work, the meeting stressed the need for strengthened government links with civil society, including NGOs, working towards gender equality. Participants particularly recognized the constructive dialogue with NGOs present at the meeting and the important role they play in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
5. The meeting recognized the similarity of concerns and progress made in most countries in the UNECE region in the implementation of the Beijing commitments. The region contains, however, great disparities. While progress was made by most developed market economies, a deterioration of women's position was observed in many countries of Eastern Europe and the

CIS, especially in the area of employability and social protection. The meeting recognized the full diversity of women's and girls' experiences and that the situations of different groups of 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 with the general challenges and areas requiring further action that are outlined in the sections below. Overall, the importance of discussion, dialogue and discourse through which experiences, successes and challenges of implementing gender equality commitments are shared, was stressed as a means to identifying innovative responses to ongoing challenges.

7. The 10-year regional Review assessed progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing commitments in 12 critical areas of concern. The country reports highlighted three areas of concern particularly relevant to the UNECE member countries to be discussed at this UNECE meeting: (i) women and economy; (ii) institutional mechanisms; and (iii) trafficking in the context of migratory movements. Emerging issues were also discussed in the context of changes in the geopolitical as well as the economic and social situation in the region.

#### **I. LINKAGES ACROSS THE TWELVE CRITICAL AREAS**

8. A review of country reports and statements indicated that to achieve gender equality the twelve critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action must be addressed in a comprehensive way, as they are strongly interconnected (e.g. links between poverty and economic insecurity, violence against women, HIV/AIDS and globalization). It was also clear that a number of other areas are closely linked to the three areas selected for this meeting, specifically: gender mainstreaming, violence against women, health and HIV/AIDS, poverty and the role of women in conflict resolution and decision making.

9. It was noted that the goal of gender equality has been supported by the development of the strategy of gender mainstreaming, which was introduced to the world in 1995 in the Beijing Platform for Action. Notwithstanding the continued relevance of specific policies and programmes for women, the importance of this strategy was further emphasized as was the need for political will and sufficient means and resources to ensure its effective implementation.

10. The need for increased efforts for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, was reinforced. This can be achieved through the strengthening of legislations and international support, including financial and technical resources. In order to improve policy and programme development, the importance of quality indicators as well as developing, disseminating and progressively updating national data on violence against women, was recognized. Following the March 2004 UNCSW discussions, members further encouraged men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence.

11. Positive developments in the field of women and health were noted, although the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS and the rise in maternal mortality rates in a number of countries still underline the need for progressive legislation and policies on family planning and sex education at school. The reports and statements reiterated the need for states to enhance their cooperation in the coordination to fight HIV/AIDS. The meeting emphasized the 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;
- Supporting employment opportunities for women of different ages, including mature women workers, and developing strategies that include training for decent and productive work for young women including in fields predominantly occupied by males;
- Ensuring better access to lifelong learning;
- Promoting equal access for young women and men to all professional disciplines through inter alia improved educational systems;
- The need to support women entering and working in ICT fields where they are in the minority and enable women to use ICTs as a tool to reach business goals and achieve high-quality employment;
- The need to support women's access to credit, ICT training, networking, business skills and market access in order to have quality work;
- Taking into account the strengths and needs of groups of women and girls who have been disadvantaged and who face structural unemployment and lack of economic opportunity, especially the needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities, indigenous women, refugees and internally displaced women to earn a living through employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship;
- Recognizing paid and unpaid care-giving as essential to the economy;
- Increasing the positive contribution of men in the care economy as a necessary means to achieve gender equality;
- Enacting a comprehensive policy including gender mainstreaming in tax and benefit policies;
- Increasing efforts to enable women to secure employment commensurate with their qualifications;
- Intensifying the design, implementation and promotion of family friendly policies and services, in accordance with the specific needs of working parents and family life, including affordable, accessible and flexible quality care services for children and other dependants, harmonization of school schedules with working hours, parental and other leave schemes and encouraging the equal sharing of employment and family responsibilities;
- Need for integrated approach to women's self-employment and entrepreneurship, paying attention to the identification and support for women entrepreneurs, gender mainstreaming in SME policies, and coordination and linkages among governments, private sector, civil society and self-employed women;
- Promoting access for women to the financial, investment and trade sectors.

### *Good Practices and Lessons Learned*

15. To address pay gaps and employment discrimination and in order to promote better results among employers to foster gender equality in the workplace, several countries used such tools as surveys, reviews, audits, training and other mechanisms to apply, enforce, and monitor

their commitments. Trade unions, equal opportunities commissions and employer organizations were involved in many of these initiatives

16. Good practices also included particular efforts to promote women's employment in the new technologies sector and other new or non-traditional fields. Efforts to improve women's opportunities to gain income from self-employment and entrepreneurship included initiatives, such as business planning guides, focused on meeting the needs of groups of women who face 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 elderly and designing more comprehensive approaches to early learning and care in the context of family, education and labour market policy.

## B. Social Protection and Pensions

### *Challenges and Areas Requiring Intensified Efforts*

18. The challenges with respect to social protection and pensions are largely related to integrating women's unpaid work experiences, the need for high-quality gender equality indicators, data and benchmarks, and the need for further gender mainstreaming. Challenges included:

- Reflecting unpaid work, especially care giving, in market based systems of social protection and pension systems and promoting equal sharing of family care responsibilities between men and women;
- Improving data collection by sex on social protection beneficiaries including pensions;
- Using benchmarks, such as those provided by the ILO and the OECD, to ensure decent level of retirement benefits and to assess programme efficiency;
- Reflecting the different life course trajectories between men and women in social protection and pension systems;
- Establishing integrated responses in a variety of policy areas, combining social policies with changes in employment policies and other fields (such as labour law or public education);
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective into social security reforms and pension reforms;
- Promoting further research and open policy debate on gender aspects of social protection and pension schemes as well as exchange of best practices;
- Old age security is becoming an increasingly important element in light of demographic and economic trends;
- Assessing the incentives of tax and benefit systems on the employability of women.

## *Good Practices and Lessons Learned*

19. New and/or expanded ways of taking care giving into account in policy areas such as income supplements, maternity and parental benefits and pension and taxation credits were identified by several countries as ways to improve women's access to social protection. Some of these measures apply regardless of whether a parent is employed or not.

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. Obstacles to the use of family benefits by fathers have been removed in a number of countries. In addition maternity benefits and maternity leave have been administratively and legally separated from childcare benefits and childcare leave.

### **III. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS**

#### *Challenges and Areas Requiring Intensified Efforts*

22. Although there have been improvements to institutional mechanisms in the last ten years, there is an ongoing need to foster gender equality and gender mainstreaming as a component of good governance through sufficient resources and reinforced cooperation of relevant stakeholders. Members expressed their concerns on a number of issues, particularly with regard to government accountability. Issues highlighted included:

- Promoting a much deeper understanding and recognition of gender equality and of women's rights as human rights;
- Strengthening institutional mechanisms by addressing weaknesses due to a lack of financial and human resources, of political will, or an inadequate understanding of gender equality issues;
- Creating comprehensive indicators, collecting and using relevant data, assuring rigorous analysis in policy, ensuring accessibility for widespread use and organizing the obligation to use them;
- Developing good models for gender equality plans of action and practices;
- Organizing comparative studies across countries, exchanging information on the impact of the various institutional mechanisms and providing technical assistance;
- Intensifying efforts to train decision-makers at all levels to improve the quality of gender mainstreaming practices, by developing and disseminating standards;
- Improving independent evaluation and accountability mechanisms, as well as mechanisms for independent evaluation and monitoring, preferably by mandatory reporting;
- Building links with line ministries and other stakeholders;
- Developing more participatory methods of gender mainstreaming;

- Promoting the meaningful participation of young women in the policies, programmes and decisions that affect their lives;
- Strengthening the link of national machineries with civil society, including the women's movement and the academic community;
- Accelerating progress in gender budgeting;
- The effort to eliminate various forms of discrimination, including ethnicity/race, religion/ faith, disability, age and sexual orientation, is increasingly understood to require integrated attention. A clear institutional focus on gender remains needed;
- Addressing gender bias in strategies that address other inequalities and ethnocentric bias in gender equality policies.

### *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 plans of action such as in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

24. In several countries, new types of mechanisms were developed, such as equal opportunities commissions, ombudspersons, parliamentary committees, independent audit committees to assess progress in gender equality policies in all ministries and centres for gender studies, in order to strengthen the institutional capacity to advance equality. Gender budgeting initiatives were also developed by governments and NGOs as another tool for accountability.

25. Many countries cited new or enhanced forms of cooperation among stakeholders, such as discussing the future development of gender equality policy with women's organizations, political parties, trade unions, the media, and academics. Some of these efforts also served to raise public awareness and generate constructive public policy discussions of gender equality issues. Others helped provide information to women on their rights or fostered training to improve understanding and gender analysis capacity among government officials at all levels as well as in the private sector and civil society. Some countries improved capacity to integrate diversity issues into their gender equality work in ways that enhance their ability to address the needs of all women and others focused priority attention on groups of women who are particularly marginalized or disadvantaged in their societies. Concerned with the low numbers of women in government, especially at higher levels, countries outlined their strategies for increasing women's political participation. Some countries have also taken measures to increase women's participation on boards of large corporations.

26. Another area where there were significant new developments is statistics and indicators. These initiatives included setting up a gender statistics section within the government statistical agency, improving the collection and use of statistics disaggregated by sex and developing indicators on specific equality issues such as employment, reconciliation of work and family as well as on beneficiaries of programmes and policies. In this area as well, efforts are being made

to have statistics and indicators that reflect the impact of policies among different populations of women, including those who have been marginalized or disadvantaged.

#### **IV. TRAFFICKING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION**

##### *Challenges and Areas Requiring Intensified Efforts*

27. The continually high number of women being trafficked over the past decade is of growing concern to most countries. More attention is required to address the human rights abuses and the root causes of trafficking, including economic causes, in women and girls, in all countries and to ensure that anti-trafficking strategies have a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach. Some of the challenges included:

- 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 into national action plans of countries of destination;
- Addressing the demand side of trafficking through new information campaigns, and increasing the understanding among men how trafficking for prostitution and sexual exploitation harms women and children and undermines gender equality.

### *Good practices and lessons learned*

28. There are several examples of countries having improved coordination and collaboration across different ministries responsible for issues such as labour, justice, immigration and foreign 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 key issues such as employability, social security, aging population and transforming masculinity;
- Including a gender perspective and involving women in decision-making on the full range of environmental issues;
- Ensuring a gender perspective and women's participation in all aspects of developing new technologies;
- Addressing women's unequal access to the benefits of information and communications technologies as users, producers and policy-makers to support the potential of ICTs for achieving women's rights and gender equality, eliminating poverty, overcoming women's isolation and improving governance;
- Working for the empowerment of women in the private sector and fostering corporate social responsibility for promoting gender equality;
- Encouraging men and boys to play a positive role in achieving gender equality;
- 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.

## ANNEX 2

### **REPORT OF THE NGO FORUM 12-13 DECEMBER 2004**

(organized in preparation for the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting)

#### **NGOs AS PARTNERS ON THE WAY TO ACCELERATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

More than 300 participants from 42 countries took part in the Forum on 12-13 December 2004, held in the Centre de Conférences de Varembé and in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, preceding the two-day Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 10-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Forum was organized by the NGO Working Group on Women for the UNECE Region, in cooperation with subregional networks and the UNECE secretariat. Due to the generous contributions of UNIFEM, UNDP, OSCE and the Open Society Institute, an important number of participants came from CEE and CIS countries.

It was a Forum structured into Plenary Meetings and Workshop Sessions to participate as equals in what essentially is an Intergovernmental Conference. This process was chosen, as in the preparatory meetings in Vienna in 1994 and in Geneva in 2000, to facilitate a meaningful dialogue on critical issues related to the four themes identified for this preparatory conference.

The meeting was opened by Marise Paschoud, convenor of the NGO Working Group on Women for the UNECE Region. Guest speakers included Carolyn Hannan, Director of the UN Division of the Advancement of Women, Concita Poncini, Vina Nadjibulla (for Bani Dugal), Susi Shaked, Presidents of the NGO Committees on the Status of Women in Geneva, New York and Vienna, Brigitte Schmögnerova, UNECE Executive Secretary. They insisted on the importance of partnership between NGOs and the United Nations and gave information on the preparations for the Review of Beijing + 10 that will be held at the forty-ninth Commission on the Status of Women in New York from 28 February to 11 March 2005.

To arrive at specific recommendations the Forum proceeded as follows:

1. On the first day, the Forum was informed of subregional reports of NGO Coalitions from the EU, the CEE and CIS countries, Canada and the US.
2. During the first and the second day, five workshops worked on issues related to the four themes of the UNECE Meeting and on "After Beijing +10" and prepared recommendations to complement the UNECE's conclusions.

The Closing Session, chaired by Charlotte Thibault (FAFIA), received the workshops reports. Closing remarks were made by Renate Bloem, President of CONGO, and Concita Poncini, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva.



## SUBREGIONAL REPORTS

### EU countries

*European Women Lobby, Kirsti Kolthoff*

Since Beijing, some real progress has been made in the European Union at the legislative level; the position of women in decision-making has improved. However, one of the most serious gaps in EU action on gender equality is the absence of any binding measure to fight against violence against women, including the growing phenomenon of trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation and prostitution. In recent years, the EU has adopted an economic policy that stresses market liberalization, privatization and competition, and this has led to a greater feminization of poverty, less job security and a weakening of the European social model of social protection and public services. Another worrying trend is the negative influence of very conservative forces and religious fundamentalism, in particular in relation to women's sexual and reproductive rights.

### CEE/CIS countries

*Karat Coalition, Kinga Lohmann*

Although the CEE women's activists support strongly the enlargement of the European Union since the changes of the laws can lead to the improvement of the situation of women, they are very concerned about a new process of inclusion and exclusion which has begun. Women – former partners – are now divided by new borders with some of them being inside the Union and others outside it. Karat Coalition with one foot in the EU and the other foot outside is extremely concerned about the increasing gap in the situation of women in the region, between those who have already joined the EU and those who are left outside.

*Liberal Society Institute, Irina Kolomiyets*

Recommendations for the future:

- National institutions responsible for women's empowerment should be financially provided and professionally staffed.
- Policy for equal opportunities should be based on country-specific gender investigation, gender statistics and results of gender monitoring and gender expertise.
- Budgetary policy should be gender sensitive, transparent and participatory.

*Social Technologies Agency, Mira Karibaeva*

Recommendations for the future :

- Develop and implement programmes aimed at advancing gender equality with long term commitment and sustainability in mind, because establishing effective and strong inter-country and inter-regional relationships is not possible in a short period.
- These programmes should also aim to work with government structures to change from rhetorical strategies to practical solutions that will lead to achieving equality of results.

- Strengthening of the existing potential of local gender experts via running, monitoring and evaluating joint programmes. Only strong local experts and expertise can ensure that these changes will be sustainable and irreversible in our region.

### Canada

*Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, Nancy Peckford*

In Canada, high rates of poverty among single mothers, women of colour, and immigrant and refugee women persist. Racialized and gender-based violence against Aboriginal women goes unchecked. Instead, governments have prioritized the elimination of budget deficits and the national debt. Women have been disproportionately affected by reduced accessibility to vital social supports, including employment insurance, social assistance, legal aid, and core operating funds for women's organizations. Despite multi-billion dollar surpluses in the last seven years, there has been little re-investment in women's equality.

### USA

*Women's Environment and Development Organization, June Zeitlin*

At Beijing+5, women's groups reported a strong governmental commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action. But at Beijing +10, we have to report that the official governmental commitment to the Platform is wavering, progress towards implementation is stalled and undermined in key areas, including human rights, poverty eradication and reproductive health and rights, with disastrous consequences for American women, particularly the poor women of colour and immigrant women. Ratification of CEDAW is stalled and the effectiveness of the ICC is being undermined. Massive military expenditures for the war in Iraq and excessive tax cuts have principally benefited the wealthy. The few pre-existing institutional mechanisms for women, including the President's Interagency Task Force on Women, have been dismantled. Women's representation in the Congress and State legislatures remains abysmally low at 14 per cent and 22 per cent respectively.

## **THEMATIC WORKSHOPS**

### **I. WOMEN AND ECONOMY**

#### A. Employability

The discussion on women and the economy must begin with the universally accepted UN human rights framework which challenges the current neoliberal economic model promoting deregulation, privatization and unbridled trade liberalization, which disregard their negative gender and social consequences. This approach seriously undermines implementation of the BPfA and the achievement of the MDGs.

This must be replaced with a paradigm based on sustainable development models that link economic growth to social development, environmental protection and gender equality.

Macroeconomic policies while seemingly gender neutral have deepened inequalities between countries, between urban and rural areas and between women and men in all countries in the UNECE region. Women are not a homogenous category. They engage in diverse and complex ways, as economic actors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. But as women represent the world's poor in the region and worldwide, the negative impacts of WTO and IFIs affect them disproportionately.

Policies of attracting FDIs expose women to low paid work in exploitative conditions. The global economic governance system is led by countries of the UNECE region, not working for women and the poor. The challenge is to generate enough resources and how these are allocated. The UN should lead in promoting a rights-based and social justice approach to economic policy-making with gender lens.

Privatization of public services has not only reduced women's opportunities to decent employment, but has also increased inequities in provision of services, leaving the poor either without services or with low quality services. It has also increased women's caring responsibility.

Discrimination in access to employment, promotion and training for women and other equality seeking groups is still systemic throughout the UNECE region. Women remain clustered in low skilled, poor quality jobs with poor regulation and low levels of union representation. The majority of workers in part-time, temporary and casual work in the informal economy are women.

#### Recommendations:

- Allocate adequate resources to ensure enforcement of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws and policies adopted by UNECE countries;
- Analyse systematically the persistent wage gaps based on gender and other grounds, such as "race" and ethnicity;
- Develop employment equity plans, gender workplace audits and gender responsive budgets;
- Undertake job evaluation schemes free of gender bias and value women's jobs, particularly caring skills;
- Introduce policies and programmes to implement the ILO Core Standards on Equal Rights at Work;
- Ensure that part-time work is an option, not an obligation, for women workers and must be regulated so as to have equivalent conditions to full-time workers on a pro-rata basis. This form of work should not be used as a strategy to return women to domestic caring roles, which replace state-funded community-based care facilities;
- Extend social regulation and protection to precarious forms of work in the informal economy where women make up the majority; account should be taken of the conclusions of the ILO Conference on decent work and the informal economy, adopted in 2002;
- Guarantee a national minimum living wage as a measure to bring women out of poverty, reduce the gender wage gap and end discrimination in wage setting in low skill jobs where women predominate;
- Give a monetary value to unpaid work of caring for children, the elderly, the sick and disabled and provide adequate financial support for these activities such as tax and pension

systems that recognize time spent out of the labour market by women doing this work as a measure to eliminate feminization of poverty;

- Ratify ILO Convention 156 and adopt policies and incentives to encourage more men to do this caring work;
- Develop gender sensitive policies and action plans for institutional and cultural changes in the workplace and at home aimed at changing male behaviour and mental attitudes, using examples of best practices in the region, particularly in Iceland and Sweden;
- Adopt the principle of employability stipulated in the ILO Recommendation on Human Resources Development which takes into account the life course approach and lifelong learning of women;
- Enable girls equal opportunity in education at all levels and introduce curricula that are non-traditional “female” courses;
- Redress the present occupational segregation resulting from male-biased job classification, evaluation and gender stereotyping by encouraging women to enrol in science and technology in general and in information and communication technology in particular;
- Set up centres, such as those that exist in France, that provide technical, financial and social support for the integration of women in the labour market, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS. They should include appropriate supports so that women from minority and ethnic groups and indigenous peoples, as well as the disabled and older women, can acquire adequate and quality skills to access decent employment of their choice. In respect of the ageing population, States should implement the Madrid Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 2002;
- Provide highly educated women whose education is not marketable in the present economic context with opportunities to upscale their knowledge and skills that will raise their accessibility to jobs that break the glass ceiling;
- ICT skills are becoming a necessity for survival, therefore training should be provided to all women in remote and rural areas through distance learning and cyber cafes, and should take account of cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Promote e-entrepreneurship and e-management development as well as inclusion of women entrepreneurs in trade fairs and trade missions.
- Allocate increased resources from developed to developing countries, particularly ODAs reaffirmed by the UNECE countries in Goal 8 of the MDGs. It is essential that governments at this meeting unequivocally reaffirm the entire Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing+5 Outcomes.

## **B. Social Security and Pension**

Ignoring the social implications from a gender perspective of economic readjustments, have as a consequence eroded existing social security provisions for women.

### **Recommendations:**

- Social security, social services and pension provisions should take into account the definition of family in its new forms (increasing women single-headed households; reconstructed families of divorced couples; couples of same sex; grandparents as head of households of orphaned children; orphaned headed households whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, widows/widowers etc);

- Adopt a holistic approach to ensure policy coherence among different government ministries and departments in resifting priorities, inter alia redistribution of military spending, using gender auditing and budgeting;
- Guarantee protection of acquired pension rights and making such pensions portable;
- Review public and private pensions systems to ensure that acquired provisions are guaranteed for decent standards of living;
- Strengthen provisions for parental leave and ensure the responsibilities of fathers in the equal sharing of work and family responsibilities as called for in ILO C156, taking account that the compensations systems vary from country to country;
- Provide for maternity and/or parental leave to protect and to guarantee that women do not risk losing their jobs and that men take on more family responsibilities.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS**

The Workshop's recommendations were first adopted unanimously by more than 60 participants representing women's non-governmental organizations and networks under the chair of IAW – AIF, SIW, and then edited in the steering group together with CNIDFF, CLEF, EWL and NAWO, FAFIA and MEHR Association.

Reaffirming the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the UNGASS in 2000, and demanding that gender equality and women's human rights be mainstreamed throughout the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's);

Considering that although gender mainstreaming is one of the means used for the advancement of women, it cannot replace the need to establish specific institutional mechanisms and programming;

Recognizing the needs and concerns of the great range of women, all recommendations below and all policies, programmes and other actions taken to create equality for women must use an integrated approach in order that equality be achieved for all women of all ages including the girl child. Special attention must be given to particularly disadvantaged groups of women and those facing multiple oppressions;

Considering the increasing feminization of poverty in a context of a global economy which does not take into account the differential impact on women and men;

### Recommendations:

- National mechanisms must have a statutory basis and should be strong enough to survive political changes in government.
- Machineries, including independent bodies, must be established at the highest possible executive level at national, regional and local levels to apply gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment in all policies and their implementation.
- There must be mandatory training of civil servants and all government officers in gender mainstreaming.

- Gender mainstreaming must be strengthened and designed to promote gender equality. Its impact must be measured, made transparent and available to all stakeholders using sex-disaggregated statistics.
- The Commission on the Status of Women should create a Special Rapporteur on national laws and practices that discriminate against Women.
- National Governments must create governmental coordinating structures with a legal mandate including NGO representatives.
- Governments need to ensure that compulsory national education systems include non-sexist programmes in their curricula.
- International and national actors in regions of economic, political crisis or armed conflict must establish a gender task force to ensure the participation of local women in the solution.
- All member States should be required to enact legislation ensuring the establishment of mechanisms that result in gender parity (50 per cent) in all decision-making processes and institutions, including peace negotiations.
- Governments must create mechanisms to assess the impact of growing religious and trade fundamentalism, whatever their origin, and to combat them when they threaten women's rights.
- National mechanisms for the advancement of women must be allocated adequate human and financial resources to be effective.
- National plans of action exist formally without proper funding, implementation and monitoring. We demand that member States fully commit to: recognizing the resource implications of the effective implementation of action plan; providing resources in finance and personnel to ensure the participation of women at all levels of decision making in all different areas.
- Gender budgeting must be institutionalized across all departments and ministries, and the member States should be required to monitor, analyse and audit expenditure and regularly report on the implementation and outcome.
- Funding for women's NGOs must be provided so that they will broaden civil dialogue on the human rights of women and the girl child. New budget planning should include specific actions and programmes with funding for Equal Opportunity initiatives.
- The application of gender mainstreaming must include targets and gender impact assessment in all policies and their implementation as well as specific programmes for the advancement of women.
- Member States must effectively implement their international commitments, national constitution and laws without subverting them by issuing executive orders or taking other measures that contradict them.
- Governmental reports to CEDAW and CEDAW's resulting recommendations must be the object of discussion in parliament.
- NGOs should be recognized and entitled to actively participate in the government reporting processes on all human rights mechanisms, including CEDAW. The report to CEDAW should be made public, as should be the alternative NGO report.
- Governments should recognize and support actively and effectively young women's organizations in their effort to promote their empowerment and participation in decision making.

- Measurement of outcomes, which requires gender, disaggregated and reliable statistics are needed for monitoring all actions of government.
- Member States must establish, where none exist, cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary and cross-border strategies to combat violence against women and trafficking and where they do exist, enforce them.
- Governments must introduce capacity building and leadership training for women in NGOs to become more effective in working with and monitoring institutional mechanisms.
- All levels of governments must implement gender mainstreaming using concrete and transparent action plans with established indicators and outcomes and timelines developed in partnership with civil society organizations.

### **III. TRAFFICKING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS**

Trafficking in women and children is a consequence of structured gender inequality and is a form of violence. It is also a symptom of relative and absolute poverty. The participants in this workshop expressed great concern about the failure of governments, despite successive international agreements, to stem the tide of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. Counter-trafficking strategies must be anchored in a human rights framework.

The participants fully endorsed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocol thereto, specifically relating to all paragraphs of Article 3 in relation to the definition of the trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

#### Recommendations:

- Governments must recognize that the trafficking in human beings and particularly in women and children is a major violation of human rights. They must therefore implement and monitor the Palermo Protocol and all other relevant human right instruments and allocate sufficient resources to prevent and combat this gross human rights violation.
- Safeguarding the human rights of women and of all victims of trafficking must be central to all considerations and measures in relation to prevention, protection of victims and prosecution of perpetrators.
- The safety and protection of women and children who are victims of trafficking must be the overriding consideration at all times, so that:
  - Protection of victims must not be conditional on any agreements to give evidence to or to cooperate with the criminal justice system and other authorities.
  - There shall be no penalties for victims of trafficking in countries of origin, transit or destination. Victims of trafficking must never be treated as illegal immigrants or any other way criminalized.
  - Protection and support must be provided to all women and children who are victims of trafficking regardless of their legal status, or the presence or absence of documents showing their status.
  - Destination countries must establish mechanisms for legal migration. Counter-trafficking strategies should not be used as a means to stem legal migration.
  - A person must be granted protection as soon as she is recognized as a victim of trafficking and must be granted rights as stated in article 6 of the Palermo Protocol,

including all forms of social, employment, legal and housing support, as well as comprehensive health services and specifically access to sexual and reproductive health rights.

- National legislation should ensure the right to compensation to victims of trafficking for physical, psychological and material damages.
- Prevention strategies of countries of origin must reflect and be reflected in poverty reduction and social development strategies with specific reference to economic opportunities for women.
- Long term prevention strategies must address the root causes of trafficking and these include poverty, discrimination, racism, patriarchal structures, violence against women, fundamentalisms, gender inequality, lack of social safety nets, money laundering, corruption, political instability, conflicts and uncontrolled zones, barriers and disparities between countries.
- All governments must introduce measures that recognize the unequal power relations between women and men and must introduce positive measures to promote the empowerment of women in all areas of life.
- Forced marriage can be seen as a form of trafficking and is a gross violation of women's and girls' human rights and a form of violence against women, particularly sexual violence. Governments must take all necessary measures, including legal and policy measures, to eliminate this practice.
- Governments must develop a comprehensive witness protection mechanism including the legal representation and protection of the privacy of victims, anonymous certified statements in courts, and special protection throughout the duration of the criminal proceedings.
- Governments must strengthen legislation and the enforcement of the legislation in relation to sanctions against all perpetrators of trafficking including transnational criminals. The states must establish special funds supplied by confiscated asset or by fines paid by traffickers who are convicted in criminal proceedings.
- Research must be conducted in the countries and regions of origin, transit and destination in order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of human trafficking and to develop effective strategies to combat trafficking in women and children.
- Trade agreements and agreements related to development cooperation must be monitored from a gender perspective with specific reference to countries and situations where trafficking in women and children is known to be a reality.
- In relation to the demand that fosters trafficking, governments shall adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures, such as educational, social or cultural measures, including through bilateral or multilateral cooperation, to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking.

#### **IV. EMERGING ISSUES**

The Emerging Issues workshop, coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, highlighted critical areas that either were not adequately covered in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Outcomes Document from the Beijing + 5 Review, and/or have intensified in the past decade. An overarching concern of the group was the way in which global forces that have intensified over the decade since Beijing have often eroded support for and attention to women's human rights. In particular, the growth of militarism and fundamentalisms



of many kinds and the growing inequities produced by globalization were seen as detrimental to the achievement of the Platform.

We reject all excuses for violations of women's human rights whether justified in the name of "national security" or "cultural heritage" or religion. The global "war on terrorism" should not be used as an excuse to undermine any group's human rights or to neglect the critical issues of women's daily human insecurity. We see multilateralism as the way to address global security concerns. Politics of greed, exclusion, domination and military power have failed women in the UNECE region.

We call upon governments to develop better alternatives for our collective future human security based in respect for all human rights.

### Section 1

**Militarism:** the current geopolitical context is one of war, heightened military spending, promotion of a culture of violence in daily life, and increased transnational crime and corruption. The primary victims are civilians, particularly women and children. *Governments* should counter this climate related to "the war on terror" by promoting peace, disarmament, and intercultural dialogue. Military budgets must be reduced, with spending shifted to poverty reduction, development and the protection of human rights. The *United Nations* should implement Resolution 1325 through actions, an audit, and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur; *UN peacekeeping forces*: include more women in decision making; develop gender monitoring mechanisms and trainings on local contexts; end impunity for violence perpetrated by peacekeepers. *International organizations* working on organized crime must review their activities, increase transparency, disclose full budgets, and increase discussion of their work.

**Fundamentalisms:** women oppose all forms of fundamentalisms because they create and demonize "the Other" and use religion, cultural heritage, nationalism and ethnicity to obtain political power and to control women's lives. Governments must ensure that civic rights laws are implemented and enforced. The principle of secularity should be respected by each state in all its policies. Governments must refuse all interference of fundamentalisms in education. Secularity respects equally non-belief and beliefs. We reject the use of tradition and ethnicity to prevent women from enjoying their full reproductive and sexual rights.

**Sexual Rights:** sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws and in international and regional human rights and consensus documents. All women, including young women, have the right to make informed choices about all aspects of their sexual lives, including their sexual pleasure, sexual autonomy and sexual orientation; must have access to comprehensive sexuality education, and confidential sexual and reproductive health services, including those related to safe and legal abortion. All women must be free to establish all forms of families and to exercise their sexual rights free from gender-based violence and coercion, including FGM, forced and early marriage, so-called honour killings and domestic violence. Governments must create enabling conditions to ensure that all women and girls enjoy the full range of sexual rights. The Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against

women should include how gender-based violence violates women's sexual rights and recommendations to end it.

**HIV/AIDS:** women's experience and gender equality must be central to decisions about access to treatment, the links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS, or any other aspects of the HIV pandemic. Prevention and treatment programmes must be anchored in a human rights framework, and governments have the responsibility to protect and fulfil the human rights of people affected by HIV/AIDS. Strategies must encompass sexual and reproductive health and rights with special attention to young women, through the promotion of comprehensive sexuality education. Female controlled prevention methods such as microbicides and female condoms must be accessible and women must be involved in the design and delivery of antiretroviral programmes.

**Information and Communications Technology:** to ensure full participation of women of all ages and cultural backgrounds in information societies, governments must ensure that all ICT programmes, investments and policies, including WSIS, consistently incorporate gender indicators and benchmarking, and are accountable for evaluation. They must provide affordable access to and education on effective use of ICTs, and empower women to generate, own, develop, use and shape ICTs in content and policies. Regulatory frameworks addressing violent and stereotypical images that exploit women must be developed with all stakeholders, particularly women, and must not enforce censorship or surveillance that limits access to information or invades privacy.

**Public Services:** trends toward deregulation, privatization and cuts in public services previously provided largely by the state and that adversely affect women are of concern. The state has a duty to provide water, sanitation, and primary health care, education and care services for children and other dependent people. We oppose the shift of costs from the state to household, which often creates particular hardship for women. The state is accountable for the quality and equal access of public services; any changes should be subject to a gender impact assessment.

The group also expressed concern about two topics not developed in depth:

- **Biotechnology/New Technology:** Gender equality and women's human rights as well as women's participation must be guaranteed in the research, design and implementation of new technologies, including new reproductive technology and nanotechnology.
- **Women and the Environment:** the escalating degradation of the earth requires governments to address the consequences of war and conflict, unrestrained economic growth, depletion of natural resources and pollution of air and water. It is urgent to involve women at all levels of decision-making, including specialists, economists and scientists.

## Section 2

The Beijing Platform and the Beijing + 5 Outcomes Document acknowledge the differential impact of issues on different groups of women. We affirm the need to look at such diversity in implementing the Platform and call upon governments to affirm the human rights of all women, regardless of whether they are named there. The group affirms the need for attention to all oppressed groups of women, and looks at seven constituencies in the UNECE region. While

these women are often victimized in ways requiring particular attention, they are not only victims but also can be agents whose knowledge and perspectives prove vital to creating new approaches to issues.

**Roma Women:** In most of the CEE/CIS countries, Roma women and girls often live in extreme poverty and face social exclusion and multiple forms of discrimination. We demand that state parties mainstream Romany women and girls' issues throughout national strategies, including on Romany communities, and allocate financial resources for effective implementation.

**Indigenous Women:** As reflected in the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they are "equal in dignity and rights to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such". Indigenous women's issues must be included in all recommendations put forward in implementing the BPFA and in other areas.

**Women with disabilities:** Recognizing that women with disabilities are subject to multiple forms of discrimination, efforts should be undertaken to include relevant text in the "international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities".

**Lesbians and Bisexual women:** All lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people who identify as women or girls are entitled to the full enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

**Youth:** Young women have the right to participate in the design, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes in all sectors, not just those identified as being specifically related to youth, and to be compensated appropriately by NGOs and governments for their work.

**Older women:** Population aging is a gender issue. Well-being in later life is directly related to experiences across the life course; the greater disadvantages women face throughout their lives can lead to poverty, isolation and poor health.

**Widows:** The number of widows of all ages has risen. Poverty and marginalization of widows can expose them and their children to violence in all forms. Governments and the international community must provide benefits and services where needed and devise appropriate public policies.

## **V. LINKS BETWEEN BEIJING+10 AND MDGs: PROPOSAL FOR THE FUTURE**

The working group expresses its concern about the lack of linkage between the Beijing PFA and MDGs at the UN and national level. "Without progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women, none of the MDGs will be achieved". In fact, six of the MDGs stem directly from the BPFA: poverty, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, health of mothers and sustainable environment. To speed up implementation of BPFA and strengthen the implementation of the MDGs, they should be linked "horizontally".

The Group wishes to remind UNECE Governments that UN conferences on women are not theme conferences, but an opportunity for women to come together and make up their minds on all issues on the UN agenda. Such conferences are an ideal opportunity for interaction with governments and civil society representatives. They are needed as long as other UN major conferences have an overwhelming male majority.

Recommendations:

- Women are participants and not “target” groups when it comes to UN Conferences.
- All MDGs should be gender mainstreamed and a gender sensitive budget and effective evaluation should be made for each goal.
- UNECE Governments should provide adequate resources to implement the Beijing BPFA and the MDGs and indicate the proportion of funds earmarked for the empowerment and capacity building of women.
- The NGO Committee on CSW in New York should convene an NGO strategy meeting during the forty-ninth CSW Session on prerequisites and feasibility of a fifth UN World Conference of Women before or in 2010 and/or alternatives.