Division for the Advancement of Women
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Capacity Building for Promoting Gender Equality in African Countries

AIDE-MEMOIRE

Meeting on
Strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of
information and communication technologies

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
28-30 September 2005

I. Introduction

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), is organizing a meeting on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for senior representatives from national machineries for the advancement of women in Africa, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

The three-day meeting will take place at the ECA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 28 to 30 September 2005. Participants include: one national machinery expert representative per country; one ICT policy-maker per sub-region; one to two WSIS Secretariat representatives; and one to two members of the WSIS Gender Caucus. Participants from the UN ICT Task Force will also be invited.

The meeting in Ethiopia will draw on lessons learned from four sub-regional workshops organized for all national machineries in Africa as well as progress made in establishing sub-regional e-networks and national websites and integrating gender perspectives into national ICT policies and activities.

II. Background

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that national machineries for the advancement of women have been established in almost every Member State to, *inter alia,* design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women. National machineries for the advancement of women are the central policy-coordinating units in governments. One of their main tasks is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas.

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-seventh session, considered the role of ICTs in relation to gender equality. The panel discussion on "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and

their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women", emphasized the role of ICTs and the media as tools for development and as central to the empowerment of women. Media and ICTs were increasingly used to share knowledge, enhance participation of all members of society, increase networking, give voice to marginalized groups, organize political action, empower people, fight poverty and enhance economic development. In addition to access, the issues of women's information needs and available content were addressed in the panel. Participants called for research on women's information needs and the production of local content in local language.

In its Agreed Conclusions, the Commission on the Status of Women noted that "the media and ICTs offer tools for enhancing women's full access to the benefits of information and new technologies and can become central tools for women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality" (para 2). One action to be taken was to "strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women, including through the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources and the provision of technical expertise, to take a lead advocacy role with respect to media and ICTs and gender equality, and support their involvement in national, regional and international processes related to media and ICTs issues, and enhance coordination among ministries responsible for ICTs, national machineries for the advancement of women, the private sector and gender advocacy NGOs within countries" (para 4(x)).

The meeting is organized as part of the project, "Capacity-building for national machineries for the advancement of women in promoting gender equality in Africa", which has the overall objective of building institutional capacity for promoting gender equality in Africa.

The four sub-regional workshops, held from April 2004 to May 2005 in Namibia, Senegal and Ethiopia, aimed to develop the capacity of national machineries of participating countries to take full advantage of new information and communications technologies to strengthen networking, information sharing and knowledge management to enhance their effectiveness in national policy-making and planning processes for gender equality.

Sub-regional e-based networks of national machineries were established during these workshops to strengthen the capacity of national machineries to implement their mandates, for example, by facilitating exchange on their work as advocates and catalysts for gender equality The development of a website prototype for national machineries for the advancement of women was initiated to expand opportunities for information dissemination within the national context as well as at sub-regional and regional levels.

The project will draw on the expertise of African professionals, national ICT policy makers, African representatives of WSIS Secretariat and representatives of the United Nations ICT Task Force.

III. Meeting on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies

A. Objective of the meeting

The objective is to consolidate the achievements made at the four sub-regional workshops.

The meeting will:

* Draw lessons on progress made in establishing the national websites and sub-regional e-networks, progress in integrating gender perspectives into national ICT policies, including through the exchange of good practices, and the status of implementation of national action plans;

* Establish a regional e-based network of national machineries from participating countries to strengthen cooperation and information sharing through regular information dissemination on women's and gender issues, including via electronic media and the internet;

* Develop inputs from national machineries to the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), including modalities for a panel discussion during the summit and a declaration on national machineries and ICT;

* Develop a strategic framework for follow-up to the project at national level, including fundraising and training plans.

B. Expected outputs

The meeting will produce the following outputs:

* Documented lessons learned by national machineries on establishing national websites and e-networks, on ways to integrate gender perspectives into national ICT policies;

* A proposal for a regional e-based network of national machineries;

* A strategic framework for follow-up to the project at national level;

* Declaration on National Machineries and ICT to be forwarded to WSIS;

* A proposal for a panel discussion during WSIS

C. Venue and participants

The three-day event will take place at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The number of participants will be approximately **seventy**, including:

- One senior representative of the national machinery per country (53);

- Five ICT policy makers: one from each previous workshop from all sub-regions;

- Four to five staff members from Division for the Advancement of Women, including one administrative staff;

- One or two facilitators;

- Representatives from the ECA (ACGD and DISD)

- One to two members of the WSIS Gender Caucus to serve as resource persons.

- One to two participants from the UN ICT Task Force

D.   Organizational and administrative matters

The meeting will be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women in conjunction with the Economic Commission for Africa. This three-day meeting will be convened in plenary as well as in working groups.

During the first day, brief presentations will be made in plenary by five sub-regional representatives, nominated by DAW in collaboration with the ECA, on lessons learned in establishing and implementing their national websites, sub-regional e-based networks, as well as integrating gender perspectives into national ICT polices and developing and implementing national action plans. This will be followed by interactive dialogue.

On the second day, participants will meet in working groups to develop proposals on a common framework for the way forward, both at the national and regional levels. This will involve the establishment of a regional e-network. These plans should draw on good practice examples identified during the first day. They should also specify concrete suggestions on fundraising and training required.

Resource persons from ECA and the WSIS gender caucus will provide information on WSIS II on the third day. Participants will agree on a common strategy for participation of national machineries in WSIS II, including modalities of a panel discussion, proposal of possible participants and follow-up. They will also adopt a Declaration to be submitted to the WSIS in Tunis.

E. Interpretation

The meeting will be conducted in English with interpretation into French.

F.   Documentation

The documentation of the meeting will comprise of relevant background papers, including United Nations documents.

G.   Budget

The Division for the Advancement of Women will make available funds required to cover expenses for the organization of the meeting. This will include the costs of travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) for all invited participants, as well as for consultants and resource persons.

H.   Passports and Visas

Participants will be expected to make necessary arrangements with regard to passports, visa and health certificates for travel. An information note will be sent out to participants to assist them with travel arrangements. All relevant correspondence should be addressed to:

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