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BEIJING +15 REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING

Geneva, 2-3 November 2009

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1. At its meeting on 24 September 2008, the Executive Committee of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) supported the organization of the Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting in the ECE region in preparation of the global review of the progress made in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the Outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly in 2000, which will take place at the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010.
2. The Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting was held on 2-3 November 2009.
3. The meeting was organized in partnership with regional organizations with specific expertise and experience in the areas addressed, namely the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Furthermore, the ECE secretariat worked in close cooperation with the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women in order to ensure linkages between the regional and global levels of the review.
4. Prior to the meeting, non-governmental organizations organized an NGO Forum on 30-31 October 2009.

I. ATTENDANCE

5. The meeting was attended by representatives from 53 ECE member States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Uzbekistan.
6. Representatives of the Holy See participated under Article 8 of the Commission's terms of reference.
7. Representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental organizations were in attendance.
8. The meeting was attended by 372 participants, including 115 representatives from 52 non-governmental organizations.
9. The list of participants is available at the ECE website:
<http://www.uncece.org/gender/Beijing15.html>.

II. OPENING SESSION

(Agenda item 1)

10. The meeting was opened by Mr. Ján Kubiš, ECE Executive Secretary, and by Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (on behalf of the Secretary-General).

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

(Agenda item 2)

11. The following officers were elected:

Chairperson: Mr. Marc Giacomini (France)

Vice-Chairpersons: Ms. Filloreta Kodra (Albania), Ms. Tetiana Kondratiuk (Ukraine),
Mr. Frederik Arthur (Norway)

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

(Agenda item 3)

12. The meeting adopted its agenda and organization of work (ECE/AC.28/2009/1).

V. REGIONAL REVIEW OF PROGRESS

(Agenda item 4)

13. The regional review of progress was opened with introductory remarks by Mr. Ján Kubiš, ECE Executive Secretary. Subsequently, Heads of Delegations as well as NGOs and international organizations were given the floor to present the progress made during the past years in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the challenges ahead. Statements were made by 38 member States under this agenda item.

VI. THEMATIC DEBATES

14. The meeting was organized around the three substantive issues on the agenda. Each session or sub-session was chaired by the chairperson of the conference and introduced by three to four panellists consisting of Government representatives, specialized agencies, international organizations, NGOs as well as independent experts on the relevant subject. The presentations of the panellists were followed by an interactive debate for each panel. Representatives of NGOs presented conclusions and recommendations from the NGO Forum at each substantive session.

A. Gender-sensitive economic policies in the context of the economic and financial crisis

(Agenda item 5)

(a) Panel 1

15. Panellists and titles of interventions: Ms. B. Pyke, Director, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission: “*Gender equality in EU labour markets: challenges and policies*”; Ms. J. Trenevskva, Advisor for gender, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: “*Gender-responsive budgeting – the experience of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*”; Ms. O. Kisselyova, President, Liberal Society Institute, Ukraine: “*A gender approach to social protection policies*”.

(b) Panel 2

16. Panellists and titles of interventions: Ms. B. Adams, Senior Advisor, Global Policy Forum: “*The financial crisis - risks and opportunities*”; Mr. S. Sainciuc, Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Republic of Moldova: “*Poverty, migrants and remittances: the impact of the crisis on vulnerable women in Moldova*”; Ms. E. Kalnina, National Gender Equality Council of Latvia and Coalition for Gender Equality in Latvia: “*The impact of the crisis on work/family reconciliation measures and women’ position in Latvia*”; Ms. C. Gréboval, Policy Director, European Women’s Lobby: “*Gender approach to the economic and financial crisis in the EU*”.

B. Gender and the corporate sector

(Agenda item 6)

17. Panellists and titles of interventions: Ms. J. Hjertø, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Children and Equality, Norway: “*Legislative measures to achieve gender balance on company boards –*

the experience of Norway"; Mr. C. de Vries, Senior Policy Advisor, Directorate Emancipation, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Netherlands: *"Talent to the top": voluntary measures to advance women in decision making – the case of the Netherlands*"; Ms. P. Schulz, Director, Federal Office for Gender Equality, Switzerland: *"Swiss initiatives to eliminate the Gender Pay Gap"*; Ms. D. Jerkov, General Manager, Organization of Business Women, Croatia: *"Women self-employed, access to credit and work/family balance in the Balkans"*.

C. New partnerships, networks, and alliances for gender equality

(Agenda item 7)

(a) Panel 1

18. Panellists and titles of interventions: Ms. M. Buvinic, Director, Gender and Development Section, World Bank: *"World Bank Partnerships supporting gender in Eastern Europe and Central Asia"*; Ms. M. Tarasiewicz, Executive Director, Network of East-West Women / NEWW-Polska: *"EU-CIS Gender Watch: NGO cooperation between new EU Member States and new EU Neighbours"*; Ms. Z. Azhigulova, Deputy Head, Social Development Department, Kyrgyzstan: *"Is ODA supporting policies for gender equality – the case of Kyrgyzstan"*.

(b) Panel 2

19. Panellists and titles of interventions: Ms. Z. Djobarova, Programme Specialist, UNIFEM: *"Partnerships to support gender equality in Europe and the CIS countries – UNIFEM experience"*; Ms. L. Sperl, Programme Specialist, UNDP Regional Center, Bratislava: *"Partnerships to support gender equality in transition economies – UNDP experience"*; Ms. K. Lohmann, Executive Director, KARAT Coalition / WIDE Regional Platform: *"Economic literacy from a gender perspective"*.

VII. CLOSING SESSION AND CHAIRPERSON'S CONCLUSIONS

(Agenda item 8)

20. The chairperson presented the Chairperson's conclusions. The meeting, after comments and amendments unanimously endorsed the Chairperson's conclusions and agreed to forward them, together with the report of the meeting, to the Commission on the Status of Women. The Chairperson's conclusions will serve as the ECE region's input to the Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly, to be held during the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women from 1-12 March 2010 in New York. The Chairperson's Conclusions are annexed to this report.

21. The meeting also agreed to attach the recommendations from the NGO Forum as Addendum 1 to this report.

Annex

CHAIRPERSON'S CONCLUSIONS

On the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and as part of the Beijing +15 review, ECE member States renew their commitment to the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women and girls that restrict their full participation in development processes. Member States emphasize that the achievement of gender equality is an essential condition for sustainable economic growth, and reaffirm the centrality of gender equality for the universal achievement of all Millennium Development Goals. In this context, member States welcome the forthcoming United Nations gender entity and call for its prompt establishment including at country level.

1. As regards the ECE region, priority fields for action in the past five years have been:
 - (a) legislation to address gender-based violence, including domestic violence and trafficking;
 - (b) women in the economy, mainly through narrowing the gap between female and male employment rates and adopting specific measures to combat women's poverty; and
 - (c) the development and strengthening of national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. Notable progress has been achieved in most countries regarding:
 - (a) women's participation in the labour market;
 - (b) women's political participation at local levels;
 - (c) new and/or strengthened legislation on gender-based violence, including domestic violence;
 - (d) institutional mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment.
3. The challenges most frequently mentioned included:
 - (a) the gap between legislation and implementation;
 - (b) decent work for women and measures to counteract labour market segregation;
 - (c) the gender pay gap;
 - (d) the situation of migrant women and women belonging to minority groups, who suffer multiple forms of discrimination;
 - (e) the persistence of gender stereotypes, especially in the media and in education;

- (f) the lack of sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data, and the lack of gender-sensitive indicators;
- (g) the role of men in advancing gender equality, for example through increased sharing of family responsibilities.

4. The following recommendations were highlighted :

- (a) Address specific vulnerabilities through:
 - (i) enforcing new legislation against gender-based violence, including domestic violence, violence in conflicts and trafficking, and developing prevention, protection and assistance measures for victims, as well as sanctions against perpetrators;
 - (ii) combating poverty of women in certain rural areas, including through facilitating ownership of land and productive assets;
 - (iii) defending the rights of women migrant workers and those working in the informal sector, especially in terms of personal safety, and working and social rights.
- (b) Engender national policies through:
 - (i) expanding the breadth and depth of gender-responsive budgeting as one of the main tools for implementing effective gender-sensitive policies;
 - (ii) fostering a mix of policies combining mandatory measures, incentives and awareness-building to accelerate the pace towards parity in economic and political decision-making positions;
 - (iii) engaging a wide range of actors, including NGOs and the private sector, as a means of implementing and monitoring progress on gender equality. This requires the collection of systematic and reliable sex-disaggregated data and statistics, as well as gender-sensitive indicators;

Dialogue and multi-stakeholder partnerships have an essential role in ensuring that gender equality remains high on the agenda, and Official Development Assistance is a key element in this respect.

- (c) Strengthen the situation of women at work through:
 - (i) ensuring that employment and social protection policies and practices take into account women's underemployment and the predominance of women in the informal sector, in precarious jobs, in part-time work and in lower paid work;
 - (ii) developing a policy mix of encouraging, enabling and obliging measures to advance gender equality in the corporate sector, including gender equality in corporate social responsibility agendas, capacity building and

legal frameworks (e. g. quotas, targets, objectives, sanctions and other measures);

- (iii) reconciling work with family responsibilities through legal entitlements such as paid leave for both parents, policy measures to encourage men to meet their family responsibilities, available and affordable quality care for children and dependant adults, and affordable training schemes to facilitate reintegration in the labour market;
- (d) Mitigate the impact of the crisis on women through promoting gender-sensitive analysis of the impact of the crisis and developing countercyclical policies that place priority on job creation and retention, on social sectors such as education, childcare and health, and on protection schemes which benefit the whole population.

The financial crisis can thus be used as an opportunity to design gender-sensitive stimulus packages and social safety nets that involve affordable, quality childcare, parental-leave reform and efforts to close the gender pay gap.
