

Expert Consultation: Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2005)

United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)

Expert Consultation on

Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and

appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Aide Memoire

I. Introduction

The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) is organizing an Expert Consultation on “Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” which will take place in New York, from 31 October to 3 November 2005. The Expert Consultation will facilitate the Division’s preparation for the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

II. Background

The ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was carried out during the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women earlier this year. The review and appraisal showed that there has been significant progress over the past decade in terms of policy reforms, legislative change, and institutional development. Positive developments included the establishment of national policies and strategies for gender equality in almost all countries. Countries reported increased diversity in the mechanisms at national level promoting and monitoring attention to gender equality (such as gender equality commissions, ombudspersons offices and parliamentary networks and caucuses), as well as innovative approaches including increased attention to resource allocations through gender-sensitive budgeting, and efforts to engage men and boys more actively in promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

Despite progress made, however, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains far from being fully achieved. While some gains had been seen in relation to each of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern in all regions, obstacles and challenges were also reported in every area. A large gap exists between policy and practice which needs to be explicitly addressed. Persistent gaps in all regions included low levels of women’s representation in decision-making positions; stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices; and discrimination in employment, including occupational segregation and wage gaps. Violence against women, including domestic violence, was noted as a major challenge worldwide. In some regions, Governments noted disproportionately high poverty levels among women, and their insufficient access to or control of economic resources. Governments also noted the serious effects of conflict on women, particularly sexual violence. Countries reported high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and trafficking in women and girls was of concern to many Governments.

The review and appraisal heightened awareness that the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly - together with the outcomes of other intergovernmental processes, such as Security Council resolution 1325, as well as the articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - remain the valid global framework for promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

The Declaration adopted, by consensus, by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session, reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Declaration 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.

The Declaration emphasized that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. It stressed the need to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the 2005 World Summit. Importantly, the Declaration also recognized that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.

The Declaration called upon the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, all sectors of civil society including non-governmental organizations, as well as all women and men, to fully commit themselves and to intensify their contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. This provides an important mandate for the renewed and accelerated efforts at national level to implement the existing policy framework.

It is now essential to focus on directing attention and resources to accelerated and effective follow-up and action to ensure full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. A critical element will be working quickly to build on the momentum of the review and appraisal process and to take full advantage of opportunities, at national, regional and at global level, for increasing attention to implementation.

In 2006 the Commission on the Status of Women will hold its 50th session. It will be important to both celebrate the achievements of this important international institutional mechanism for gender equality and empowerment of women and consider ways to enhance its role in the new millennium to more effectively address the challenges ahead. The 50th session of the Commission provides a unique opportunity to identify the key issues to be addressed in the follow-up to the ten year review in the context of the development of its new multi-year programme of work from 2007.

III. Objectives

The overall objective of the Expert Consultation is to identify priority issues in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These priority issues will be considered in the proposals put before the Commission on the Status of Women for its multi-year programme of work from 2007.

The consultation will:

- Identify priority issues at national level which will require attention in the follow-up to the ten-year review;
- Provide a rationale for selecting these priority issues;
- Identify strategies which need to be taken at national level to address these priorities;
- Indicate what global policy development would be required in these areas (i.e. possible policy recommendations).

IV. Expected outcome

- (a) A report containing the summary of the discussion and recommendations.
- (b) The findings and recommendations of the Expert Consultation will be disseminated at a panel on 3 November with participation by Member States, United Nations entities and civil society representatives.

V. Methods of work

The Expert Consultation will be attended by 12 experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to the experts appointed by the Secretary-General. In selecting the experts, the criteria of geographical and gender balance, to the extent possible, will be respected. Participants will as far as possible represent networks of researchers and activists, in accordance with the objectives identified above.

VI. Documentation

The documentation for the meeting will include papers prepared by experts. The Expert Consultation will be conducted in English only. The documentation will be available in English only.