

## **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

### **2010 Thematic Discussion**

#### **Special policy dialogue**

#### ***“The role of women in countries in special situations”***

**30 June 2010**

**Conference Room 3, NLB  
UN Headquarters, New York**

- The special policy dialogue on *“The role of women in countries in special situations”* will be held on 30 June 2010 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, during the High-Level Segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.
- There is a disproportionate impact of the current crisis on countries in special situations, such as in Africa, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDSs), and post-conflict and post-crisis countries. Crises, ranging from climate change and natural disasters to conflict and economic downturns, severely threaten the path of development and have an unequal impact on the most vulnerable segments of their population, among them many women. As the advancement of gender equality and empowerment of women have a strong multiplier effect on political, economic and social development, special considerations need to be factored into development planning and programmes that take into account the different needs of women and men.
- The policy dialogue will provide an opportunity to discuss gender equality perspectives in countries in special situations and to share experiences on ways of overcoming obstacles and challenges preventing women’s inclusion and participation in decision-making and planning in the aftermath of crises.
- At the inter-governmental level, there is an increased recognition of the importance of gender equality and empowerment of women to effective crisis response, as well as to sustainable economic growth and development. Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), for example, call for women’s increased participation in peace processes, the elimination of sexual violence in armed conflict, the protection and promotion of women’s human rights and mainstreaming of gender equality perspectives in the context of armed conflict, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and reconstruction. In addition, the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015), which outlines an international strategy for disaster reduction, stipulates that a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, education and training. The question now is how to advance implementation of these and other mandates and commitments to effectively empower women in countries in special situations. There are good and promising practices to build on.
- In this context, the policy dialogue will address the specific roles and challenges for women in countries in special situations in three different policy areas:
  1. *Governance – women’s participation in decision-making and planning;*
  2. *Economic development – women’s economic empowerment; and*
  3. *Social development – women’s social empowerment.*

- *Governance – women’s participation in decision-making and planning* - The political involvement of women and their equal participation in decision-making processes in post-crisis and post-conflict periods is vital for relief operation to be effective. Sustainable relief strategies can impact the long-term objective of promoting gender equality and empowering women in societies coping with crisis and conflict. Overlooking the needs and priorities of women and girls, including in terms of physical security, access to basic services and control of productive assets and income, can have devastating consequences for sustainable development.
- *Economic development – women’s economic empowerment* - The challenge of women’s economic empowerment in post-crisis and post-conflict situations is rarely recognized. For example, while every civilian faces problems such as continuing presence of landmines, scarcity of implements and other inputs and difficulties in accessing markets, women who typically do not have land titles may find it difficult to earn enough income and to access resources to sustain the family even when they have become the sole breadwinner. The informal sector usually becomes the most significant employer in this context, and here too women face considerable difficulties when traditional networks have been broken.
- *Social development – women’s social empowerment* - In times of crisis, access to health care, education and livelihood may be severely affected and all forms of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, may be exacerbated. Yet, in many crisis situations women continue to be excluded from needs assessment and planning in social policy setting and there tends to be inadequate recognition of and financing for social development needs.

#### **PANELISTS**

##### **Opening remarks:**

- **H.E. Ambassador Octavio Errázuriz**, Vice-President of ECOSOC, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations
- **Mr. Patrick Hayford**, Director, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, on behalf of **Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra**, Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Africa and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

##### **Panelists:**

- **Ms. Carla Koppell**, Director of Initiative for Inclusive Security (Moderator)
- **Ms. Leymah Gbowee**, Executive Director, Women in Peace and Security Network Africa
- **Ms. Frances Stewart**, Director of Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Department for International Development, University of Oxford
- **Mr. Jan Egeland**, Director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
- **Ms. Graciana del Castillo**, Senior Research Scholar, Columbia University

##### **Co-Organizers:**

- UNDP, OCHA, PBSO, OHRRLLS, OSAA, UNIFEM, DESA