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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”:

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

Summary submitted by the Co-Chairpersons Kyung-wha Kang (Republic of Korea) and Katherine K. Wallman (United States of America)

1. At its third meeting, on 1 March 2004, the Commission held a high-level round table (decision 46/101) on 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. In organizing the high-level round table, the Commission collaborated with the Statistical Commission, which held its thirty-fifth session from 2 – 5 March 2004. The event was co-chaired by the Chairperson of the

Commission on the Status of Women and the Vice-Chair and Chairperson-Designate of the thirty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission. The dialogue followed an interactive format in three segments. The first segment was opened by the Co-chairperson from the Commission on the Status of Women and was devoted to a dialogue among senior representatives of national machineries for the advancement of women attending the forty-eighth session of the Commission from capitals. The Co-chairperson from the Statistical Commission opened the second segment and invited senior representatives of the Statistical Commission from capitals to participate in the dialogue with all members and observers of the Commission on the Status of Women. In the final segment, invited senior representatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations were invited to take part in the dialogue. A discussion guide prepared by the Bureau of the Commission supported the dialogue (E/CN.6/2004/CRP.1). A total of 48 speakers participated in the high-level round table. Participants included both producers and users of statistics as follows: eight ministers, nine vice ministers, state secretaries and directors-general/secretaries general, fifteen other senior representatives from national machineries for the advancement of women; three senior officials from Permanent Missions; four senior representatives from the Statistical Commission; six representatives from United Nations entities and three from non-governmental organizations.

2. Participants welcomed the format of the high-level round table and the collaboration among the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission. The topic provided a unique

opportunity for an exchange of views and experiences among users and producers of statistics in regard to measuring progress towards the goal of gender equality.

3. Participants provided examples of institutional structures responsible for collecting and maintaining statistical information at the national level. In many countries, national statistical offices or bureaux, which may be autonomous, had centralized responsibility for the collection of statistics. In addition, line ministries or other offices may collect data and statistics on issues within their area of responsibility. In some instances, mechanisms with responsibility for women's issues and gender equality or gender focal points collected sex disaggregated data, in association with statistical offices, line ministries, or other relevant bodies. Representatives of the Statistical Commission urged users of data on gender equality to work with and make their data needs known to the national statistical offices, line ministries, and other offices in their respective countries.

4. According to participants, one of the purposes of statistics was to enhance the capacity for effective and targeted policy-making. As statistics could be a tool for achieving gender equality, participants stressed the importance of increased co-operation and communication between statistical offices as producers of statistics, and of policy-makers and national machineries for the advancement of women as users of statistics, to ensure the successful collection and use of relevant information. They should be produced using transparent methods and meet user requirements, following the Fundamental

Principles of Official Statistics. Enhanced dialogue, including through designated mechanisms, was called for to clarify user needs and the constraints of producers in data collection. The need for regular dissemination of available data to policy makers was stressed.

5. Participants agreed on the importance of good, reliable, timely and readily available sex disaggregated statistics for measuring progress towards the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the implementation of gender equality policies and strategies, and identification of areas requiring further attention. Participants agreed on the central role of national statistical offices in coordinating and satisfying the demands for gender-related statistics covering population, education, labour, health and many other areas. Statistics were necessary to demonstrate effectively any lack of progress as well as achievements in the status of women. They were critical to identify and document trends, gaps, and barriers in regard to gender equality, to plan and implement well-targeted policies, and to assess the impact of policies and decisions on the situation of women. Statistics were also an effective tool in advocacy. Statistical information is an important element in States' reporting on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in areas such as employment, education, health, participation in public life and decision-making, and violence against women, and in fulfilling reporting obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Gender-specific data were also a tool for successful gender mainstreaming. At the same time, participants identified as a challenge the systematic availability and use of statistics and consolidated findings in ongoing policy-making.

It was also pointed out that a lack of agreement on what information would be collected and how could lead to reduced credibility and loss of confidence in government policies.

6. Participants discussed gaps in data collection, methodological shortcomings, and the implications of poor, insufficient or unreliable statistics for policy-making. Participants also discussed the necessity of coordination among all actors, such as line ministries and civil society, in order to avoid duplication of effort, lack of harmonization and comparability in the collection of information. In this respect, the central role of the national statistical offices in coordination was discussed. Participants discussed the need for national statistical systems to involve users and other stakeholders of gender statistics in the planning of data collection, compilation and dissemination of information through regular consultation and meetings between users and producers of statistics.

7. In certain areas, such as violence against women, methodological shortcomings and lack of reporting, or under-reporting, led to inaccurate data collection, and such unreliable or misleading information could lead to poor policies. Outdated data sometimes limit the usefulness of the information as a basis for policy-making. At times there is a discrepancy between the types of statistics produced, and the needs of policy-makers. While most data was now collected disaggregated by sex, the analysis of such data was not always undertaken in a sex-disaggregated manner. In some cases, data were presented at the national level, but not for the State or local

level. In new areas, such as for example information and communications technologies, data collection in general remained limited which also reduced their usefulness for policy making supportive of gender equality. Newly emerging areas of work require further efforts and increased support to national statistical offices to improve the collection of statistics in the social field. Statistics were also needed to monitor enforcement of laws. Data on business ownership should be broken down by gender. All these new demands for statistics must be considered in light of the need to support and strengthen the national and international statistical system to ensure that it may cover newly emerging areas of concern in a valid and sustainable way.

8. It was noted that, since quantitative data alone were not sufficient for providing a complete picture of many situations, these had to be accompanied by qualitative data and contextual analysis of a problem. National statistical offices use quantitative information to describe the sources and quality of statistics collected and compiled. Statistical analysis of data is also required. While disaggregation of data on the basis of sex was essential, disaggregation by other factors was also important as women frequently experienced multiple discrimination based on factors such as age, race or ethnicity. Careful attention was necessary to ensure that such data were collected and produced in a culturally sensitive manner, and used positively for the advancement of women and not to further discriminate against them. Participants noted the importance of the

Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to these goals of transparency and confidentiality of information. In collecting particular types of data, participants emphasized the need to work with the target group, especially with vulnerable groups of women, such as women victims of violence, single parents, or indigenous women, to ensure that their concerns in regard to privacy, safety and other aspects were properly covered. Much remains to be done in these areas in terms of developing suitable data collection, compilation and analytical methods for such work.

9. While statistics, targets and indicators were collected and compiled at the national level, participants stressed the need to ensure comparability of data internationally to measure progress in implementation of the Platform for Action. In some areas, such as trafficking in women, regional and international cooperation was essential to measure the problem and track developments. It was recognized that it was sometimes difficult to achieve international comparability of statistics and indicators.

10. A challenge common to many countries was the lack of sufficient financial and human resources, skills and capacity to effectively collect and process statistics relating to the situation of women, and to compile qualitative information and indicators. As data collection was very costly, there was a need to increase cooperation between national statistical offices and line ministries responsible for this work. Participants called for enhanced collaboration at various levels to support data compilation, comparative analysis and the

sharing of experiences and best practices among countries. In this regard, the role of the entities of the United Nations was emphasized, and attention drawn to the availability of guidelines, training programmes and other capacity-building tools for use at the national and/or sub-regional level following agreed standards and methods for compilation of sound statistics. Participants noted the usefulness of the publication *World's Women: Trends and Statistics*. It was also noted that the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with the regional commissions and key international agencies, is preparing the next report on the *World's Women: Trends and Statistics in 2005*. The report will review progress of national statistical authorities to collect, compile and report to the United Nations on gender statistics.

11. Increased collaboration could prove particularly useful in the compilation of new statistics and surveys related to women and children affected by HIV/AIDS, violence against women, and harmful traditional practices. Because of cost and other issues, participants cautioned against initiating collection of new data series, and instead called for expanding and disaggregating existing collections on the basis of sex. Participants noted the cost to societies that can accrue from lack of statistics for effective policy making while at the same time noted the necessity to support statistical systems that provide the necessary information required by a wide range of stakeholders including policymakers, researchers and civil society, among others.

12. Inclusion of, and cooperation with civil society in data collection and the collection of census and survey information was seen as an

important vehicle for improved participation and understanding of concepts, definitions, data and survey information. Such collaboration and co-operation could also enhance political support for the production of gender-specific statistics and analysis.

13. Users of statistics provided examples of periodic and new publications of gender statistics and indicators, stressing that wide availability of such data was vital for public debate on progress in gender equality. Governmental statistical websites were also increasingly used to publish such information free of charge. Good practices in the collection, dissemination and use of sex disaggregated statistics included coordination mechanisms and advisory groups to foster dialogue and cooperation among producers and users, and to reduce the cost of data compilation. Databases had been established in areas such as employment, and political participation of women. New types of analysis, such as Gender equality indexes or barometers served to illustrate government performance at national and local level. Measurement of progress in gender equality in certain areas was also sometimes required in conjunction with budget bills.

14. The High-level round table greatly benefited from the participation of high-level representatives from capitals and from the interaction among members of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission in a unique dialogue between users and producers of statistics. The exchange of experiences and interaction among member states, representatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations was seen as a valuable

contribution to the forty-eighth session and preparation for the forty-ninth session. Participants were encouraged to continue this exchange of information at the national level. Such cooperation would be of benefit in the identification of challenges, good practices and lessons learned in the compilation and use of statistics and indicators to support decision-making processes and the monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.
