

51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women
“Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”

Informal panel

28 February 2007

ISSUES PAPER

I. Introduction

In accordance with its recently adopted methods of work,¹ the Commission on the Status of Women will convene a panel on “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”, on 28 February 2007, from 1.00 to 3.00 p.m., during its fifty-first session. This panel represents an innovative feature in the work of the Commission that will enable participants to have a preliminary discussion on the priority theme of the Commission’s 52nd session in 2008.

In considering the theme of “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” in 2008, the Commission will have the opportunity to provide substantive inputs, through agreed conclusions on “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” adopted following the consideration of the topic at its 52nd session, to the following processes:

- ECOSOC’s Development Cooperation Forum, July 2008;
- Review Meeting on the implementation of the Paris Declaration, Ghana, third quarter of 2008;
- Review Conference on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, Qatar, late 2008.

The objective of the panel is to review existing mechanisms and processes for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women at the national, regional and global levels, identify good practices and lessons learned, and highlight gaps and challenges requiring further attention. The role of various stakeholders including governments, donor agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, will be raised in the panel.

II. Background

The panel builds on commitments made on financing for gender equality at the international level, including the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), the Monterrey Consensus (2002) and the Paris Declaration (2005).

Recognizing the need for resources for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Beijing Platform for Action² emphasized that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors. The Platform for Action noted that:

¹ See Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 25 July 2006 in resolution 2006/9.

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.

- Sufficient resources should 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;
- Full and effective implementation would require the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes, as well as the adequate financing of specific programmes for securing equality between women and men.

The Platform for Action called on governments to, inter alia:

- Make efforts to systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures; adjust budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures, both for enhancing productive capacity and for meeting social needs; and achieve the gender-related commitments made in other United Nations summits and conferences;
- Facilitate, at appropriate levels, more open and transparent budget processes;
- Revise and implement national policies that support the traditional savings, credit and lending mechanisms for women.

At the regional level, the Platform for Action³ noted that regional development banks, business associations and other regional institutions should be invited to contribute to and help mobilize resources in their lending and other activities for the implementation of the Platform for Action. At the international level, it stated that countries involved in development cooperation should conduct a critical analysis of their assistance programmes so as to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid through the integration of a gender approach.

At its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly⁴ noted that the realization and achievement of the goals of gender equality, development and peace needed to be supported by the allocation of necessary human, financial and material resources for specific and targeted activities at the local, national, regional and international levels as well as by enhanced and increased international cooperation.

- Governments were called upon 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.
- Governments, regional and international organizations, including the United Nations system, and international financial institutions and other actors, as appropriate, were encouraged to call for continued international cooperation, including to fulfil the yet to be attained internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance as soon as possible, thereby increasing the flow of resources for gender equality, development and peace.

³ 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.

⁴ General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

At its forty-third session, the Commission adopted agreed conclusions on “institutional mechanisms” which put forward a series of recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the strategic objectives of chapter IV.H “Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women” of the Beijing Platform for Action. The agreed conclusions called on governments, inter alia, to provide adequate and sustainable financial and human resources to national machineries and other institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women through national budgets, as well as the possibility of attracting funds from other bodies for the purpose of specific projects.

The international community, including the United Nations system, was also called on to:

- Support national Governments in their efforts to strengthen national mechanisms through official development assistance (ODA) and other appropriate assistance;
- Encourage multilateral, bilateral, donor and development agencies to include in their programmes of assistance, activities that strengthen national machineries.

The Monterrey Consensus⁵, 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. The Monterrey Consensus stressed that it is critical to reinforce national efforts in respect of capacity-building on gender budget policies in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

In the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness⁶, developed and developing countries agreed on a set of five principles to promote aid effectiveness: (i) ownership, (ii) alignment, (iii) harmonization, (iv) managing for results, and (v) mutual accountability. The Declaration acknowledged that harmonization efforts are also needed on cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality and other thematic issues including those financed by dedicated funds.⁷

The Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at the ten-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action welcomed the progress made thus far towards achieving gender equality, stressed that challenges and obstacles remain in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and, in this regard, pledged to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation.

III. Format of the panel

The panel will take the form of an interactive dialogue. Five panellists will make presentations of no more than 7 minutes. Speakers intervening from the floor will be given 3 minutes to briefly share their experiences or address questions to the panelists.

A summary of the discussion will feed into preparations for the priority theme of the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2008.

⁵ Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002 (A/CONF.198/11, chapter 1, resolution 1, annex).

⁶ Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability, High-level Forum, Paris, 28 February – 2 March 2005.

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

IV. Issues for consideration

The panel will focus on the extent to which the goals and recommendations in the Beijing Platform for Action, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Monterrey Consensus and the Paris Declaration have been met in relation to financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The expert panelists will provide examples of experiences and lessons learned in relation to mechanisms and processes through which funds and resources are allocated for gender equality and the empowerment of women, including (i) gender-sensitive budgeting; (ii) development cooperation; (iii) funding of the women's movement; and (iv) role of the private sector.

The following questions may serve as a non-exhaustive discussion guide:

- What are the positive and negative trends in financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women at national, regional and global levels?
- What role do various stakeholders play in initiating, implementing and monitoring policies/strategies/actions at national, regional and international levels to ensure sufficient allocation of resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women?
- What good practice examples and lessons learned can be provided, and what are the key challenges encountered in financing for gender equality at different levels, for example in relation to:
 - a. Undertaking gender-sensitive budgeting?
 - b. Incorporating gender perspectives in aid partnerships, including in implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness?
 - c. Implementing gender mainstreaming in bi-lateral and other loan agreements?
 - d. Securing private sector support?
 - e. Securing funding for national machineries for the advancement of women?
 - f. Securing funding for the women's movement?
- What further research and actions are needed to increase resource allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment?