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## **Commission on the Status of Women**

### **Fifty-second session**

25 February-7 March 2008

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third 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 on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women**

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

## **I. 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<sup>1</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,<sup>2</sup> and to enhance its working methods, the Commission on the Status of Women decided at its forty-sixth session, in 2002, 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 regional groups, on the number, timing and theme of any such round tables.

2. At its fiftieth session, in March 2006, the Commission on the Status of Women decided that the annual interactive high-level round table would focus on experiences, lessons learned and good practices, including results with supporting

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\* E/CN.6/2008/1.

<sup>1</sup> *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, annexes I and II.

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



data, where available, in relation to the implementation of previous commitments made with regard to the priority theme.<sup>3</sup>

## **II. Organizational matters**

### **Theme**

3. The high-level round table will focus on the priority theme of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”.<sup>4</sup>

### **Participants**

4. The high-level round table will provide an opportunity for dialogue among high-level representatives from member States attending the fifty-second session of the Commission. These may include ministers of women’s affairs; ministers of finance and planning; heads of national machineries for the advancement of women; heads of women’s/gender equality commissions; and senior officials from other relevant ministries and from statistical offices.

5. 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 have an opportunity to participate in the dialogue.

### **Timing**

6. The high-level round table will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 25 February 2008, from 3 to 6 p.m.

### **Format**

7. The high-level round table will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Commission, Olivier Belle (Belgium).

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

9. The first half of the high-level round table should consist of a discussion among high-level representatives from member States. During the second half, invited senior officials of the United Nations system and representatives of non-governmental organizations will participate.

### **Outcome**

10. A Chairperson’s summary of the high-level round table will be prepared.

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<sup>3</sup> Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, para. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., para. 23 (b).

### III. Elements for discussion in the high-level round table

#### A. Background

11. Commitments on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women have been made by Governments at the global level, including at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) and the Millennium Summit (2000). There has been, however, limited assessment of progress made in allocating resources to translate global commitments into action at the national level.

12. In its discussion of the resources required for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Platform for Action emphasized that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors.<sup>5</sup> Governments, holding the primary responsibility for implementing the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action, should make efforts to systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures, adjust budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures and achieve the gender-related commitments made in other United Nations summits and conferences.<sup>6</sup>

13. The Platform for Action noted that sufficient resources should be allocated to national machineries for the advancement of women as well as to all institutions, as appropriate, that could contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action.<sup>7</sup> Governments should create a supportive environment for the mobilization of resources by non-governmental organizations, particularly women's organizations and networks, feminist groups, the private sector and other actors of civil society, to enable them to contribute towards that end.<sup>8</sup>

14. The Platform for Action called for adequate financial resources for implementation of the Platform for Action in the developing countries, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries. Furthermore, countries involved in development cooperation should conduct a critical analysis of their assistance programmes so as to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid through the integration of a gender approach.<sup>9</sup>

15. The Platform for Action noted that to strengthen their support for actions at the national level and to enhance their contributions to coordinated follow-up by the United Nations, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system should set out the specific actions they would undertake, including goals and targets to realign priorities and redirect resources to meet the global priorities identified in the Platform for Action.<sup>10</sup> The Platform for Action further noted that the resources provided for the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies by the international community needed to be sufficient and should be maintained at an adequate level.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *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, para. 345.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 346.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 347.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 350.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 353.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 336.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 360.

16. The Platform for Action also addressed the need for resources in undertaking specific actions to achieve the strategic objectives relating to each critical area of concern. Among proposed actions were providing sufficient budgetary resources in the areas of education and training, women and health, violence against women, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, and the girl-child, and providing funding or resources to support specific actions in the areas of women and poverty, education and training, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, and women and the media. The subsequent agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the resolutions of other intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly, have also called for allocation of resources for the promotion of gender equality in different areas.<sup>12</sup>

17. At its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly called upon Governments to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all budgetary processes, as appropriate, in order to promote equitable and effective resource allocation and establish adequate budgetary allocations to support gender equality and development programmes that enhanced women's empowerment and to develop the necessary analytical and methodological tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.<sup>13</sup> Governments were also called upon to provide national machineries with the necessary human and financial resources, including through exploring innovative funding schemes, so that gender mainstreaming was integrated into all policies, programmes and projects.<sup>14</sup> The United Nations system and international and regional organizations were called upon to allocate sufficient resources to regional and national programmes to implement the Platform for Action in its 12 critical areas of concern.<sup>15</sup>

18. At its fiftieth session in 2006,<sup>16</sup> the Commission on the Status of Women called for mobilization of adequate funding for gender-sensitive development policies and programmes and for national machineries for the advancement of women, through national, regional and international resource mobilization and gender-responsive budget processes in all sector areas, and to allocate adequate funding for women-specific measures.

19. The Monterrey Consensus,<sup>17</sup> adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development in March 2002, highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to financing for development, including gender-sensitive development, and encouraged the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into development policies at all levels and in all sectors. It stressed the critical need for reinforcing national efforts in building capacity for gender budget policies.

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<sup>12</sup> See relevant agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

<sup>13</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex, para. 73 (b).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 76 (c).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 84 (c).

<sup>16</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 27 (E/2006/27)*.

<sup>17</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

20. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness acknowledged that harmonization efforts were needed on cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality and other thematic issues including those financed by dedicated funds.<sup>18</sup>

21. The upcoming follow-up international conference on financing for development to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Qatar in 2008, will provide a strategic opportunity for the Commission to promote concrete action-oriented and gender-sensitive policy recommendations and coherence between macroeconomic policies and the internationally agreed goals on gender equality. The third high-level forum on aid effectiveness, which will be held in Accra in 2008, to assess the progress in the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, also provides an opportunity for the Commission to advance gender-sensitive policy recommendations.

## B. Discussion guide

22. During the round table, high-level representatives from capital are expected to focus on lessons learned, achievements and good practices, as well as gaps and challenges, with supporting data where available, on implementation at the national level of commitments on the priority theme, “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”.

23. Participants may wish to consider the following issues:

(a) Efforts that have been undertaken to promote gender-sensitive macroeconomic policies, particularly in relation to the follow-up of the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development at the national level;

(b) Public finance management initiatives to measure and better monitor the resources allocated to gender equality at the national level;

(c) Efforts undertaken to implement gender-responsive budgeting processes at national and local levels, including attention to the roles of different stakeholders, such as the ministry of finance and other line ministries, national machineries for the advancement of women and women’s groups and networks, and capacity-building programmes developed to support those efforts;

(d) International resources, including bilateral and multilateral assistance, mobilized for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women at the national level, and the implications of the new aid modalities on financing for gender equality;

(e) Innovative approaches towards, and good practice examples of, financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women’s development funds and private sector initiatives targeting women and girls;

(f) Extent to which allocation of resources is addressed in the development of gender equality policies, strategies and action plans and in the context of legislative change and is monitored in the implementation process;

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<sup>18</sup> Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonization, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability, adopted at the High-level Forum on the question of “Joint Progress towards Enhanced Aid Effectiveness: Harmonization, Alignment, Results”, held in Paris, 28 February-2 March 2005, para. 42.

(g) Status of funding for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, including the allocation of resources for capacity-building and monitoring of progress in implementation;

(h) Mechanisms for and status of funding for the national machineries for the advancement of women, including, as relevant, comparison with funding for other ministries and departments and the collaboration between the national machineries and the ministries for finance and planning in allocation of resources;

(i) Status of funding for women's organizations, including changes in the sources or amounts of funding available;

(j) Mechanisms in place, or being developed, for monitoring and evaluating allocation of financial resources in all the above areas.

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