

**52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
25 February to 7 March 2008**

**Interactive expert panel
Key policy initiatives on financing for gender equality and the
empowerment of women**

26 February 2008

Moderator's Summary

1. At its fourth meeting, on 26 February 2008, the Commission held an interactive panel discussion on the theme “Key policy initiatives on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”. The panellists were: Ms. Isabella Bakker, York University, Canada; Ms. Mireille Brunings-Stolz, Central Bank of Suriname; Ms. Mayra Buvinic, The World Bank; Ms. Lydia Alpízar Durán, Association for Women’s Rights in Development and Chairperson of the expert group meeting on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, convened by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and hosted by the Government of Norway, in Oslo, Norway, from 4 to 7 September 2007; Ms. Caren Grown, American University, Washington D.C.; and Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The panel was moderated by Mr. Julio Peralta (Paraguay), Vice-Chairperson of the Commission.

2. Financial resources are critical for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, and are necessary for both women-specific targeted and gender-mainstreaming interventions. Financing is also necessary for the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as highlighted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Commitments on financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment have been made by Governments, including at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000, and the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002. While some progress has been made, these commitments have not been fully implemented.

3. There are many opportunities for enhancing financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. These include the implementation of, and follow-up processes to, the Monterrey Consensus and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Participants also discussed the need for enhanced use of key policies, strategies and tools at the national level to strengthen financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

4. Although it was widely recognized that gender equality made good economic sense, macroeconomic policies continued to fail to take into account gender equality concerns. Participants noted that while progress had been made in incorporating gender

perspectives in social sectors, such as education and health, this was not the case in economic sectors. The potential of areas such as trade liberalization and foreign direct investment in relation to financing gender equality and women's empowerment remained largely unexplored. Participants also noted that to make progress in achieving the goal of gender equality, the challenge of poverty had to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

5. Participants noted a lack of coherence in the Monterrey Consensus between economic policies that emphasized low inflation and mobility of capital on the one hand, and the social commitments to poverty reduction, human rights and gender equality on the other. It was pointed out that gender equality was not systematically integrated throughout the six leading areas for action. At the same time, there was potential for integrating initiatives for financing gender equality in these areas and gender-sensitive indicators could be generated to measure progress. In the area of trade, for example, an indicator could be the percentage of trade negotiation mandates that proactively include gender-sensitive frameworks for each sectoral area negotiated.

6. Participants discussed the use of gender-responsive budgeting as a strategy for changing budget policies and resource allocations to strengthen financing for gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender-responsive budgeting was results-oriented, and aimed to ensure a more equitable distribution of public resources and the benefits of development for women as well as men. As part of this approach, both the revenue and expenditure side of budgets should systematically reflect the differentiated needs and realities of women and men. For example, it was important to review current taxation systems to ensure that they were progressive and did not perpetuate gender inequalities.

7. Participants gave examples of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives, many of which had involved the participation of civil society, especially women's groups and networks. It was recognized that effective implementation of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives required political will and sensitization of decision-makers, as well as capacity-building and technical expertise. In some countries, gender focal points had been appointed in line ministries to support the use of this approach, and manuals had also been prepared. In a number of cases, entities of the United Nations system had provided technical support in the development and application of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives.

8. While development cooperation was a source of financing for gender equality and women's empowerment, OECD-DAC data indicated that for the period 1999-2003, US\$3.1 billion per year was principally or significantly focused on the achievement of gender equality, out of a total of US\$50 billion ODA per year. Inclusion of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness provided an opportunity to increase the share of ODA focused on the achievement of gender equality. Several donor and recipient countries had taken initiatives to ensure gender-responsive implementation of the Paris Declaration principles. For example, through the principle of harmonization, recipient countries had prioritized gender equality in development assistance when donor partners were committed to gender equality and women's empowerment. Multilateral institutions had also taken steps to increase funding for

gender equality. For example, the World Bank had developed an action plan to strengthen integration of gender equality issues in the economic sectors to expand women's economic opportunities.

9. Participants discussed various proposals for mobilizing international and national resources to increase financing for gender equality and women's empowerment, including a tax of one percent on speculative currency transactions; a one-time wealth tax in industrialized countries to help fund ODA; and fulfillment by OECD members of their commitments to allocate 0.7 percent of their GDP to ODA. Excessive currency reserve holdings at national level, which were estimated to cost around 1 percent of GDP, could be used for productive investments, including for funding gender equality interventions. Participants also noted the role of the private sector in mobilization of financial resources for gender equality.

10. Participants suggested that, while costing of gender equality interventions was a critical strategy in clarifying resource requirements and identifying sources of funding, national action plans, policies and strategies for gender equality were not systematically accompanied by resource estimates for their implementation. Several methods and approaches had been developed to estimate the cost of such policies and initiatives. The costing methodology used by the United Nations Millennium Project—the interventions based needs assessment— was discussed. Using this methodology, the average annual per capita cost of achieving gender equality for five countries had been estimated to be between one third and one half of the total cost of achieving all the MDGs in these countries. The financing gap for the gender equality interventions in these countries was estimated at 18-27 per cent of the total MDG financing gap.

11. Existing examples of costing exercises of national action plans and the Millennium Development Goals offered an opportunity to expand the use of this strategy, and thus increase the potential for resource allocations for gender equality. Government agencies as well as civil society organizations could use this strategy as part of national planning and budgetary processes, which would also contribute to strengthening transparency and accountability in regard to results for gender equality. Several participants suggested that the interventions-based needs assessment costing methodology be further developed so that it could be applied by a larger number of countries.

12. Participants emphasized the need for data disaggregated by sex and indicators for designing and implementing key policy initiatives on financing for gender equality, as well as for monitoring and evaluating results achieved. Gender impact assessments, budget guidelines and the gender equality policy marker used by OECD-DAC member countries were also useful tools. Regular reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by States parties was another tool for monitoring allocation of resources and ensuring accountability.

13. National machineries for the advancement of women, the United Nations system and women's organizations continued to play a catalytic role in advocating for and

monitoring the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, including resource allocations. Despite their mandates and responsibilities, many national machineries for the advancement of women received a disproportionately small percentage of national budgets. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had consistently highlighted the insufficient allocation of resources for national mechanisms for the advancement of women. Participants emphasized the need for adequate resources for the sustainability of the work of such mechanisms. Participants also noted the need for enhancing the work of the entities of the United Nations system in support of gender equality. In order to sustain a vibrant women's movement, increased funding for women's organizations was also considered essential.

14. Participants stressed the urgency of translating existing commitments for gender equality into action. Towards this end, a package of measures had to be in place in response to specific national realities, which should include a strong legal framework, comprehensive policies and strategies, and effective institutions to promote gender equality. All of these measures had a cost, and consistent funding therefore had to be part of the package.

15. Participants agreed that the integration of gender perspectives should be pursued as a priority in the preparations for and outcome of the upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (2008), as well as the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to review the implementation of the Paris Declaration (2008).