

**The policy framework for implementing MDG3**

**Statement**

**by**

**Ms. Rachel Mayanja**

**Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary General  
on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women**

**at**

**the High-level consultation**

**"Promoting the Gender Equality MDG: The Implementation Challenge"**

**World Bank, Washington, D.C., 16 February 2006**

Mr. Leipziger, Vice President and Head of the World Bank PREM Network  
Distinguished fellow panelists  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to address this High-level consultation on *Promoting the Gender Equality MDG: The Implementation Challenge*, under the critical topic of the policy framework for implementing *MDG3*. I would like to begin by congratulating the World Bank, the Governments of Norway and the United Kingdom, the OCED/DAC Network on Gender Equality and other United Nations partners for the organization of this important consultation which I hope will lead to increased collaboration on ensuring full implementation of *MDG3* and gender-responsive implementation of all other MDGs.

The Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000 included equality among fundamental values for the new millennium and specifically stated that the equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured. In the Declaration, Member States resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. They further resolved to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*.

Five years later, at the 2005 World Summit, Member States reaffirmed that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly is an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted following the Millennium Declaration in 2000, are a strategic subset of the goals and objectives that Member States committed to during the major international conferences and summits in the social and economic field during the 1990s. The MDGs do not

replace the comprehensive policy goals and related strategies arising from these conferences and summits, such as those outlined in the *Beijing Platform for Action*.

It was an important breakthrough that one MDG was established to explicitly address gender equality and empowerment of women, with a target on eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015, as well as indicators on the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, the ratio of literate women to men ages 15 to 24, the share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector, and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. However, gender equality and empowerment of women can only be achieved if gender equality perspectives are specifically identified and addressed in the implementation of all the MDGs, covering critical areas of poverty, health (including maternal mortality child health and HIV/AIDs), education, and environment.

This requires a stronger focus on the strategy of gender mainstreaming which was reaffirmed by the World Summit as a critical tool for achieving gender equality. Member States undertook to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres.

The Millennium Development Goals have successfully mobilized governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations around the achievement of development targets by specific deadlines. Although attention to gender equality issues has not been adequate to date, the Millennium Development Goals do provide new opportunities for increasing visibility of gender issues in national development planning and reporting, facilitating the development of alliances with new partners and increasing access to resources.

The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* provided a global policy framework for gender equality and empowerment of women which built on the knowledge gained and strategies developed through the earlier world conferences on women. Member States reaffirmed the *Platform for Action* as the global policy framework during the ten-year review of its implementation in 2005. It should guide all work on gender equality and empowerment of women, including on the implementation of *MDG3*.

Almost all Member States (181) have made legal commitments to the human rights of women and girls by ratifying the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. The Convention addresses civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women, in both public and private spheres of life. It offers an enhanced framework for achieving substantive equality. It tackles the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination, which are barriers to women's empowerment and undermine the implementation of the MDGs.

Using *CEDAW* as a framework would ensure a rights-based approach to the implementation of *MDG3*. This requires a stronger focus on women as rights-holders and on identifying and enforcing the accountability of duty-bearers. Implementation of *MDG3* would be driven by the recognition of the entitlements of women and girls that entail legal obligations on the part of States parties and other relevant actors. *CEDAW* provides an effective accountability mechanism by reviewing reports of States Parties, holding a constructive dialogue with States and providing concrete recommendations for action in areas where gaps and challenges are identified.

Importantly, the Declaration adopted by Member States at the ten-year review of implementation of the *Platform for Action* in the Commission on the Status of Women in 2005 recognized that the *Platform for Action* and the *CEDAW* are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.

During the ten-year review of implementation of the *Platform for Action*, held at the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women last year, the Commission organized an interactive expert panel on the linkages between the implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action* and the internationally agreed development goals, the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Participants emphasized the importance of recognizing and building on the synergies between these instruments and their implementation processes.

The ten-year review of implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action* indicated that a large gap between policy and practice remained to be addressed. While some gains could be identified in all regions, serious obstacles and challenges were also reported in every area.

The inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment among the MDGs can be seen as a direct result of the fact that many of the commitments made by Governments in the *Beijing Platform for Action*, or through their ratification of *CEDAW*, have yet to be fulfilled, as well as an attempt to accelerate implementation. The setting of specific time-bound targets for the MDGs - with all targets expected to be achieved in the coming decade, by 2015 - provides new opportunities for accelerating implementation.

The MDGs offer a strategic opportunity to more fully integrate the goals of the *Platform for Action* and of *CEDAW* into the wider development policy agenda. While concerns were initially raised by gender equality advocates that the specific and far-reaching obligations and commitments of *CEDAW* and the *Platform for Action* had been poorly reflected in the targets and indicators of all MDGs, including *MDG3*, there is increased recognition of the opportunities offered by working within the framework of the MDGs, including for localizing and operationalizing the global targets to adequately respond to country-specific situations and development needs.

The implementation processes for the *Platform for Action*, *CEDAW* and *MDG3* should be more effectively integrated and made mutually supportive. Successful strategies utilized by Governments, international organizations and civil society to

implement the *Platform for Action* and *CEDAW* can be scaled up in strategies to achieve MDG3. Synergetic and complementary implementation processes can result in enhanced national capacity for implementation, coordination, monitoring, and participation of stakeholders, leading to enhanced achievement of all the MDGs, including *MDG 3*.

Enhanced integration could have an important impact in monitoring and evaluation. Bodies monitoring the implementation of the MDGs can be encouraged to more effectively integrate gender perspectives into their activities, as well as to utilize the unique accountability mechanism that *CEDAW* represents. The MDGs also provide an entry point for improving national capacity for statistics. Enhanced collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data can support advocacy and monitoring for the implementation of the *Platform for Action* and *CEDAW*. The implementation process for *MDG3* can increase knowledge and awareness of the policy and normative frameworks for gender equality and empowerment of women among a broader constituency and enhance accountability for their implementation.

In addition, the linking of implementation of *MDG3* and all other MDGs to the implementation of the *Platform for Action* and *CEDAW* can increase the involvement and influence of traditional actors, for example, national mechanisms for gender equality, such as Ministries for Women's Affairs, Gender Equality Commissions, Parliamentary Caucuses, and civil society organizations and networks. It can also lead to the increased engagement of critical bodies not always directly and actively engaged in efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, such as line ministries, ministries of planning and finance.

In addressing the challenge of the many serious obstacles that remain to the full implementation of *MDG3*, it is important to acknowledge the interconnectedness of *MDG3* to all other MDGs, as well as the need to ensure that the gender mainstreaming strategy is effectively utilized. All national development strategies, such as poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs), sector strategies and strategies for the implementation of specific MDGs must fully incorporate gender perspectives and identify the resources required for ensuring gender-sensitive outcomes.

Fully utilizing the gender mainstreaming strategy would require, for example, systematic and effective use of gender analysis, gender needs assessments, and collection and use of sex-disaggregated data in all planning and monitoring processes, as well as the further development of relevant indicators. Gender-sensitive budget initiatives at all levels should be given particular attention as an effective means to ensure to meet policy commitments.

In the 2005 World Summit, Member States resolved to adopt, by 2006, and implement comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the MDGs. This provides an important opportunity to ensure that gender perspectives are fully integrated into these national policies, approaches and resource allocations, and that sufficient attention is given to *MDG3*. Recognizing this unique opportunity, the Commission on the Status of

Women has focused the High-level Round Table on identifying ways to ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated into the development of these strategies from the initial stages. All efforts need to be made by a wide variety of stakeholders within Governments and civil society, with support from external donors, including the United Nations, to ensure that the development of these strategies contributes to identifying and addressing the remaining implementation challenges. The participants at this consultation may wish to consider how this opportunity could be fully utilized and the way in which this group could support this process.

In conclusion, the full implementation of *MDG 3*, and all the MDGs, can only be assured through the effective use of the policy framework provided in the *Platform for Action* and its follow-up, as well as the normative framework for substantive equality and non-discrimination in *CEDAW*.

Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*