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Commission on the Status of Women**Fifty-first session**

26 February-9 March 2007

Agenda item 5

**Follow-up to Economic and Social Council
resolutions and decisions****Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger,
including through the global partnership for development****Note by the Secretariat****I. Background**

1. The Economic and Social Council, in paragraph 13 of its agreed conclusions 2002/1 of 26 July 2002,¹ invited its functional commissions to provide inputs to the overall theme of the Council's coordination and high-level segments as they related to their areas of work. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/16 of 20 November 2006, adopted new working methods for the Council to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination in the implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided that the Council should hold an annual ministerial-level substantive review as part of its high-level segment and requested the Council to urge its functional commissions to contribute to the review. In accordance with its oral decision of 2 March 2007, taken at the 6th meeting of its organizational session for 2007, the Council will consider, at the high-level segment of its 2007 substantive session, the theme "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development".

2. The present note has been prepared by the Secretariat to assist the Commission on the Status of Women, should it consider providing input to the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Economic and Social Council.

3. The note highlights recommendations for action to eliminate poverty and address hunger, food security and nutrition, including through international

¹ See A/57/3 (Part II), chap. V, sect. A, para. 9.



cooperation and partnerships, contained in the Beijing Platform for Action,² the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,³ the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women since 1996, relevant resolutions of the Assembly, the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action⁴ and the Declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later.⁵

II. Women, gender equality and poverty

4. The Beijing Platform for Action noted that the great majority of the more than 1 billion people in the world who lived in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in the developing countries, were women. The Platform for Action emphasized that poverty had various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. Poverty was also characterized by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life (para. 47).

5. In particular, the Platform for Action noted that while poverty affected households as a whole, because of the gender division of labour and responsibilities for household welfare, women bore a disproportionate burden, attempting to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity. Poverty was particularly acute for women living in rural households (para. 50).

6. The Platform for Action emphasized that in addition to economic factors, the rigidity of socially ascribed gender roles and women's limited access to power, education, training and productive resources as well as other emerging factors that might lead to insecurity for families were also responsible for poverty among women. The failure to adequately mainstream a gender perspective in all economic analysis and planning and to address the structural causes of poverty was also a contributing factor (para. 48).

7. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/209 of 22 December 2005 on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), also expressed deep concern that the number of women and girls living in poverty had increased disproportionately to the number of men, particularly in developing countries, and that the majority lived in rural areas where their livelihoods were dependent on subsistence agriculture (tenth preambular para.).

8. The further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,⁶ adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special

² *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

³ General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the World Food Summit, 13-17 November 1996* (WFS 96/REP), part one, appendix.

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the World Food Summit: five years later, 10-13 June 2002*, part one, appendix; see also A/57/499, annex.

⁶ General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

session entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, recognized that many factors had contributed to widening economic inequality between women and men, including income inequality, unemployment and the deepening of poverty levels of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. That outcome document recognized that gender inequalities and disparities in economic power-sharing, unequal distribution of unremunerated work between women and men, lack of technological and financial support for women’s entrepreneurship, and unequal access to, and control over, capital, particularly land and credit and access to labour markets, as well as all harmful traditional and customary practices, had constrained women’s economic empowerment and exacerbated the feminization of poverty. Furthermore, fundamental economic restructuring experienced by the countries with economies in transition had led to lack of resources for poverty-eradication programmes aimed at empowerment of women (para. 8).

III. Gender-sensitive approaches to addressing poverty and hunger

9. In the United Nations Millennium Declaration,⁷ Governments resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that was truly sustainable (para. 20).

10. The Platform for Action called on Governments to analyse, from a gender perspective, policies and programmes — including those related to macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment, external debt problems, taxation, investments, employment, markets and all relevant sectors of the economy — with respect to their impact on poverty, on inequality and particularly on women; and to assess their impact on family well-being and conditions and adjust them, as appropriate, to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services (para. 58 (b)). The Platform for Action also called on Governments to pursue and implement sound and stable macroeconomic and sectoral policies that were designed and monitored with the full and equal participation of women, encouraged broad-based sustained economic growth, addressed the structural causes of poverty and were geared towards eradicating poverty and reducing gender-based inequality within the overall framework of achieving people-centred sustainable development (para. 58 (c)).

11. The Platform for Action encouraged Governments, intergovernmental organizations, academic and research institutions and the private sector to develop conceptual and practical methodologies for incorporating gender perspectives into all aspects of economic policymaking, including structural adjustment planning and programmes; and apply these methodologies in conducting gender-impact analyses of all policies and programmes, including structural adjustment programmes, and disseminate the research findings (para. 67).

12. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly emphasized that, given the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women in many countries, particularly developing countries, it was essential to

⁷ See General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000.

continue to review, modify and implement, from a gender perspective, integrated macroeconomic and social policies and programmes, including those related to structural adjustment and external debt problems, to ensure universal and equitable access to social services, in particular to education and affordable quality health-care services and equal access to and control over economic resources (para. 54).

13. The Commission on the Status of Women, in its 2002 agreed conclusions on thematic issues: eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, in a globalizing world,⁸ urged Governments to ensure that all actions to achieve the poverty eradication goals established in the United Nations Millennium Declaration included the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle (para. 5 (a)); and to establish or improve gender-specific analysis of poverty and strengthen institutional capacities at all levels, including relevant national machineries, in order to undertake gender analysis in poverty eradication initiatives by, inter alia, the allocation of sufficient resources (para. 5 (g)).

14. The Commission also urged Governments to improve the collection, compilation and dissemination of timely, reliable, comparable data disaggregated by sex and age and further develop quantitative and qualitative indicators, including social indicators, by national and international statistical organizations so as to increase capacity to measure, assess and analyse poverty among women and men, including at the household level, and make progress in the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle (para. 5 (h)).

15. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/210 of 22 December 2005 on women in development, recognized the mutually reinforcing links between gender equality and poverty eradication, as well as the need to elaborate and implement, where appropriate, in consultation with civil society, comprehensive gender-sensitive poverty eradication strategies that addressed social, structural and macroeconomic issues (para. 9).

IV. Gender equality and hunger, food security and nutrition

16. The Beijing Platform for Action called on Governments to develop agricultural and fishing sectors, where and as necessary, in order to ensure, as appropriate, household and national food security and food self-sufficiency, by allocating the necessary financial, technical and human resources (para. 58 (e)); to develop policies and programmes to promote equitable distribution of food within the household (para. 58 (f)); and to develop and implement anti-poverty programmes, including employment schemes, that improved access to food for women living in poverty, including through the use of appropriate pricing and distribution mechanisms (para 58 (j)). The Platform for Action also called on Governments to formulate and implement policies and programmes that enhanced the access of women agricultural and fisheries producers (including subsistence farmers and producers, especially in rural areas) to financial, technical, extension and marketing services; to provide access to and control of land, appropriate infrastructure and technology in order to increase women's incomes and promote household food

⁸ See Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/5 of 24 July 2002, sect. A.

security, especially in rural areas; and, where appropriate, to encourage the development of producer-owned, market-based cooperatives (para. 58 (n)).

17. The Platform for Action called for actions to be taken by Governments, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and employers' and workers' organizations and with the support of international institutions, to ensure that girls had continuing access to necessary health and nutrition information and services as they matured, to facilitate a healthful transition from childhood to adulthood (para. 106 (m)).

18. Governments and other stakeholders were further urged to ensure that health and nutritional information and training formed an integral part of all adult literacy programmes and school curricula from the primary level (para. 107 (j)). The Platform for Action also called on Governments and international and non-governmental organizations to provide public information on the removal of discriminatory practices against girls in food allocation, nutrition and access to health services (para. 281 (a)).

19. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly urged Governments to ensure universal and equal access for women and men throughout the life cycle, to social services related to health care, including education, clean water and safe sanitation, nutrition, food security and health education programmes (para. 72 (e)).

20. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly called on Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other actors of civil society to strengthen measures to improve the nutritional status of all girls and women, recognizing the effects of severe and moderate malnutrition, the lifelong implications of nutrition and the link between mother and child health, by promoting and enhancing support for programmes to reduce malnutrition, such as school meal programmes, mother-child-nutrition programmes and micronutrient supplementation, giving special attention to bridging the gender gap in nutrition (para. 79 (d)).

21. The outcome document called on Governments, regional and international organizations, including the United Nations system, and international financial institutions and other actors, as appropriate, to take steps with a view to the avoidance of, and refrain from, any unilateral measure at variance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impeded the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children, that jeopardized their well-being and that created obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights, including the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being and their right to food, medical care and the necessary social services; and to ensure that food and medicine were not used as tools for political pressure (para. 90).

22. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly also urged stakeholders to adopt measures to ensure that the work of rural women, who continued to play a vital role in providing food security and nutrition and were engaged in agricultural production and enterprises related to farming, fishing and resource management and home-based work, especially in the informal sector, was recognized and valued in order to enhance their economic security, their

access to and control over resources and credit schemes, services and benefits, and their empowerment (para. 94 (e)).

23. In the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, adopted on 13 November 1996, Governments reaffirmed that the full and equal participation of men and women was essential for achieving sustainable food security for all (fourth para.). The Declaration also acknowledged the fundamental contribution to food security by women, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the need to ensure equality between men and women (fifth para.).

24. In the World Food Summit Plan of Action, adopted on 13 November 1996, Governments committed to ensure an enabling political, social and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on full and equal participation of women and men, which was most conducive to achieving sustainable food security for all (commitment one). To this end, Governments aimed to, inter alia, promote women's full and equal participation in the economy, and for this purpose introduce and enforce gender-sensitive legislation providing women with secure and equal access to and control over productive resources including credit, land and water (objective 1.3, para. 16 (b)); provide equal gender opportunities for education and training in food production, processing and marketing (ibid., para. 16 (d)); tailor extension and technical services to women producers and increase the number of women advisers and agents (ibid., para. 16 (e)); improve the collection, dissemination and use of gender-disaggregated data in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development (ibid., para. 16 (f)); and gather information on women's traditional knowledge and skills in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and natural resources management (ibid., para 16 (h)).

25. The Declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later, adopted by the Summit, held in Rome from 10 to 13 June 2002, reaffirmed the need to assure gender equality and to support empowerment of women and recognized and valued the continuing and vital role of women in agriculture, nutrition and food security and the need to integrate a gender perspective in all aspects of food security (para. 13).

26. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/209 on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), reaffirmed that all Governments and the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, at both the national and international levels, and encouraged the use of gender analysis as a tool for the integration of a gender dimension into planning the implementation of policies, strategies and programmes for the eradication of poverty (para. 29).

27. In the annex to its resolution S-24/2 on further initiatives for social development, adopted on 1 July 2000 by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", held at Geneva from 26 June to 1 July 2000, the Assembly committed to eradicate poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind (commitment 2), including by improving national capacity to address hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity at the household level, in cooperation with the World Food Programme, the Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other concerned agencies, in particular by recognizing and supporting women in their pivotal role in providing food security (sect. III, para. 30).

V. Gender equality, poverty and hunger and the global partnership for development

28. The Platform for Action urged national and international non-governmental organizations and women's groups to mobilize all parties involved in the development process, including academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and grass-roots and women's groups, to improve the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes directed towards the poorest and most disadvantaged groups of women, such as rural and indigenous women, female heads of household, young women and older women, refugees and migrant women and women with disabilities, recognizing that social development was primarily the responsibility of Governments (para. 60 (a)). The Platform for Action also called on international organizations to increase funding for programmes and projects designed to promote sustainable and productive entrepreneurial activities for income-generation among disadvantaged women and women living in poverty (para. 66).

29. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly called for international cooperation and partnerships for eradicating poverty and hunger, and urged the United Nations system and international and regional organizations, as appropriate, to allocate sufficient resources to regional and national programmes to implement the Platform for Action in its 12 critical areas of concern (para. 84 (c)).

30. The outcome document called for effective measures to address the challenges of globalization, including through the enhanced and effective participation of developing countries in the international economic policy decision-making process, in order to, inter alia, guarantee the equal participation of women, in particular those from developing countries, in the process of macroeconomic decision-making (para. 101 (a)).

31. The establishment, in partnership with private financial institutions, where appropriate, of "lending windows" and other accessible financial services with simplified procedures that were specifically designed to meet the savings, credit and insurance needs of all women, was encouraged (para. 101 (f)).

32. The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly called for continued international cooperation, including the reaffirmation to strive to fulfil the yet-to-be-attained internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance as soon as possible, thereby increasing the flow of resources for gender equality, development and peace (para. 101 (l)).

33. Partnerships and cooperation among Governments, international organizations, in particular international financial institutions, and multilateral organizations, private sector institutions and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, especially women's and community-based organizations, to support poverty eradication initiatives focused on women and girls, were specifically encouraged (para. 102 (c)).

34. The Commission on the Status of Women, in its 2002 agreed conclusions on thematic issues: eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, in a globalizing world, called for the forging of constructive partnerships among Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in poverty eradication efforts and to further support and encourage women and men, girls and boys, to form new advocacy networks and alliances (sect. A, para. 5 (ff)).

35. The General Assembly, in its resolution 59/222 of 22 December 2004 on the international financial system and development, called for the continued effort of the multilateral financial institutions, in providing policy advice, technical assistance and financial support to member countries, to work on the basis of nationally owned reform and development strategies, to pay due regard to the special needs and implementing capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and to minimize the negative impacts of the adjustment programmes on the vulnerable segments of society, while taking into account the importance of gender-sensitive employment and poverty eradication policies and strategies (para. 17).
