

**Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
and the African Centre for Gender and Social Development, Economic Commission for
Africa**

Capacity Building for Promoting Gender Equality in Africa and West Asia Countries

**Regional workshop to establish the African e-network for national machineries and
its support mechanisms**

AIDE-MEMOIRE

Addis Ababa
5-8 December 2006

I. Introduction

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) is co-organizing with the African Centre for Gender and Social Development (ACGS), of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), a workshop for representatives from African national machineries for the advancement of women. The regional workshop will take place at the ECA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 5 to 8 December 2006. One national machinery representative per African country will be invited to participate.

The project builds on a series of sub-regional and regional capacity-building and network-building activities undertaken in 2004 and 2005 on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT). The workshop will introduce participants to the structure and activities of an e-network for national machineries in Africa and its support mechanisms. It will include training for participants on the practical and technical aspects of the e-network.

II. Background

The project has the overall objective to build institutional capacity for promoting gender equality in Africa and West Asia. The current phase of the project focuses on the development of a regional e-network among national machineries in Africa, which aims to enhance the capacity of national machineries of participating countries to take full advantage of ICT to strengthen networking, information sharing and knowledge management.

The Beijing Platform for Action noted that national machineries for the advancement of women have been established in almost every Member State to, *inter alia*, design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women (para 196). The national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy-coordinating unit inside governments. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas (para 201).

At its forty-seventh session, the Commission adopted agreed conclusions 2003/44 on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women. The Commission urged Governments and other stakeholders to, inter alia: “enhance, for the benefit of women and girls, international cooperation in support of national efforts to create an enabling environment to reduce the digital and information divide between developed and developing countries and promote, develop and enhance access to, and transfer of, knowledge and technology...” (para. 4w) and “strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women, including through the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources and the provision of technical expertise, to take a lead advocacy role with respect to media and ICT and gender equality, support their involvement in national, regional and international processes related to media and ICT issues and enhance coordination among ministries responsible for ICT, national machineries for the advancement of women, the private sector and non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender advocacy.” (para. 4x)

In the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Governments committed themselves to ensuring that the Information Society enables women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes, and agreed that gender perspectives should be mainstreamed into all sectors of development and ICT used as a tool to that end. The action-oriented Tunis Agenda, adopted at the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (November 2005), committed Member States to building ICT capacity for all and confidence in the use of ICTs by all, including women. It was acknowledged that full participation of women is necessary to ensure inclusiveness and respect for human rights within the Information Society. The Tunis Agenda made a commitment to implementing effective training and education, particularly in ICT science and technology, which motivates and promotes participation and active involvement of girls and women in decision-making in the Information Society.

The creation of an e-based network of national machineries in Africa will enhance the effectiveness of national machineries within each country. It will serve as a tool to strengthen the capacity of national machineries to implement their mandates, for example, by supporting their work as advocates and catalysts for gender mainstreaming, as well as support the design and use of an adequate information infrastructure for the achievement of gender equality. The e-network will also link national machineries to the intergovernmental processes, such as the regional Committee on Women and Development (CWD) and the global Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), through facilitating preparations for upcoming sessions. It will also enhance networking and sharing of information and good practice examples regionally and sub-regionally.

III. Regional workshop to establish the African e-network for national machineries and its support mechanisms

A. Objectives of the workshop

The workshop aims to enhance the institutional capacity of national machineries to effectively use ICT to strengthen their networking and capacity-building programmes for the advancement of women in Africa and act as catalysts for systematic gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes, nationally and regionally.

The workshop will:

- Establish the structure and activities of an e-based network of national machineries from participating countries to strengthen cooperation and information-sharing through regular information dissemination on gender equality and women's empowerment, including via electronic media and the internet;
- Provide training to participants in the technical and operational aspects of the e-network;
- Enhance the capacity of national machineries to maximize the use and benefit of information and knowledge management, through more effective use of ICT, to promote gender equality.

B. Expected outputs

The workshop will produce the following outputs:

- A draft regional web portal for the e-network will have been presented to participants and modified to incorporate their comments and suggestions;
- The structure, form and activities of the e-based network of national machineries will have been discussed and finalized;
- The responsibilities and commitments of the national machineries, ECA and DAW in relation to the future functioning of the e-based network will have been discussed and finalized;
- Representatives from the national machineries will have been trained in practical and technical aspects of the e-network, such as using discussion lists, sharing information on the web portal and participating in e-discussions.

It is anticipated that, based on the experience gained during the workshop, participants will use the e-network on a continuous basis, to share experiences and good practices, and exercise leadership for promoting gender equality. The e-network will provide an unparalleled opportunity for networking and collaboration prior to regional and global inter-governmental (CWD and CSW) and treaty body processes (CEDAW). It will also assist national machineries in sharing knowledge on critical areas of concern for gender equality in Africa, as well as identifying and addressing salient emerging issues.

C. Venue and participants

The four-day event will take place at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The number of participants will be approximately seventy. They will include:

- One representative from each national machinery (53);
- Representatives from ECA (African Centre for Gender and Social Development and Development Information Services Division);
- Gender focal points from ECA sub-regional offices;
- Staff members from the Division for the Advancement of Women;
- Facilitators/trainers/resource persons.

D. Organizational and administrative matters

The workshop will be co-organized by DAW and ECA. The meeting of 53 representatives of national machineries will be held for four days. Participants will convene in plenary as well as in working groups. Participants will first review the outcomes of the earlier project on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of ICT, and evaluate progress made in implementing the regional Declaration and Strategic Framework for Action, adopted at the regional meeting in Addis Ababa, in September 2005.

A proposed structure and activities of the e-network will be presented at the workshop and participants will meet in working groups to evaluate this and make recommendations. A draft design for the regional web portal for national machineries will be presented at the workshop and participants will play an active role in adapting the functions, design and content as needed. Participants will also receive training in the practical and technical aspects of participating in the e-network, such as using discussion lists, sharing information on the web portal and participating in e-discussions. On the final day, the results of the discussions in the meeting, the revised regional web portal and the revised structure and activities of the e-network will be presented in plenary.

E. Interpretation

The plenary sessions will be conducted in English with interpretation into French. Working groups will be conducted in English and French.

F. Documentation

The documentation of the workshop will comprise relevant background papers, as well as training materials designed specifically for this workshop. Participants will be provided with handouts to facilitate the training of other staff members in their respective national machineries.

G. Budget

The Division for the Advancement of Women will make available funds required to cover expenses for the organization of the meeting. This will include the costs of travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) for all invited participants, as well as for consultants and resource persons.

H. Passports and Visas

Participants will be expected to make necessary arrangements with regard to passports, visa and health certificates for travel. ECA will send out an information note to participants to assist with travel arrangements.

I. Correspondence

All relevant correspondence should be addressed to:

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