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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” (c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: (i) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”; (ii) Current challenges and forward looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls

Regional Processes in preparation for the Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

1. In preparation for the ten-year review and appraisal at the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the regional commissions held regional meetings. Meetings of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were held in all regions in conjunction with these intergovernmental regional meetings, and NGOs participated actively in the intergovernmental regional meetings.

2. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) held the Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean from 10 to 12 June 2004 in Mexico City. The Conference focused on reviewing the implementation and fulfilment of international and regional agreements and on the analysis of two central themes of strategic importance to the region: poverty, economic autonomy and gender equality; and empowerment, political participation and institution-building. The Mexico City Consensus, which was adopted at the Conference, reaffirmed the decision of participating countries to apply measures in different areas toward gender equality. The Consensus called on Governments to adopt measures in political, social, economic and cultural spheres, including legislative measures and institutional reforms, to ensure the full development and advancement of women of all ages, with a view to guaranteeing their access to justice and their exercise and enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

3. From 8 to 10 July 2004, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) hosted the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace in Beirut. The Conference reviewed and appraised the accomplishments achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005, identified the obstacles to the implementation process, developed initiatives and new measures to expedite implementation and confronted the challenges that obstruct the achievement of development, equality and peace. The Conference adopted the Beirut Declaration, which outlines actions to be implemented over the following ten years to empower women, improve their conditions and increase their participation in political, economic and social life. Additionally, the Beirut Declaration highlighted: the political participation of women at all levels including the legislative, judiciary and executive levels; the role of the media in raising gender awareness and projecting a positive image of Arab women in the West and East; the central role that ESCWA has been playing in raising gender awareness and empowering women; and called upon the regional commission to provide technical assistance in that respect.

4. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) hosted the High level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes from 7 to 10 September 2004, in Bangkok, Thailand. The report of the meeting contained the Bangkok Communiqué which set out gains made over the past ten years, identified gaps, and recognized challenges that lay ahead for the region. The Communiqué reaffirms commitment to the consensus of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It notes significant progress in the formulation of national policies and action plans to promote

gender equality and the empowerment of women, the establishment and the strengthening of national machineries and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, formulation and revision of domestic laws and regulations to eliminate discrimination against women, and affirmative actions to increase women's participation in politics and decision-making. The Communiqué noted the insufficient catalytic role given to national machineries for the advancement of women and insufficient financial and human resources allocation to promote gender equality, and addressed the need for closer cooperation and partnerships with various stakeholders and collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics.

5. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) held its review from 12 to 14 October 2004 during the Seventh African Regional Conference on Women held in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. The review detailed progress in addressing the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action and emerging issues, and assessed implementation of the regional 1994 Dakar Platform for Action, the Africa-specific content of which raises issues widely reflected in the global Beijing Platform and other relevant global and regional frameworks. The outcome document of the Conference noted that, to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, it would be necessary to institutionalize gender mainstreaming through the provision of adequate resources, technical expertise and sufficient authority to those responsible for implementation. The Conference outcome document called upon Governments to regularly evaluate the extent to which political will was translated into concrete results, so as to identify and remedy existing gaps in the implementation of gender policies.

6. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) held its *Regional Preparatory Meeting for the ten-year review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action* from 14 to 15 December 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting recognized the similarity of challenges and progress made in most countries but also great disparities, which exist within the region. While progress was made by most developed market economies, a deterioration of women's position was observed in many countries of eastern and Europe and CIS. Main themes of the meeting reflected three areas of particular concern to the ECE member countries: women in the economy (employability and social protection); institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality; and trafficking of women in the context of migratory movements. The chairperson's conclusions, which were the main outcome of the meeting, reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, stress the importance of strong and sustained political commitment for achieving full implementation of commitments and draw the attention to linkages across 12 critical areas of the Platform. The document calls for using good practices to address key challenges, which were identified in each of three areas discussed. It also addresses a number of emerging issues such as: mainstreaming gender into economic policies (public budgets, fiscal policy, trade policies), and welfare reforms, broadening and deepening the scope of gender responsive budgets to take into account diversity and to include interactions with employability, social security, ageing population and transforming masculinity, ensuring a gender perspective in the development of new technologies (especially ICT), empowering women in private sector

and fostering corporate social responsibility for promoting gender equality and working with men.