

Issues Paper
CSW Interactive Panel Discussion on
“Addressing the linkages between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration: Progress, gaps and challenges”
3 March 2005, 3.00 p.m.- 6.00 p.m.

Background

The Millennium Declaration, adopted by United Nations Member States in September 2000, represents a global political commitment towards the promotion of sustainable human development, peace and security, human rights, democracy and good governance. The Millennium Declaration built upon the outcomes of the twelve major summits and conferences of the 1990s, at which Governments agreed on development goals in the social and economic fields to be implemented at national, regional and international levels, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA). The BPFA embodies the commitment of the international community to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and to the promotion of international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The outcome document of the five-year review of implementation at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000 reaffirmed the BPFA, emphasized the crucial links between the advancement of women, gender equality and progress for society as a whole, and identified further action required to achieve the full implementation of the Platform for Action.

The Millennium Declaration is a common framework for internationally agreed goals and states that “The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured”¹. States resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable². States also resolved to combat all forms of violence against women; and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women³. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were considered to be both objectives in themselves and means to achieve overall progress in development.

Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁴, to be achieved by 2015, were subsequently formulated. Progress was to be assessed on the basis of specific targets (16) and indicators (48), most of which are addressed by the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and the outcome document. Goal 3 of the MDGs is to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. It calls for elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015. The four indicators associated with Goal 3 concern the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

¹ A/RES/55/2, para 6

² *ibid.*, para 20

³ *ibid.*, para 25

⁴ Millennium Development Goals: 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. Achieve universal primary education; 3. Promote gender equality and empower women; 4. Reduce child mortality; 5. Improve maternal health; 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. Ensure environmental sustainability; 8. Develop a global partnership for development

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, is a requirement for the full achievement of all other internationally agreed goals. Conversely, achieving the other internationally agreed development goals has implications for the full achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The integration of gender perspectives throughout efforts to achieve all goals is therefore critical for progress in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Successful implementation of development goals will only be possible if gender perspectives are fully mainstreamed into all areas covered by the Millennium Declaration, including human rights protection and promotion, peace and security, and democracy and good governance.

Monitoring and reporting processes enable governments and other stakeholders to review progress and challenges in achieving gender equality across all internationally agreed development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and in the outcomes of major summits and conferences, including the Beijing Platform for Action. In relation to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General's most recent report⁵ noted that while there had been progress in gender equality in education, progress towards other indicators under Goal 3 lagged behind.

Achievements and challenges identified

Some responses from Governments to the questionnaire for the ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action indicated among their achievements, increased linkages between gender policies, overall national development frameworks, and policy instruments addressing the MDGs, as well as some increased collaboration between national coordination mechanisms, including national machineries for the advancement of women and gender equality, and bodies set up to monitor the implementation of the MDGs. However, full integration of gender perspectives into the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and MDGs and utilization of the synergies with the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document are yet to be achieved.

Issues for consideration

At its forty-eighth session in 2004, the Commission decided to focus on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly through the expanded use of interactive dialogue, with broad-based participation of governmental delegations at the highest level of responsibility and expertise and of civil society and organizations within the United Nations system, bearing in mind the need to integrate a gender perspective in the implementation and review of the United Nations Millennium Declaration⁶. The Chairperson of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women was also requested to transmit its outcome, through ECOSOC, to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, including to the high-level event of the General Assembly on the review of the Millennium Declaration. The High-level Plenary meeting will be held from 14-16 September 2005.

A Note by the Secretariat⁷ as an input to the ECOSOC high-level segment provides an overview of intergovernmental outcomes that considered the linkages between gender equality and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. An Expert Group Meeting on Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals will be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women from 7-10

⁵ A/59/282, paras. 55-56, and 58.

⁶ CSW Resolution 48/5

⁷ E/CN.6/2005/CRP.4

February in Baku, Azerbaijan, to provide further inputs. The report will be available in late February, prior to the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The panel discussion should address opportunities and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Panelists and participants in the discussion should present examples of actions that have led or could lead to greater synergies in implementation and achievement of goals. There should be a strong focus on enhancing consultation with and participation of a broader range of stakeholders in policy-making, implementation, monitoring and advocacy.

a. Policy issues

The discussion surrounding gender equality and the empowerment of women has focused to a large extent on MDG 3, and on its associated targets and indicators and the linkages to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are not made clear. The gender perspectives of the other internationally agreed development goals, and the gender perspectives contained in the other areas of attention of the Millennium Declaration, in particular peace and security, democracy and good governance, and their relevance to the implementation of the Platform for Action, have not been consistently addressed. Participants could provide information on how the enhanced mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all areas of the Millennium Declaration, on the basis of the commitments made in the Platform for Action, might advance full implementation.

In the Millennium Declaration, Governments committed themselves to spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development⁸. Although there is a growing understanding of the importance of a rights-based approach in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, the recognition of linkages with international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been limited. Participants could indicate how a rights-based approach can be enhanced in national implementation efforts.

In their advocacy efforts, stakeholders have recognized that the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and the targets and indicators associated with the internationally agreed goals can be efficiently used to promote the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome document of the special session, and vice-versa. Participants could provide concrete examples of how recognizing and building on synergies can strengthen the future implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at national, regional and international level.

b. Implementation and monitoring

Linking the systematic, consistent and regular monitoring of the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and the Platform for Action is critical. Challenges identified included a lack of capacity, statistics and resources, as well as insufficient targets and indicators. Participants could provide good practice examples of how integrated monitoring processes that ensure attention to linking implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, have led to enhanced progress at national level. Examples could be provided on enhancing synergies, for example through improved collection and use of sex-

⁸ A/RES/55/2, para 24

disaggregated statistics and gender-specific data, in accordance with recommendations in the Platform for Action, in the preparation of national MDG reports, or linking the Platform for Action to the MDGs in the preparation of the national response to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Platform for Action.

Participants could provide examples of how the development, adaptation and use of specific national and regional targets and indicators on gender equality has enhanced national and regional monitoring and implementation of both the Platform for Action and other internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and indicate where changes may be required at the global level to usefully enhance future monitoring of the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.

c. Institutional arrangements, including coordination and collaboration:

Participants could provide information on institutional mechanisms and how these have interacted in implementation and monitoring processes. In particular, participants could focus on the role of national machineries, MDG monitoring committees or other bodies monitoring the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the goals contained therein, and how the involvement or lack of involvement of such bodies has affected implementation and monitoring processes.

Consultation with and participation of external stakeholders, including civil society, women's groups and networks, and the effects of a lack thereof, should also be specifically addressed. Participants might provide examples of how collaboration of national institutions and other external stakeholders has led to greater synergies at the national level, and indicate additional actions which could be undertaken in this respect.

Collaboration and coordination between institutions involved in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals in enhancing synergies, and ways to improve the effectiveness of efforts in this regard, should be discussed.