

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

AIDE-MEMOIRE

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

Tunis, Tunisia
18 November 2005

I. Introduction

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), is organizing a panel on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT), to be held as a parallel event during the World Summit for the Information Society in Tunis, Tunisia in November 2005.

The panel will take place on 18 November 2005, from 3 to 5 pm in Conference Room Béja, Kram Conference Centre. The panel will draw on lessons learned from four sub-regional workshops and one regional meeting organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women for all national machineries in Africa during 2004 and 2005. Panellists will include one representative of national machineries for the advancement of women from each of the sub-regions.

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, including national ICT policy.

At its forty-seventh session in 2003, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted agreed conclusions 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”. The Commission noted that the media and ICT 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. 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 ICT and gender equality, and support their involvement in national,

regional and international processes related to media and ICT issues, and enhance coordination among ministries responsible for ICT, national machineries for the advancement of women, the private sector and gender advocacy NGOs within countries.

The Declaration of Principles, adopted on 12 December 2003 at the World Summit on the Information Society, emphasized that the development of information and communication technologies provided enormous opportunities for women, who should form an integral part of, and be key actors in, the Information Society. Member States expressed their commitment to ensuring that the Information Society enabled women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. They agreed that gender perspectives should be mainstreamed into all sectors of development and ICT used as a tool to that end.

The panel is organized as part of the project "Capacity-building for national machineries for the advancement of women in promoting gender equality in Africa and Western Asia" that has the overall objective of building institutional capacity for promoting gender equality.

Within this project, four sub-regional workshops have been held in Africa, in Namibia, Senegal and Ethiopia (2) in 2004 and 2005 with the objective of developing 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.

During these workshops, sub-regional lists of national machineries were established to encourage national machineries to use ICT to implement their mandates, for example, by facilitating exchange of information on advocacy and on working as catalysts for gender mainstreaming. The development of a website prototype for national machineries for the advancement of women was initiated to expand opportunities for information management and dissemination within the national context, as well as at sub-regional and regional levels.

At the regional meeting, held in Addis Ababa in September 2005, representatives of national machineries and ICT policy makers adopted a Declaration and a Strategic Framework for Further Action, and established an e-network for national machineries in the African region.

III. Panel on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of information and communication technologies

The objective of the panel is to provide an opportunity for national machineries for the advancement of women to inform participants at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in November 2005 about progress made by national machineries in effectively using ICT in support of their work, as well as to highlight the specific challenges and constraints faced by national machineries in accessing or using ICT for their work, and to solicit support in addressing these challenges and constraints.

Panellists will:

- Highlight lessons learned and progress made in establishing national websites, national and sub-regional e-networks, and in utilizing ICT to support advancement of their goals, including by integrating gender perspectives into national ICT policies, including the status of implementation of national gender and ICT action plans;
- Emphasize the specific challenges that national machineries face as they use ICT in their work;
- Present the regional e-network of national machineries as well as the Declaration and Strategic Framework for Further Action, adopted at the meeting in Addis Ababa in September 2005.

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

D. Contact persons

Roselyn Odera
Chief, Gender Analysis Section
Division for the Advancement of Women
Tel: (917) 367 4352
Fax. (212) 963 3463
E-mail: oderar@un.org

Anna Fälth Modersitzki
Gender Analysis Section
Division for the Advancement of Women
Tel (917) 367 3124
Fax. (212) 963 3463
E-mail: modersitzki@un.org