



United Nations Nations Unies
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for the Advancement of Women

AIDE-MEMOIRE

Expert Group Meeting

Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals

Baku, Azerbaijan, 7-10 February 2005

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for 2002-2006, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), at its forty-ninth session from 28 February – 11 March 2005, will consider the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document adopted by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”.

2. In preparation for the CSW session, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) will organize an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals”, hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan, in Baku, from 7-10 February 2005.

3. The findings and recommendations of the meeting will provide inputs for the high-level panel on the same topic during the CSW, as well as for the discussion on the contribution of the CSW, transmitted through ECOSOC, to the review of the Millennium Declaration during the high-level plenary of the General Assembly in September 2005.

II. Background

4. Since 1990, the international community has convened twelve major conferences and summits¹ that have committed Governments to address the priorities of a new development agenda. The world conferences and summits identified emerging issues, reaffirmed principles and helped articulate new thinking on development, including the notion that democracy, development and respect for all human rights, including women’s rights, are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The conferences and summits played a key role in building consensus around a common concept of sustainable human development, centered on the rights and needs of

¹ These include the World Summit for Children (1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996), and the World Food Summit (1996).

human beings, fostered by sustainable global economic growth and supported by a revitalized and equitable system of multilateral cooperation. The conferences and summits also focused on a more participatory and inclusive approach to development and emphasized the need for cooperation between Member states, the United Nations and all areas of society, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academia and the media, and major groups of stakeholders, in particular women, to ensure the effective implementation of outcomes and action plans.

5. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by consensus in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Declaration embodies the commitment of the international community to the advancement and empowerment of women and to gender equality. The Platform for Action sets out measures for national, regional and international action in twelve critical areas of concern: women and poverty; education and training; health, including reproductive rights; violence; armed conflict; economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment, and the girl child.

6. The rights of women and girl-children were recognized as an integral part of universal human rights, and there was a clear commitment to the promotion of international legal standards, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Governments and the United Nations also agreed to promote the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels as a strategy to complement action for the empowerment of women.

7. The outcome document adopted by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000 (also called “Beijing + 5”), reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and emphasized the crucial links between the advancement of women, gender equality and progress for society as a whole. The outcome document identified further action required to achieve the full implementation of the Platform for Action.

8. The Millennium Declaration, adopted by United Nations Member States in September 2000, represents a global political commitment towards the promotion of sustainable human development, peace and security, human rights, democracy and good governance. The Millennium Declaration includes equality among the fundamental values essential to international relations and specifically states that “The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured”². States resolved 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 sustainable³. States also resolved to combat all forms of violence against women; and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁴. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were therefore considered to be both objectives in themselves and means to achieve overall progress in development.

9. The objectives in the Millennium Declaration were derived from the outcomes of the major summits and conferences of the 1990s and subsequently consolidated as eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁵, to be achieved by 2015. In order to measure and monitor progress,

² A/RES/55/2, para 6

³ *ibid.*, para 20

⁴ *ibid.*, para 25

⁵ MDGs:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women

mobilize political commitment and initiate concrete action, 16 global targets and 48 global indicators were established. Participatory implementation and monitoring processes were encouraged. Stakeholders are to monitor and report on achievements and continuing challenges in MDG country reports, which inform public debate and facilitate advocacy.

10. The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs responded to calls for an overall common framework for specific, time-bound action to achieve global development goals. They also served as an important reference framework for major summits and conferences held after 2000⁶. In his most recent report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General stressed that “[the Goals] are a measurable set of human development benchmarks that can provide clear indications of whether the world is managing to build the more “inclusive and equitable” globalization called for in the Declaration. [T]hey have provided an unprecedented basis for partnership between developed and developing countries [...]. They have also allowed the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and other development partners to align their work around a common framework and to improve the coherence and effectiveness of all their efforts at country level.”⁷

11. When the MDGs were subsequently formulated, Goal 3 specifically addressed the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The target associated with MDG3 has a narrow focus, aiming at the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. The four indicators in turn focus on the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate females to males of 15-to-24-year-olds; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. These and most of the targets and indicators established for the other MDGs, are addressed in specific objectives under different critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action.

12. It has been noted that there is a need to focus on the gender equality aspects of the Millennium Declaration that are not specifically contained in the selected set of goals that constitute the MDGs. Many observers have noted the importance of clearly articulating the relevance of rights-based approaches to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, in order to ensure that existing legal commitments to the promotion and protection of human rights, for example those set out in CEDAW, are duly taken into account. Gender equality advocates have also emphasized the importance of linking the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action. Discussions on monitoring and implementing the MDGs have focused on the need to ensure a more comprehensive approach to gender equality under Goal 3 as well as efforts to acknowledge the cross-cutting nature of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the implementation and monitoring of the MDGs. Some gender equality advocates have called for the formulation of additional goals, indicators and targets, while others see openings for more strategically working with existing indicators and targets. The Secretary-General has stated that “There is no time to lose if we are to reach the Millennium

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4. Reduce child mortality
 5. Improve maternal health
 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 7. Ensure environmental sustainability
 8. Develop a global partnership for development

⁶ International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, 2002); World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002); and the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, 2003)

⁷ A/58/323, paras 48 and 50

Development Goals by the target date of 2015. Only by investing in the world's women can we expect to get there.”⁸

13. Several United Nations entities, as well as the Millennium Project's Task Force 3 on Education and Gender Equality, have facilitated the discussion on the integration of gender perspectives into the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. An International Workshop on Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals was jointly sponsored by the Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the OECD/DAC Network on Gender Equality, and the Multilateral Development Bank Working Group on Gender⁹. In its Second Guidance Note on “Country Reporting on the Millennium Development Goals” of October 2003, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) noted that gender equality was at the heart of reaching the MDGs and thus sex-disaggregated data essential for monitoring MDG progress¹⁰. Reports by the World Bank¹¹, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)¹² have pointed out that the achievement of the goals required the availability, analysis and use of sex-disaggregated data to allow for consistent monitoring, and that this required more than a set of narrow, sector-specific actions. In a study of national MDG reports submitted until early 2003¹³, a UNDP consultant recommended ways to mainstream gender perspectives more effectively into national reporting processes, guidance notes and training programmes, including through consistent, cross-cutting gender analysis and the active participation of independent gender experts.

14. UNFPA has advocated for the inclusion of progress made towards achieving the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) goal on universal access to reproductive health services. This goal is not specifically included among the MDGs, but UNFPA has argued that it is essential for meeting the MDGs since the attainment of reproductive health and reproductive rights are fundamental for women's empowerment¹⁴. This view was re-affirmed by the Secretary General in Bangkok: “The Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed. And that means stronger efforts to promote women's rights, and greater investment in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning”¹⁵.

15. Several electronic discussion fora conducted over the course of the past two years have noted that policy-makers and practitioners at the national, regional and international levels have increasingly attempted to ensure that the constraints and challenges mentioned above are addressed, for example through enhanced participatory processes and a more comprehensive focus on gender perspectives in monitoring processes, including through nationally adjusted targets and indicators.

16. In 2005, the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, will be the focus of major review processes. A high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on a comprehensive review of all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed goals and the global partnership required for

⁸ Message for International Women's Day 2003, United Nations press release, 8 March 2003

⁹ World Bank, *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*

¹⁰ UNDG, *Country Reporting on the Millennium Development Goals*, Second Guidance Note, October 2003, p.6

¹¹ World Bank, *Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*, 4 April 2003

¹² UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women 2002: Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*, 2002

¹³ UNDP, *Millennium Development Goals: National reports – A look through a gender lens*, May 2003

¹⁴ UNFPA, *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals Population and Reproductive Health as Critical Determinants - Population and Development Strategies #10*, 2003.

¹⁵ Message to the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, Bangkok, 16 December 2002

their achievement, and of the progress made in the integrated and coordinated implementation, at the national, regional and international levels, and of the outcomes and commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, will take place from 14-16 September 2005. After the 2005 high-level plenary meeting, a review group is to be established by the Office of the Secretary General to decide on a revised set of indicators for monitoring the MDGs. Data availability at the country level would remain the key criteria for consideration of any new indicators.

17. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work, the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake a ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document from 28 February – 11 March 2005. At its forty-eighth session in 2004, the CSW decided that the review and appraisal would bear in mind the need to integrate a gender perspective in the implementation and review of the Millennium Declaration¹⁶. The Chairperson of the forty-ninth session of the CSW was requested to transmit its outcome, through ECOSOC, to the 60th session of the General Assembly, including to the high-level event of the General Assembly on the review of the Millennium Declaration.

18. In July 2005, the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will consider the theme “Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities.”¹⁷. In its resolution 2004/44¹⁸, the Council requested the functional commissions, the regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to contribute to the preparation of the input of the Economic and Social Council to the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly. In its resolution 2004/4, ECOSOC also recommended that the General Assembly encourage its Committees and other intergovernmental bodies to take further measures to systematically integrate gender perspectives into all areas of their work, including the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow up to the outcomes of major United Nations summits and conferences, and in particular the high-level plenary meeting in 2005.

19. The CSW can make a contribution to integrated and coordinated implementation and follow up by suggesting actions to be taken by Member States and other stakeholders to ensure that the linkages between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration, including the goals contained therein, are duly taken into account. The CSW will identify possible entry points for ensuring that achievements, gaps and challenges identified in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs are addressed in a consistent and harmonized manner by both review processes.

20. The Expert Group Meeting offers an opportunity to make concrete, action-oriented policy recommendations in the report that will be made available to the CSW and can support the preparation of the CSW’s input into the review process of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs.

III. Objectives

21. The overall objectives of the Expert Group Meeting are to:

¹⁶ Resolution 48/5

¹⁷ ECOSOC decision 2004/294 of 23 July 2004

¹⁸ of 22 July 2004

- a) identify the achievements, including good practice examples, as well as gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals at national level;
- b) make specific recommendations on ways and means to increase the practical integration of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals.

IV. Documentation

22. The documentation for the meeting will consist of:

- a) A background paper prepared by DAW;
- b) Short papers prepared by each expert on a specific topic from her /his area of expertise;
- c) Papers prepared by observers.

V. Profile of the participants

23. The expert group meeting will be attended by 10-12 experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The expert group meeting will also be attended by observers from Governments, the United Nations, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia.

24. In selecting the participants, the criteria of geographical, and gender balance to the extent possible, will be respected. The participants will be drawn from a variety of fields and expertise, in accordance with objectives identified above.

25. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to the experts appointed by the Secretary-General.

VI. Organization

26. The meeting will be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Government of Azerbaijan will host the meeting and provide logistical support.

27. The meeting will be conducted in English and the documentation will be in English.

28. The meeting will meet in plenary, and in working groups. In an opening plenary meeting, background presentations will create a conceptual framework for discussions. The plenary will be followed by an in-depth discussion of specific issues in working groups.

VII. Expected outcome

29. On the last day of the meeting the experts will adopt a final report that will contain the main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. The report will be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women.

6 January 2005