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**Items 112 & 113, and 97 (a)**

**Briefing for Delegates**  
**by**  
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Distinguished delegates of the Second and Third Committee,

I take great pleasure in this opportunity to brief you prior to the consideration, by the Third Committee of its agenda items 112: Advancement of Women and 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" of the proposed agenda. As in the past, both agenda items will be considered jointly.

I welcome the opportunity to brief you on the report which will be taken up by the Second Committee under agenda item 97 (a): Women in development.

I would like to start by reviewing the reports prepared for the Third Committee that are under the responsibility of the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).

Under agenda item 112: Advancement of Women, the Third Committee will consider the following reports:

- **Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/56/268)**
- **Report of the Secretary-General on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls (A/56/316)**
- **Report of the Secretary-General on the problem of violence against women migrant workers (A/56/329)**
- **Report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/56/328)**
- **Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/56/38)**

Under this agenda item, you will also have before you reports concerning the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) as well as the Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

## **Item 112**

### **Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/56/268)**

General Assembly resolution 54/135 of 7 February 2000 requested the preparation of a comprehensive report on the situation of rural women and challenges faced by them, based, *inter alia*, on the outcome of an expert group meeting, which will draw from the contributions and case studies provided by experts from various regions.

In pursuing the resolution, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and in consultation with FAO and the World Bank organized an expert group meeting on “The situation of rural women within the context of globalization.” It was hosted by the Government of Mongolia, and took place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 4 to 8 June 2001.

The objective of the report is to examine the impact of major global trends, such as the growth in rural non-farm economic activities, the liberalization of trade and markets for agricultural products, the acceleration in the commercialization of agriculture, and the rapid diffusion of products, technologies, information and consumption patterns on rural women. The report also proposes a policy agenda to maximise the beneficial effects of globalization for women within the context of ongoing social and economic changes in rural areas.

The Secretary-General’s report and the report of the expert group meeting will also be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-sixth session in March 2002, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as it reviews the obligations of States Parties to CEDAW, in particular Article 14.

The following points are emphasized in the report.

- Women’s employment opportunities have diversified and increased, particularly in the area of labour migration. These have a strong effect in terms of increased autonomy, self-esteem and expansion of choices and decision-making power within and outside of the household. In some situations, these changes are contributing to the weakening of traditional gender values and norms of the society thus contributing to gender equality.
- Increased employment and migration, however, have often been associated with poor working conditions, low pay, the lack of work-related benefits, exposure to the risks of violence and exploitation, and the continuation of the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities at home.
- Increased economic volatility, job insecurity and often losses of livelihoods experienced within the global economy might increase gender disparities in the long run as the benefits for women from paid employment are often short-lived.
- Due to existing inequalities between women and men worldwide the impact of globalization has gender differentials. The extent to which women can benefit from globalization depends on existing local contexts, gender relations, class and ethnic divisions as well as regional disparities.

In conclusion the report recommends, among others, the following:

- Compile data on and analyse the impact of globalization on rural communities from a gender perspective;
- Support empirical research and case studies on diverse economic and sociocultural contexts within which women live; in particular women’s labour migration should be studied carefully. Perhaps the next report of the Secretary-General on Women in Development can focus on this issue.

- Convene a high-level policy consultation to set priorities and identify strategies;
- State Parties to the CEDAW Convention should pay more attention to Article 14 on rural women in their periodic report.

**Report of the Secretary-General on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls (A/56/316)**

This report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 54/133 of 17 December 1999, is based on information provided by Member States, entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

- It describes measures taken at the national and regional levels, and within the United Nations system, to address traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls.
- Activities with respect to female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, as well as marriages without the free and full consent of the intending spouses, crimes committed in the name of honour or passion, female infanticide, dowry-related violence and acid attacks are described.
- Measures taken include legal and policy responses and measures targeted at prevention and education, as well as cooperation with the media and non-governmental organizations.
- Particular attention is drawn to a draft Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Fundamental Rights of Women and Girl Children which had been adopted by a symposium for legislators in Addis Ababa in 1999, and training materials for health sector workers developed by WHO.

The report concludes that although Member States, United Nations entities and NGOs have continued to devote significant efforts to the elimination of harmful traditional and customary practices, further efforts are required, in particular:

- Measures aimed at changing entrenched behaviour of both women and men in all communities are required, as are strategies which address the underlying values that support such practices.
- The sensitization and the development of alternative career training programmes for traditional practitioners, as well as the identification of alternatives in situations where harmful practices constitute a ritual ceremony or rite of passage are also needed.

**Report of the Secretary-General on the problem of violence against women migrant workers (A/56/329)**

This report, also based on the responses of Member States, United Nations entities, other intergovernmental organizations, including the International Organization for Migration, and non-governmental organizations, was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 54/138 of 17 December 1999.

- It describes the efforts of Member States to collect data and statistics on women migrant workers and on the forms of violence to which they may become victims, such as physical and/or psychological violence, sexual harassment and sexual violence, racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination.
- It surveys relevant legal and policy measures introduced to confront violence against women migrant workers, and other measures, such as advisory services for potential migrants in their countries of origin, and support and legal advice systems provided by consulates in countries of destination which may be available for such women.
- Awareness-raising campaigns and bilateral agreements concluded between countries of origin and destination are also described.
- The report draws attention to the work of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, and the emphasis on the situation of women migrant workers during the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The report concludes that:

- Despite numerous efforts, the data on women migrant workers continues to be sketchy, and the scale of abuse and discrimination against such women is insufficiently documented.
- In addition, although Member States have introduced legal, policy and education measures, including through the use of modern communications technology, information on these measures, and particularly their impact, remains incomplete. It calls for comprehensive information on bilateral agreements between countries of origin and destination of women migrant workers, and the impact of such agreements, as well as on labour and immigration legislation, and its impact.
- The report draws attention to the interface between migration and trafficking and urges that measures designed to protect women, such as increasing requirements for migration for employment, should be carefully considered so as to ensure that they are not rendered vulnerable to traffickers. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants continuing to pay special attention to the situation of women migrant workers, and encourages the Special Rapporteur on the rights of non-citizens to ensure that the rights of women migrant workers are specifically addressed in his work.

### **Report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/56/328)**

This report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 55/70, indicates that as of 1 August 2001, 168 States parties had ratified, acceded or succeeded to the Convention, and three additional States were signatories. As of 1 August 2001, 68 State parties had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and 24 had ratified or acceded to it. Only 24 States parties had deposited instruments of acceptance to the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention relating to the extension of the Committee's meeting time.

- The report draws attention to reservations entered by States parties on ratification or accession during the period from 1 August 2000 to 1 August 2001, and objections and communications received with regard to reservations.
- Withdrawals of reservations by States parties are also highlighted.
- Suggestions and recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth sessions which took place in 2001 are drawn attention to, and in particular its decision 25/1 in which it requested the General Assembly to:
  - (a) approve on an exceptional basis, a session of three weeks' duration consisting of thirty meetings in August 2002, to be used entirely for the consideration of the reports of the States parties in order to reduce the backlog of reports awaiting review; and
  - (b) approve an enlargement of the pre-session working group scheduled to meet from 4 to 8 February 2002 in order to prepare issues and questions relating to reports to be considered at the exceptional session of the Committee in August 2002.

The programme budget implications of this decision, which were placed before the Committee, are contained in its report on its twenty-fifth session (A/56/38).

The report notes that the Committee adopted its revised rules of procedure, including its procedures with regard to the Optional Protocol, at its twenty-fourth session, and also highlights the activities of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women to encourage universal ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, as well as acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph.1. Efforts by the Division to provide technical support to States parties to the Convention and the Optional Protocol are also described.

### **Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/56/38)**

This report consolidates the report of the Committee on its twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth sessions held during 2001, during which it considered reports of 14 State parties, adopted its revised rules of procedure, and prepared contributions to the World Conference against Racism and the special session of the General Assembly on children.

### **Item 113**

Under agenda item 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, you will have before you the following reports:

- **Report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to and progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/56/319)**
- **Report of the Secretary-General on the range of tasks of the Division for the Advancement of Women (A/56/319/Add.1)**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to and progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/56/319)**

The report on the Follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, also known as the 'rolling report', was prepared in response to General Assembly resolutions 55/71 and 50/203.

The objective of the report is to provide information on the outcome of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) substantive session of 2001, and provides an overview of activities undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations entities, and non-governmental organizations and civil society in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This report is the third such reports on follow-up presented in 2001 on a rolling basis to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly. It provides an update of developments since the submission of the Secretary-General's reports on the follow-up to the Beijing Conference and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/55/293), the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session (E/CN.6/2001/2), and the ECOSOC session in 2001 (E/2000/78).

The following points are emphasized in the report:

- The United Nations system has continued efforts to implement the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Beijing+5 outcome.
- Many organizations within the UN system have increased their efforts at mainstreaming gender perspectives in their work programme. Consistent efforts are being made throughout the United Nations to incorporate a gender perspective into substantive work, and many departments and regional commissions have increased attention to a gender perspective in their medium-term plans and to the inclusion of a gender perspective in the preparation of programme budgets.
- Some entities in the UN system have focused their efforts on ensuring gender equality in personnel practices, and gender sensitivity in all projects and programmes.
- Gender equality continues to be addressed in sectoral and thematic work of some offices within the UN system in carrying out their individual mandates.
- UN entities continue to show their commitment to gender mainstreaming through the establishment of gender focal points; the increase of technical and financial resources at the national, international, regional and sub-regional levels to accelerate the attainment of gender equality; the increase of women professional staff members at decision-making levels; and the commitment to achieving the goal of 50 per cent gender balance set by the UN.

In conclusion it must be noted that this report is primarily for information purposes. It only summarizes and does not analyze the activities of individual entities within the UN and non-governmental organizations and other institutions of civil society. Therefore, no recommendations are made.

## **Report of the Secretary-General on the range of tasks of the Division for the Advancement of Women (A/56/319/Add.1)**

This report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly on the full range of tasks of the Division of the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, including those that might arise from the implementation of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and from the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- In preparing this report, the Division relied on the information provided in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (subprogramme 2 “gender issues and advancement of women” of section 9 “Economic and social affairs”) which describes the full range of tasks of the Division for the Advancement of Women and Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.
- The proposed programme budget has been formulated on the basis of subprogramme 2 of programme 7 of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. The outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly and the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination on 22 December 2000 – events that took place after adoption of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 – were taken into consideration in the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.
- The draft programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003 was considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session. Recommendations by the Commission have been forwarded to the Committee for Programme and Coordination, when it met for its forty-first session (11 June-6 July 2001), (A/56/16).
- Addressing programme 7 as a whole, the Committee for Programme and Coordination, expressed the view that the level of resources proposed was not commensurate with the work programme to which high priority had been attached, nor was it commensurate with the level of growth proposed for other high priority programmes. It was further noted that adequate budget resources should be provided for strengthening of the subprogramme, particularly for technical cooperation activities.
- ACABQ also considered the draft programme of work and made recommendations (*see A/56/7*)

The following points are emphasized in the report.

- Demands placed on the subprogramme and its core functions are expanding: policy analysis and research; substantive servicing of intergovernmental meetings; substantive and technical servicing of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a human rights treaty body; advisory services and technical cooperation; as well as coordination and outreach.



- The increased demand stems from:
  - (a) the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly; the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 22 December 2000 (which has now been ratified or acceded to by 24 States parties);
  - (b) two annual meetings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
  - (c) more requests for information and training activities on gender issues;
  - (d) a sustained high interest of civil society in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Division since the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly; and
  - (e) the call for more in depth coverage and outreach including through electronic means of communication.

#### **Item 97 (a)**

Under agenda item 97 (a): Women in development, the Second Committee will have before it the **Report of the Secretary-General on women in development: Access to Financial Resources: A Gender Perspective (A/56/321)**

This report was prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 42/178 and 54/210 in which the General Assembly recognized the significant contribution of women to the overall economy and recommended the intensification of efforts to promote the integration of women in development. Reports on the effective mobilization of women in development have been submitted to the General Assembly on a biennial basis.

The objective of the present report is to address the issue of women's access to financial resources in view of the fact that women do not have equal access with men to financial resources such as credit or equities. In preparing the report, the United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development, to be convened in 2002, was taken into consideration.

The following points are emphasized in the report:

- Gender-based obstacles to accessing financial resources exist;
- Women face major constraints in accessing financial resources in the start-up phase as well as at several stages of the firm's life-cycle despite the increased number of women-owned businesses and enterprises headed by women;
- Micro-credit is the most significant source of financial services available to women but it does not ensure sustainability;
- Women lack knowledge on the availability of other financial resources and instruments such as bank financing, savings and insurance, equity financing, etc;
- Lack of access to ICT, including the use of the Internet, increases women's exclusion from financial resources and business opportunities, especially in developing countries; and

- The importance of integrating empowerment strategies into financial service delivery in order to promote women's involvement in leadership, planning and decision-making processes.

The conclusion of the report point to, among others, the need for Governments, NGOs and financial institutions to develop accessible financial mechanisms responsive to the needs of women entrepreneurs and women business owners; and gender sensitive programming and management in all loan programmes, including micro-credit. Also, in view of the accelerating changes in the global economy, the report calls for macro-economic policies and all aspects of financing for development to be examined from a gender perspective in order to ensure women's access to financial resources.

Thank you very much for your attention today, and for this opportunity to brief you on the main issues to be taken up. I would be happy to address any questions you might have. I would also appreciate your comments and guidance on these, and other issues related to the advancement of women described in the above reports.

Thank you.