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United Nations
Division for the Advancement of Women
Expert Group Meeting on “Financing for gender equality
and the empowerment of women”
Oslo, Norway
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AIDE-MEMOIRE

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for 2007-2009, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will consider “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” as its priority theme during its fifty-second session from 25 February to 7 March 2008. In order to contribute to a further understanding of the issue and to assist the Commission in its deliberations, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) will convene an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on this topic in Oslo, Norway, from 4 to 7 September 2007.

2. The findings and recommendations of the experts will provide inputs for the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme of CSW. They will also be presented at an interactive panel discussion during the 52nd session of Commission on the Status of Women.

II. Conceptual Framework for the Expert Group Meeting

A. Background

3. Commitments on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women have been made by Governments at the international 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).

4. In its discussion of the resources required for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors.¹ The Beijing Platform for Action called for sufficient resources to be allocated to national machineries for the advancement of women as well as to all institutions, as appropriate, that can contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action. Governments were also called upon to 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 this end.²

5. 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, effective and appropriate resource allocation and establish adequate budgetary allocations to support gender equality and development programmes that enhance women's empowerment and develop the necessary analytical and methodological tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.³ 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 is integrated into all policies, programmes and projects.⁴

¹ *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.

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-23/3, annex.

⁴ *Ibid.*

6. At its fiftieth session in 2006⁵, CSW encouraged the international community, the United Nations system, the relevant regional and international organizations and the private sector and civil society to provide the necessary financial resources to assist national Governments in their efforts to meet the development targets and benchmarks agreed upon at the major United Nations summits and conferences and their follow-up processes. The Commission also called for mobilization of adequate funding for gender-sensitive development policies and programmes and for national mechanisms for gender equality, through national, regional and international resource mobilization and gender-responsive budget processes in all sector areas, and allocate adequate funding for women-specific measures.

7. The Monterrey Consensus⁶, 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.

8. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness acknowledged that harmonization efforts are needed on cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality and other thematic issues including those financed by dedicated funds.⁷ And most recently, the Workshop on Development effectiveness in practice⁸, held in Dublin in April 2007, emphasized that gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability are fundamental cornerstones for the achievement of good development results and must be harnessed to advance the implementation of the Paris Declaration.

B. Issues to be addressed

9. There has been limited assessment of progress made in channeling and allocating resources to translate international commitments into action. Some research has pointed to serious gaps and challenges. For example, it has been estimated that the financing gap for resources needed to achieve MDG3 in low-income countries, ranges from \$8.6 billion in 2006 to \$23.8 billion in 2015.⁹

10. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) will explore the mechanisms of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, in particular: public finance, including gender-responsive budgeting; macroeconomic policies, particularly in relation to follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development; mobilization of international resources, including bilateral and multilateral assistance and new aid modalities; and new and

⁵ CSW Agreed Conclusions on “Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work” 2006/1.

⁶ Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002 (A/CONF.198/11, chapter 1, resolution 1, annex).

⁷ Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability, High-level Forum, Paris, 28 February – 2 March 2005, para. 42.

⁸ The Workshop on “Development effectiveness in practice” was organized by the OECD/DAC Networks on Environment and Development, Governance and Gender Equality and the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, with the support of the Irish and Danish Governments, in Dublin, Ireland, 26-27 April 2007.

⁹ “The Financial requirements of achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment” Paper prepared for the World Bank by Caren Grown, Chandrika Bahadur, Jessie Handbury and Diane Elson, August 2006.

innovative sources of funding. The potentials and challenges of the different modalities and mechanisms, as well as the role of key actors involved, will be discussed.

11. *Public finance, including gender-responsive budgeting*: Resources remain insufficient to adequately support policies and programmes that promote gender equality and the advancement of women. A number of Governments have integrated gender perspectives into their national budgets in order to reflect the differentiated needs and priorities of women and men, but attention has mainly been given to the expenditure side of the budget, with limited focus on the revenue side. Challenges in implementing gender-responsive budgets include limited dialogue between Ministries of Finance, national machineries for the advancement of women and civil society groups, and lack of expertise and tools for monitoring and evaluating budgets from a gender perspective.

12. *Macroeconomic policies, particularly in relation to follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development*: Macroeconomic policies, laid out in the Monterrey Consensus¹⁰, have implications for financing for gender equality. For example, the removal of tariffs and other trade barriers has an impact on prices of goods and services consumed by households. The resulting decreases in Government revenues can lead to cuts in social spending, with direct impact on household budgets, and disproportionate impact on women. 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, and the “Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness”, to be held in Ghana in 2008, provide an opportune occasion for the international community to advance concrete action-oriented gender-sensitive policy recommendations and coherence between macroeconomic policies and internationally agreed development goals, including on gender equality.

13. *Mobilization of international resources, including bilateral and multilateral assistance, and new aid modalities*: In recent years there has been a shift in the way that development assistance is delivered, with increased focus placed on sector-wide approaches or large programmes. From 2001 to 2005, only \$5 billion of a total \$20 billion in bilateral aid allocated to specific sectors focused on activities that have gender equality as a principal or significant objective, with two-thirds of this funding directed to the social sectors, mainly health and education, and limited funds allocated to promoting gender equality in the agriculture, infrastructure or finance sectors.¹¹

14. *New and innovative sources of funding*: In addition to public finance and international resources, including donor funding, funds and foundations have been established to mobilize resources for activities promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Women’s development funds, and funds run by women, have been set up in many countries and regions to fund local, national and regional organizations working towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. Private sector companies have also established foundations to provide funding for development activities, including gender equality, as well as developed products and services specifically geared to women and girls. In addition, remittances—which have surpassed ODA flows in many countries—have emerged as potential sources of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

¹⁰ Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002, (A/CONF.198/11, chapter 1, resolution 1, annex).

¹¹ “Aid to support gender equality, 2001-2005” January 2007, OECD-DAC Secretariat, Paris.

III. Objectives of the Expert Group Meeting

15. The overall objective of the Expert Group Meeting is to facilitate an exchange between experts on strategies for promoting the financing of gender equality and the empowerment of women. This interaction is intended to stimulate thinking on how to more effectively incorporate gender considerations into financial mechanisms and processes, and increase resources for promoting gender equality. Experiences gained, lessons learned and good practices will be highlighted and concrete recommendations developed on financing for gender equality at the national, regional and international levels. The outcome of the EGM will assist the Commission on the Status of Women in formulating policy recommendations on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women.

16. The meeting will address a range of questions in the areas identified above, including, inter alia, the following:

- What has been the impact of gender-responsive budgets and other fiscal policies intended to stimulate gender equality, and what are the challenges? What role do women's organizations play in the budget process, and how are they funded?
- How does the funding for national machineries for the advancement of women compare to that of other ministries/departments?
- How can bilateral and multilateral assistance, including through the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, be channeled more effectively towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women?
- What initiatives can be undertaken to ensure that gender equality is central to macroeconomic policies and is adequately addressed in the follow-up processes to the Monterrey Consensus?
- What role can funds and foundations, for-profit enterprises, and migrants' remittances play in mobilizing resources for gender equality? What have been some innovative approaches in this regard?

IV. Profile of the participants

17. 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 representatives of relevant institutions such as bilateral and other donors, women's funds, foundations and development banks, as well as observers from Governments, the United Nations, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia.

18. In addition to specific expertise on the issues, the criteria of geographical balance and, to the extent possible, gender balance, will be taken into consideration in selecting the experts. Experts will include academics and practitioners from relevant fields, in accordance with the objectives identified above. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to experts. Observers can attend the expert group meeting at their own expense.

V. Documentation

19. The documentation for the meeting will include:

- A consultant's paper commissioned by the Division for the Advancement of Women, outlining the major issues to be discussed;

- Expert papers prepared by experts on specific issues in line with their expertise;
- Papers prepared by observers, which will be made available but not formally presented at the EGM.

VI. Organization

20. The EGM will be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and will be hosted by the Government of Norway in Oslo, Norway, from 4 to 7 September 2007.

21. The EGM will be conducted in English and all documentation will be in English.

22. The EGM will meet in plenary and in working groups. Presentations by the experts in plenary will create the framework for discussions. The plenary will be followed by in-depth discussion of specific issues in working groups. The report will be drafted by the experts.

VII. Expected Outcome

23. The Report of the Expert Group Meeting, containing a summary of the discussion and recommendations, will be adopted by the experts on the final day of the meeting. The report will be made available at the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women and on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The findings will also be presented at the interactive expert panel during the fifty-second session of the CSW.