

**55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women  
New York, 22 February – 4 March 2011**

**Joint Statement of  
the United Nations Regional Commissions**

**Economic Commission of Africa (ECA)  
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)  
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)  
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

At this historic moment in the development of the United Nations' gender architecture as a result of the creation of UN Women, the Regional Commissions extend their congratulations to Ms Michelle Bachelet for her appointment as Executive Director of the new entity. They commit themselves to working in close partnership with UN Women in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in their respective regions.

As the arm of the UN secretariat at regional level, the Regional Commissions play a critical role in promoting the regional dimensions of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. By focusing on regional contexts, linkages and specifics, they provide a vital bridge between global processes and decision-making on the one hand and country level realities, experience and implementation on the other.

Experience shows that many issues benefit from regional intergovernmental solutions based on shared priorities and interests. In addition, many good practices have been developed at regional levels, including in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, which can be shared at inter-regional regional and global levels to enhance our joint efforts.

In working with UN Women to implement global commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the agreed conclusions which emerge from this CSW session, the Regional Commissions will draw on their base of member states and well-established intergovernmental machineries; their regional intergovernmental convening and facilitating authority; their role as conveners of the Regional Coordination Mechanisms; their close links to regional inter-governmental architecture, dynamics and developments; and their longstanding relationships with non-state actors at the regional level.

Underpinning the role and work programmes of the Regional Commissions are the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General-Assembly, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the realization that gender equality and women's empowerment is central to achieving each of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

In the context of the theme of this CSW session, the Regional Commissions share common concerns across all regions at the gender biases which remain within education and training

systems at all levels; the under-representation of girls and women in certain fields of science and technology and of boys and men in caring roles; and the gaps between educational gains for girls and women on the one hand and equal access to full employment and decent work on the other. The Regional Commissions recognize the critical contribution to women's economic empowerment of access and participation of girls and women to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

To address these and related concerns, the Regional Commissions are engaged in a number of policy and capacity development initiatives within their own contexts.

In the African context, for example, the **Economic Commission of Africa (ECA)** is promoting the use of information science and technology through its ICT, Science and Technology Division which acts as an integrated information service and resource center for Africa. ECA makes quality information on African development globally accessible and assists ECA member States to build national capacities in the use of information and communication technologies for accelerated and sustainable development. This has also involved strengthening geographic information for sustainable development.

In Asia and the Pacific, the **Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)** is supporting women across the region to access and productively use information, communication and other technologies as tools for economic empowerment through its regional centres for ICT training and technology transfer. ESCAP is furthermore collaborating with UN Women to enhance the institutional capacities of national machineries to effectively advocate within national policy processes for the interests of girls and women, including in advancing their access to education, training, science, technology and decent work across the region.

In Europe, the **Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)** prioritises the training of women in entrepreneurial skills, including in new technologies, to increase their opportunities in the market. This contributes to building women's capacity to gain economic independence through entrepreneurship and successfully set up, manage and grow their own businesses. ECE has collaborated with the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center and Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation since 2006 in providing biannual training workshops for professional women from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. 230 women entrepreneurs from government institutions and SME support agencies, NGOs dealing with small business support and development, women's business associations and academia have received training on ICTs and support systems for women entrepreneurs.

In Latin America, the **Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)** is planning to support the role of the academic community in the region to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. This will include collaboration with specialized agencies to hold an expert meeting to identify the academic resources available in the region to implement strategies for long-term research which will contribute both to public policy development on gender and the strengthening of the regional academic community. This process will also document successful policy experience in terms of promoting gender equality in the region. The outputs of this work will be made available to UN Women to support institutional strengthening of national machineries for the advancement of women's interests. The Brasilia Consensus, which was adopted by member States of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin American and the Caribbean, in July 2010, gives priority to the economic empowerment of women by advocating avenues for work, income, ownership of assets and a life free from all

forms of violence against women. In this connection, the five priority areas of UN Women finds resonance in the Brasilia Consensus.

In Western Asia, the **Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)** has had a particular focus on addressing the under-representation of women amongst ICT users. Initiatives to this end have included a project to empower poor and disadvantaged communities, particularly women, to engage in the information society by transforming selected existing ICT access points into hubs for global knowledge networks; and by developing, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities. This transformation involves revitalizing ICT access points, developing new functions, including training courses and content in the local language, and training managers in knowledge management, financial sustainability and e-business. ESCAW is currently collaborating in research on the engagement of Arab women in science and technology. The data gathered will be made available to experts and decision makers to advance the status of Arab women in these fields.

In conclusion, the Regional Commissions reiterate their commitment to working in close partnership at a regional level with UN Women and other agencies within the UN system to advance these and other endeavours, with a focus in the end on ensuring real and enduring results for girls and women on the ground in all societies.

The successful establishment of UN Women offers an historic opportunity to deepen partnerships for change and strengthen the critical linkages between the global, regional and national dimensions of our joint efforts to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment everywhere.

