

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1 – 12 March 2010**

**Interactive expert panel on
“Linkages between implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
and the achievement of the MDGs”**

Thursday, 4 March 2010, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

ISSUES PAPER

I. Background

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, remains the global agenda for women’s human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Platform covers 12 critical areas of concern: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment; and the girl child. For each critical area of concern, strategic objectives are identified, as well as a detailed catalogue of related actions to be taken by Governments and other stakeholders, at national, regional and international level. At the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, Governments agreed on further actions to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action and to ensure that commitments for gender equality, development and peace are fully realized.

In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000 (A/RES/55/2), Member States confirmed their resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate truly sustainable development. The importance of ensuring the equal human rights of women and men and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) were also highlighted in the Millennium Declaration.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), derived from the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the global conferences of the 1990s, are accompanied by a series of time-bound and measurable targets for advancing development and reducing poverty by 2015 or earlier. The MDGs aim to: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (goal 1); achieve universal primary education (goal 2); promote gender equality and empower women (goal 3); reduce child mortality (goal 4); improve maternal health (goal 5); combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (goal 6); ensure environmental sustainability (goal 7); and develop a global partnership for development (goal 8).

There is now broad recognition that gender equality is both a goal in itself, as well as a means towards the achievement of all the MDGs. While MDG 3 and MDG 5 are gender-

specific, there are clear gender dimensions in all the MDGs: achievement of MDG 3 is essential for the achievement of all other MDGs. Conversely, achieving the MDGs has implications for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

2010 provides a significant opportunity for Governments and other stakeholders to accelerate progress towards gender equality. The review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Commission on the Status of Women in March; the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review in July; and the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to review progress towards the achievement of all the MDGs in September; should result in strengthening of policies, strategies and plans and in new actions at all levels to ensure a more equitable, gender-sensitive and sustainable pattern of growth and development.

II. Critical issues

Fifteen years after the Beijing Platform of Action was adopted, many Member States are implementing national strategies, policies and action plans for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. During the past 15 years significant knowledge has been acquired about what works, good practices and lessons learned, essential for addressing gaps and challenges in the promotion of gender equality¹. Despite some important progress in a number of areas, gender inequalities remain and have recently been exacerbated by multiple global crises,² and the Platform for Action remains to be fully implemented at the national level.

Evidence shows that progress for women in many areas covered by the MDGs lags behind overall gains, including access to full employment and decent work, participation in decision-making across all sectors, and access to health services, including reproductive health services. Women continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty, with limited access to labour markets. They still account for nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults and remain underrepresented at senior decision-making levels in all areas. The reduction of maternal mortality has been slow and almost negligible for the developing world as a whole. Of all the MDGs the least progress has been made in MDG5 on maternal health. Every year, 536,000 women and girls die as a result of complications during pregnancy, childbirth or the six weeks following delivery. Almost all of these deaths (99 per cent) occur in developing countries.³

The Platform for Action, and in particular the strategic objectives and related actions in the 12 critical areas of concern, provide comprehensive guidance for achieving all the MDGs in a gender-responsive manner, and for effectively mainstreaming gender perspectives in all areas covered by the MDG framework. The slow and uneven progress for women and girls in regard to all the MDGs suggests that the global policy framework on gender equality and empowerment of women, in particular the Platform for Action,

¹ See E/CN.6/2010/2, and regional synthesis reports at

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/regional_review.html

² Report of the Expert Group Meeting on "The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals." (EGM/BPFA-MDG/2009/REPORT)

³ United Nations (2009). Millennium Development Goals Report

remains insufficiently used as basis for policy-making and programming aimed at the achievement of the MDGs.

Experience with gender-responsive initiatives to achieve the MDGs is growing. Consultative processes, involving national mechanisms for gender equality, women's groups and networks, contribute to strengthen the links between policy frameworks for achieving gender equality and those aimed at achieving the MDGs.⁴ National responses to the questionnaire on the 15-year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action, for example, indicated that some countries have added national gender-sensitive targets and indicators, including on violence against women, to the global set of goals. Countries are increasingly endeavouring to use available data disaggregated by sex to measure progress towards all the MDGs. Efforts to mainstream gender equality perspectives in national MDG monitoring and reporting have increased.⁵

A renewed focus on the implementation of all the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action and the gender mainstreaming strategy can lead to positive development outcomes and accelerate achievement of the MDGs. There is also a need to strengthen the capacity to systematically track and monitor resources for gender equality and empowerment of women, including through gender-responsive budgeting.⁶

III. Format and outcome of the interactive expert panel

The panel will take the form of an interactive dialogue. Three expert panellists will make introductory presentations of 10-12 minutes. Member States, United Nations system entities and non-governmental organizations will be encouraged to share innovative approaches and experiences and results achieved, as well as specific challenges, in implementing the Platform for Action and achieving the MDGs, and/or respond to the panellists' presentations. Interventions from the floor will be limited to three minutes. A moderator's summary of the dialogue will be prepared and posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The summary will contribute to the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review in July 2010 and the September 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on accelerating progress towards the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

IV. Issues for consideration in the interactive dialogue

The dialogue provides an opportunity to share experiences and discuss strategies for accelerating progress towards the MDGs through enhanced implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The following issues could be considered:

- What policies, strategies and actions for the promotion of gender equality have so far had the most significant impact towards achieving the MDGs?

⁴ E/CN.6/2010/2

⁵ E/CN.6/2010/2

⁶ E/CN.6/2008/2

- What kinds of processes and institutional frameworks have facilitated the development and implementation of gender-responsive strategies and actions towards achieving the MDGs?
- How can different stakeholders, including Governments, international organizations and civil society, more effectively bring the experiences, good practices and successful interventions from the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action into national MDG processes?
- What policy responses are needed to avoid reversing the gains already made towards the achievement of gender equality and the realization of the MDGs in view of the current global crises?
- What types of collaboration and cooperation are needed to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs?
- How can accountability for gender equality and empowerment of women be strengthened?