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Commission on the Status of Women

Fiftieth session

27 February-10 March 2006

Agenda item 3 (c): 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 action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Discussion guide on the high-level round table

Incorporating gender perspectives into the national development strategies for implementing the internationally agreed development goals requested at the 2005 World Summit*

Report of the Secretary-General

Background

1. In order to further develop opportunities for sharing national experience, 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, the Commission on the Status of Women decided at its forty-sixth session to introduce the option of high-level round tables (decision 46/101). It also authorized the Bureau to decide, after consultation with all interested Member States through the regional groups, on the number, timing and theme of any such round tables. The Commission has held high-level round tables at its forty-seventh, forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions.

* The late submission of this conference room paper is due to the need to consult with the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women.

I. Organizational matters

Theme

2. Following consultations with the regional groups, the Bureau decided to convene a high-level round table during the fiftieth session of the Commission on the theme “Incorporating gender perspectives into the national development strategies for implementing the internationally agreed development goals requested at the 2005 World Summit”. As in previous years, the Bureau also decided to invite senior representatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations to participate in the dialogue.

3. The 2005 World Summit called for the adoption and implementation of “comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals” (General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 22 (a)). It also reaffirmed that “the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly is an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration” (para. 58). The round table will provide an important opportunity to discuss strategies and approaches, as well as challenges and constraints, in mainstreaming gender perspectives into these national development strategies.

Participants

4. The high-level round table will provide an opportunity for a dialogue between high-level representatives, including ministers for women’s affairs, heads of national machineries for the advancement of women, heads of women’s/gender equality commissions and senior officials from other relevant ministries who are attending the fiftieth session of the Commission. The high-level round table will be open to other members of the Commission and observers. A number of invited senior officials from entities of the United Nations system and representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council will participate in the dialogue. Other representatives of entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council will have the opportunity to observe the dialogue.

Timing

5. The high-level round table will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 27 February 2005, from 3 to 6 p.m.

Format

6. The high-level round table will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Commission, Carmen Maria Gallardo (El Salvador).

7. In order to promote the interactivity of the round-table discussion, the Chairperson will guide the discussions in a proactive manner. Interventions shall not exceed three minutes. Speakers are also encouraged to direct questions and offer comments on presentations and interventions made. Written statements are strongly discouraged.

8. The first half of the high-level round table should consist of a discussion among high-level representatives from national capitals; during the second half, senior officials of the United Nations system and representatives of non-governmental organizations will be invited to participate in the discussions.

Outcome

9. A Chairperson's summary of the high-level round table will be prepared for inclusion in the report of the Commission on its fiftieth session.

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

Background

10. The Beijing Platform for Action represents the global policy framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women. To ensure accelerated and effective implementation of the Platform at the national level, Governments should promote an active, sustained and visible policy of mainstreaming gender perspectives into all policies and programmes.

11. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides a rights-based framework for implementing the international development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action. States parties to the Convention have an obligation to work towards the progressive realization of women's human rights. The Convention provides an effective accountability tool for measuring progress towards their full implementation.

12. In 2000, the Millennium Declaration recognized the need to "promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable" (General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 20). It acknowledged the conclusions of the Beijing Platform for Action that gender equality is both a goal in itself and a fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace.

13. A set of Millennium Development Goals, with 18 time-bound targets and 48 indicators, was established to support implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Goal 3, on gender equality and empowerment of women, sets a target to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015. The indicators established include the ratio of girls and boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education, the ratio of literate women to men 15-24 years old, the share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sectors and the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament. In addition to enhanced action to fully implement Goal 3, efforts are needed to ensure that gender perspectives are fully incorporated into the implementation and monitoring of all the Millennium Development Goals.

14. Gender equality plays a critical role in efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and must be an integral part of all processes at the national level, including the Millennium Development Goals, common country assessments, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and poverty reduction strategy papers.

15. The Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action during its forty-ninth session (see Economic and Social Council decision 2005/232) calls for full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. It recognized that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. The Declaration, as well as the near-universal ratification of the Convention and increasing adherence to its Optional Protocol, provide important additional impetus for promoting gender equality.

16. The 2005 World Summit, held in New York in September 2005, emphasized the interlinkages and interdependence between development, peace and security and human rights. Human rights, human security and effective and accountable governance, highlighted at the World Summit, are key elements in creating an enabling environment for gender equality and empowerment of women.

17. The Summit reaffirmed that gender equality is essential to development, security and peace and that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Platform for Action is required for achieving the internationally agreed development goals. Member States endorsed the importance of gender mainstreaming for achieving gender equality and undertook to actively promote the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres.

18. There is increasing recognition that national development strategies for implementing internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, have not given sufficient attention to gender perspectives. The development of national strategies for implementing internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in the context of the follow-up to the World Summit, therefore offers a strategic opportunity to integrate the recommendations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

19. The Commission will provide an important opportunity for Member States, through the high-level round table, to discuss strategies and approaches, as well as challenges and constraints, in mainstreaming gender perspectives into these national development strategies.

20. During the high-level round table, high-level representatives, including ministers of women's affairs and heads of national machineries for the advancement of women, heads of women's/gender equality commissions and senior officials from other relevant ministries may wish to focus on and discuss the following issues:

- The opportunities provided by the preparation of national development strategies for promoting accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- How existing policies, strategies and action plans, data, research, mechanisms and expertise on gender equality and empowerment of women should be utilized in the process of preparing the national development strategies

- The constraints and challenges that will be faced with respect to the preparation of national development strategies from a gender perspective and the means to address these effectively
- The identification of key partners and allies in the preparatory process, such as line ministries and national statistical offices
- How to ensure a key role for national mechanisms for the advancement of women, such as women's ministries, national machineries and gender equality commissions, in the preparatory process
- How to ensure adequate consultation with and involvement of women's groups and networks and access to their experience, knowledge base and expertise in the preparatory process
- The identification of existing data on gender equality and empowerment of women, including statistics disaggregated by sex, which should be utilized in the preparation of the national development strategies and the gaps and challenges that should be addressed in the process
- How the national-level process can be supported by development partners.
