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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Discussion guide on the Commission on the Status of Women High-level round table

Note by the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women**

I. Organizational aspects and format

A. Background

1. At its forty-sixth session in 2002, the Commission on the Status of Women decided to introduce high-level round tables, as from its forty-seventh session in 2003 (decision 46/101). The Commission authorized its Bureau to decide, after consultation with all interested States through regional groups, on the number, timing and theme of any such meetings. The first high-level round table was held in the Commission on 4 March 2003.

2. Following consultations with regional groups, the Bureau of the Commission held a consultative briefing on 13 January 2004 with all interested Member States to review the organization of a high-level round table at its forty-eighth session. On the basis of those consultations, the theme chosen for the meeting was “Gaps and challenges in measuring progress in implementation, in the context of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session in 2005”. The

* E/CN.6/2004/1.

** The submission of the discussion guide on the Commission on the Status of Women High-level round table was delayed pending the outcome of informal consultations of the Commission.

Bureau decided, in consultation with all interested Member States, to collaborate on the organization of the high-level round table with the Statistical Commission, which will hold its thirty-fifth session from 2 to 5 March 2004.

3. In consultation with all interested Member States, the Bureau also decided to include invited senior representatives of United Nations entities and NGOs in the interactive dialogue during part of the high-level round table.

4. The present discussion guide provides the overall framework for the high-level round table and provides information on the format of the meeting. It also presents a series of questions related to the theme of the high-level round table to guide preparations.

B. Purpose of the high-level round table

5. The purpose of the high-level round table, as set out in decision 46/101, is to further develop opportunities for sharing national experience during the annual session of the Commission, in particular with regard to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and to enhance its working methods.

6. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, the high-level round table will support the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, the identification of obstacles and constraints encountered in the context of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the recognition of new challenges and emerging issues.

C. Theme

7. The theme for the high-level round table during the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women is “Gaps and challenges in measuring progress in implementation, in the context of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session in 2005”. Over the past decade significant advances in policy development at the global and national levels have been achieved through the work of the Commission. Increasingly, its work is focused on the implementation of global policies and recommendations at the national level. The capacity to measure progress, through statistics and indicators, is therefore critical. The high-level round table will focus on gaps and challenges in terms of both producing and using statistics to measure progress in implementation and seek to encourage greater interaction between the users and producers of statistics.

D. Participants

8. The high-level round table will provide an opportunity for an interactive dialogue among senior representatives from capitals attending the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Given the chosen theme of gaps and challenges in measuring progress in implementation, the senior representatives will also be invited to participate in the interactive dialogue. The high-level round

table will be open to other members of the Commission on the Status of Women and observers. In addition, a number of invited senior officials from entities of the United Nations system and representatives of NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council will participate in part of the dialogue. Other representatives of the entities of the United Nations system and NGOs in consultative status with the Council will have the opportunity to observe the dialogue.

E. Format

9. As part of the collaboration with the Statistical Commission, the high-level round table will be co-chaired by the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Vice-Chairperson of the Statistical Commission. The co-chairpersons would guide the discussion in a proactive manner to ensure adherence to the interactive format and avoid repetition.

10. The format of the high-level round table should be a free-flowing exchange of experiences, lessons learned, good practices and gaps and challenges at the national level. Participants are to be invited to make short comments, raise questions, or respond to previous speakers, rather than present prepared statements. Keeping the inputs short will promote interactive dialogue.

11. The first segment of the high-level round table would be devoted to interactive dialogue among high-level representatives from capitals attending the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on gaps and challenges they face in relation to statistics, in monitoring progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, focusing on their role as users of statistics. In the second segment of the high-level round table the senior representatives from capitals to the Statistical Commission, the producers of statistics, would engage in interactive dialogue with the high-level representatives from capitals to the Commission on the Status of Women. The co-chairpersons would also invite other members of the Commission on the Status of Women and observers to participate in the dialogue. Invited senior representatives of United Nations entities and NGOs from all regions will be invited by the co-chairpersons to participate in the final segment of the dialogue.

F. Timing

12. The high-level round table will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Monday, 1 March 2004, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., as part of the forty-eighth session of the Commission.¹

G. Outcome

13. A chairpersons' summary of the high-level round table will be prepared for inclusion in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its forty-eighth session.

II. Elements for discussion in the high-level round table

A. Background

14. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) focused specifically on statistics in strategic objective H.3, generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. Under that objective, recommendations on the collection, compilation, analysis and use of statistics were made to national, regional and international statistical services, research and documentation organizations, Governments, the United Nations, multilateral development institutions and bilateral donors (see A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1, paras. 206-209).

15. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (see General Assembly resolution S-23/3) emphasized that clear knowledge of the situation of women and girls, research-based knowledge and data disaggregated by sex, short and long-term time-bound targets and measurable goals, and follow-up mechanisms to assess progress were required for effective and coordinated plans and programmes for the full implementation of the Platform for Action (annex, para. 64). The lack of data disaggregated by sex and age in many areas and insufficiently applied methods for assessing progress were also identified in the outcome document as some of the main obstacles confronting national machineries (*ibid.*, para. 25).

16. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/270 B, stressed the importance of building statistical capacity in all countries, including through statistical training, and of effective international support in this context for developing countries (para. 34). Collaboration between the various international organizations in the field of statistics was encouraged and concerned United Nations bodies and agencies were called upon to adopt, in consultation with Member States, simplified and harmonized methods and to support developing countries, where needed and requested, in the preparation of reports based on national data and statistics (para. 35).

17. In the same resolution, the Assembly reiterated that the Statistical Commission is the intergovernmental focal point for the elaboration and the review of indicators used by the United Nations system in the context of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels (para. 31) and requested the Statistical Commission to refine and finalize indicators to assess the implementation of commitments and the achievement of the development goals at the national, regional and international levels (para. 50).

B. Discussion guide

18. During the high-level round table, the high-level representatives from capitals should focus on their role as users of statistics. Issues to be raised in the discussion could include:

(a) The ways in which statistics and data are utilized in advocacy, policy-making and monitoring progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document;

(b) The major gaps in statistics which hinder the work of the national machineries in measuring progress at the national level;

(c) Current interaction between the users and producers of statistics and ways to enhance that interaction effectively;

(d) The capacity-building needs of national machineries in relation to statistics and indicators.

19. The delegates from the Statistical Commission would focus on their roles as producers of statistics. Issues which could be raised in the interaction could be:

(a) The challenge of compiling sex-disaggregated statistics as an integral part of official statistics;

(b) The major challenges faced by national statistical systems in meeting the demand of users for data for measuring progress in promoting gender equality at the national level;

(c) Current interaction between the users and producers of statistics and ways to enhance that interaction effectively;

(d) The capacity-building needs within national statistical systems to produce relevant and reliable statistics, in a sustained manner, which allow for an adequate gender analysis and assessment of progress in achieving gender equality.

20. The invited representatives of the United Nations entities would contribute information on:

(a) Efforts to support the national statistical offices or line ministries in different areas;

(b) Support being provided to national machineries in relation to data collection and dissemination for the monitoring of progress;

(c) Efforts made to collect data in areas where serious gaps are experienced;

(d) Efforts to maintain and strengthen existing data collection;

(e) Efforts to coordinate among United Nations entities on data collection and dissemination.

21. The invited representatives of NGOs would focus on their roles in:

(a) Advocacy for improved statistics and indicators at the national level;

(b) Promotion of more effective use of statistics.

22. Guiding questions on statistics and indicators at the national level, included in the questionnaire submitted to Member States for the preparation of the review and appraisal mandated in the multi-year programme of work in the Commission on the Status of Women in 2005, could also provide guidance for the discussion in the high-level panel:

(a) Has a core set of indicators for measuring progress in implementation been established and where is the responsibility for monitoring located?

(b) What gaps and challenges remain in relation to data and statistics?

- (c) In which areas does the lack of sex-disaggregated data continue to pose a problem for policy-making and planning and monitoring and evaluation of progress?
- (d) In which areas, and to what extent, is sex-disaggregated data being used effectively to inform policy-making and planning?
- (e) In which areas do new types of data need to be collected?
- (f) To what extent are national statistical offices and the statistical units in line ministries aware, committed and capable of providing the required data?
- (g) What sources of data and information, apart from the national statistical office, are being used for policy-making and planning purposes?

Notes

- ¹ The proposal to reschedule the high-level round table from Tuesday, 2 March, to Monday, 1 March, has not yet been conveyed in informal consultations with members of the Commission. In order to ensure the timely availability of the present note, the members of the Bureau have, however, consulted within the regional groups on this proposal. There appears to be strong support for that decision. The proposal will be brought by the Bureau to the informal consultations for approval in mid-February 2004.
