

Resolution 40/9. Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical area of concern: poverty*

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 50/203 of 22 December 1995 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 49/110 of 19 December 1994 and other relevant resolutions of the Assembly related to international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries,

Recalling further Assembly resolution 50/107 of 20 December 1995 on the observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and proclamation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty,

Reaffirming the importance of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, as well as all the United Nations major conferences and summits organized since 1990, in particular the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995,

Recognizing that the eradication of poverty will require the implementation and integration of strategies at the national and international levels in all the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1/

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on poverty 2/ in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the discussion that took place on this issue during the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolutions 50/173 of 22 December 1995 on the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and 49/184 of 23 December 1994, in which the Assembly expressed the conviction that each woman, man and child, to realize their full human potential, must be made aware of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development,

Recognizing that mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes aimed at combating poverty is crucial, as women constitute the majority of people living in poverty,

*For the discussion, see chap. II, paras. 62-69.

^{1/} Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

^{2/} E/CN.6/1996/CRP.3.

Recognizing also that the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child, as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, is essential for the advancement of women,

Recognizing further that the commitment of Governments is of fundamental importance in combating poverty and in improving living conditions for women and men,

Recognizing that national and international efforts to eradicate poverty require full and equal participation of women in the formulation and implementation of policies that take fully into account the gender perspective and that empower women to be full partners in development,

Emphasizing that empowering women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty, since women constitute the majority of people living in poverty and contribute to the economy and to the combating of poverty through both their unremunerated and remunerated work at home, in the community, and in the workplace,

Recognizing that poverty is a global problem affecting all countries and that the complexity of poverty, including the feminization of poverty, requires a wide range of measures and actions, at the national and the regional level, giving particular priority to the situation of women living in poverty and recognizing the need to improve their access to income, education, health care and other resources,

Recognizing also that more women than men live in absolute poverty and that the imbalance is on the increase, resulting in the limited access of women to income, resources, education, health care, nutrition, shelter and safe water in all developing countries, particularly in Africa and in the least developed countries,

Recognizing further that a large number of women in countries with economies in transition are also affected by poverty,

Bearing in mind that the increasing number of women living in poverty in developing countries, both in rural and in urban areas, requires action by the international community in support of actions and measures at the national and regional levels towards the eradication of poverty within the framework of the Beijing Declaration ^{3/} and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,

Stressing the necessity of promoting and implementing policies to create a supportive external economic environment, through, inter alia, cooperation in the formulation and implementation of macroeconomic policies, trade liberalization, mobilization and/or the provision of new and additional financial resources that are both adequate and predictable and mobilized in a way that maximizes the availability of such resources for sustainable development, using all available funding sources and mechanisms, enhanced financial stability and ensuring increased access of developing countries to global markets, productive investment and technologies, and appropriate knowledge,

^{3/} Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

1. *Recognizes* the central role that women play in the eradication of poverty, and stresses the need for their full and equal participation in the formulation and implementation of policies that take fully into account the gender perspective and that empower women to be full partners in development;

2. *Stresses* that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status are essential for the eradication of poverty and that the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels is an integral part of the process;

3. *Recognizes* that the eradication of poverty is both a complex and a multidimensional issue, and fundamental to promoting equality between men and women as well as to reinforcing peace and achieving sustainable development;

4. *Reaffirms* that the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, and reaffirms as well the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, to contribute to and to enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development;

5. *Stresses* that mainstreaming the gender perspective implies examining the ways in which women and men are affected by poverty, the different assets they possess to address the question and their respective contributions and potentials;

6. *Also stresses* that both mainstreaming and other positive actions should be regarded as complementary strategies aimed at enabling the full release of women's and men's development potential and at eradicating poverty;

7. *Urges* all Governments to fulfil their commitments in the Platform for Action to develop, preferably by the end of 1996, national implementation strategies or plans of actions that should also focus on the reduction of overall poverty and on the eradication of absolute poverty, with targets, benchmarks for monitoring and proposals for allocation or reallocation of resources for implementation, including resources for undertaking gender impact analysis; where necessary the support of the international community could be enlisted, including resources;

8. *Urges* all Governments, the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and civil society, to implement the Platform for Action in its entirety;

9. *Emphasizes* that, in addition to the commitments and recommendations regarding the eradication of poverty outlined in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development 4/ and in the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, specific measures in the Platform for Action should be undertaken to address the feminization of poverty and to mainstream a gender perspective in all policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty, including, inter alia, measures to:

^{4/} Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (A/CONF.166/9), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

- (a) Develop and implement education, training and retraining policies for women and girls;
- (b) Undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies;
- (c) Promote the participation of women at all levels of decision-making;
- (d) Develop national strategies for promoting employment and self-employment, including entrepreneurial and organizational skills, in order to generate income for women;
- (e) Adopt policies to ensure that all women have adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, ill health, maternity, child-bearing, widowhood, disability and old age and that women, men and society share responsibilities for child and other dependant care;
- (f) Restructure and target the allocation of public expenditures to promote women's economic opportunities and equal access to productive resources and to address the basic social, educational and health needs of women, including access to safe water, particularly of those living in poverty;
- (g) Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research for use in designing more effective policies to recognize and value the full contribution of women to the economy through both their unremunerated and remunerated work and to address the feminization of poverty, in particular the relationship between unremunerated work and women's vulnerability to poverty;
- (h) Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the contribution of women to the economy, the feminization of poverty, and the economic and social impact of debt and structural adjustment programmes in all developing countries, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries;
- (i) Analyse, from a gender perspective, macroeconomic and microeconomic policies, and the allocation of public expenditures, which should be designed and implemented with the full and equal participation of women so as to avoid negative impacts on women living in poverty;
- (j) Reduce excessive military expenditures and investments for arms production and acquisition, as is appropriate and consistent with national security requirements, in order to increase resources for social and economic development;

10. *Calls for* the implementation of the outcome of all other major United Nations conferences and summits related to the eradication of poverty;

11. *Calls upon* States to undertake all commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, 5/ taking into account commitments 2 and 5 and the linkages between them, in their efforts

^{5/} Ibid., annex I.

to eradicate poverty, and also calls upon all relevant actors to implement promptly the actions and measures for the eradication of poverty, as contained in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development; 6/

12. *Stresses* the need to fully integrate a gender perspective into the work of all thematic task forces relating to the eradication of poverty established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, as well as the importance of establishing the proposed inter-agency committee on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women;

13. *Recommends* that a United Nations system-wide effort be undertaken to review existing indicators, strengthen gender impact analysis of the design and implementation of economic reform programmes, develop complementary, qualitative assessments, and standardize measures and promote their implementation, and stresses that this effort will necessitate effective coordination;

14. *Also recommends* that the secretariats of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, incorporate a coherent method of including both the mainstreaming of the gender perspective and specific gender programmes to achieve equality between women and men in the operational activities, staffing and decision-making spheres of the system;

15. *Stresses* that the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should play a central role in enhancing financial and technical support and assistance for developing countries, particularly African countries and least developed countries, in their efforts to achieve the objectives of the eradication of poverty and the full integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, as set forth in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, particularly the goal of the eradication of poverty;

16. *Recognizes* that the implementation of the Platform for Action in the countries with economies in transition will also require continued international cooperation and assistance, in support of national efforts;

17. *Stresses* the importance of using all available funding sources and mechanisms with a view to contributing towards the goal of poverty eradication and targeting of women living in poverty;

18. *Calls upon* States committed to the initiative of allocation of 20 per cent of official development assistance and 20 per cent of the national budget to basic social programmes to fully integrate a gender perspective into its implementation, as called for in paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 50/203;

19. *Invites* all countries, the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, relevant international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and all other sectors to contribute to the implementation of programmes aimed at eradicating poverty;

20. *Stresses* the need for a coherent and coordinated approach among all partners in

^{6/} Ibid., annex II, chap. II.

development in the implementation of national poverty eradication plans or programmes that fully take into account the gender perspective;

21. *Also stresses* the need for gender-sensitive training, with the assistance of United Nations organizations, of those responsible for the formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes;

22. *Further stresses* the important role of non-governmental organizations as actors involved at the grass-roots level in the policy dialogue designed to reach women through poverty eradication programmes and calls for further efforts to identify ways by which those non-governmental organizations could contribute to the implementation of such programmes;

23. *Recommends* that the Economic and Social Council, when examining the "Coordination of the activities of the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty" as the theme for the coordination segment of the substantive session of 1996 of the Council, ensure that the relevant organs of the United Nations system take fully into account the gender perspective in their activities for the eradication of poverty, and, likewise, requests that the Council recommend to the General Assembly that the gender dimension of poverty be incorporated into all activities and documentation related to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty;

24. *Stresses* the need to fully integrate a gender perspective into the coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits and recommends that the Economic and Social Council examine, on a regular basis, the extent to which gender factors have been taken into account in the recommendations of all the concerned functional commissions;

25. *Requests* the Secretary-General to keep in mind the multidimensional nature of poverty in the implementation and review of reports on all other critical areas of concern, taking into consideration the many links between the eradication of poverty and those other critical areas of concern;

26. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the present resolution within the framework of his report on action envisaged to be taken in preparation for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

1996/2. Women and the media*

1. The Beijing Platform for Action identifies women and the media as one of 12 critical areas of concern. As stated in the Beijing Platform for Action, gender stereotyping in advertising and the media is one of the factors of inequality that influences attitudes towards equality between women and men. Through a series of dialogues on the subject during its fortieth session, the Commission on the Status of Women examined measures to be used for increasing the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication. Everywhere the

* For the discussion, see chap. II, paras. 89-91.

potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. The conclusions emanating from the Commission's dialogue contain proposals for successful implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the Platform for Action, taking into consideration the importance of implementing all the elements of the Platform.

A. Respect for the human rights of women, including freedom of expression, and the media

2. The Commission on the Status of Women reconfirmed the importance it attached to the principles of freedom of expression and of freedom of the press and other means of communication. The Commission discussed freedom of expression from a gender perspective, in particular as it related to women's full enjoyment of freedom of expression, equal access to the media, balanced and diverse portrayals by the media of women and their multiple roles, and media information aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women. Respect for the human rights of women, including freedom of expression, is a fundamental principle of the international community. In this regard, concern was also expressed about discrimination, threats and acts of violence against professional women in the field of information, including women journalists. If the goal of the full realization of the human rights of women, including freedom of expression, is to be achieved, human rights instruments must be applied in such a way as to take more clearly into consideration the systematic and systemic nature of discrimination against women that gender analysis has clearly indicated.

3. Relevant United Nations bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights and its mechanisms and procedures, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and independent expert bodies, should within their mandates, further examine violations of the human rights of women, including freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, from a gender perspective, in cooperation with the Commission on the Status of Women within its mandate.

B. Self-regulation, voluntary guidelines and responsiveness to civil society

4. The Platform for Action states that self-regulatory mechanisms by the media should be encouraged and, consistent with freedom of expression, should include the development of professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self-regulation so as to eliminate gender-biased programming and to promote the presentation of non-stereotypical images of women and balanced and diverse portrayals of women and men.

5. In the context of responsiveness to civil society, self-regulation for public and private sector industries should be set within a framework of monitoring, awareness and education and well-developed and effective avenues for complaint. Such self-regulatory measures and voluntary guidelines should be established through a process of dialogue with media professionals, not by coercion.

6. With regard to the presentation of violence in the media, initiatives by Governments and other relevant actors, as appropriate, should be taken to raise awareness of the role of the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men and in eliminating patterns of media presentation that generate violence; to encourage those responsible for media content to establish voluntary professional guidelines

and codes of conduct; and to raise awareness also of the important role of the media in informing and educating people about the causes and effects of violence against women.

7. The following initiatives are among those which could be taken, as appropriate, consistent with the freedom of expression:

(a) Encourage the media to take part in international discussions, including the exchange of information and sharing of best practices on voluntary guidelines on a gender-balanced portrayal of women and men. Special attention should be given to the proliferation of transborder and global communications;

(b) Support and encourage women's equal participation in management, programming, education, training and research, including through positive action and equal opportunity policies, with the goal of achieving gender balance in all areas and at all levels of media work, as well as in the media advisory, regulatory and monitoring bodies.

C. The important role of media education

8. Media education, through, for example, practical workshops and training sessions, is an effective way to create greater awareness of gender stereotyping and equality issues among the general public, government, media industries and professionals.

9. In countries where major parts of the population, including many women, are illiterate or media illiterate, Governments should support the goal of providing appropriate education and training.

10. Civil society at large has an important role in exercising its influence on media content and stereotyped portrayal through consumer action and advocacy and different forms of media watch.

11. At the international level, an exchange of national experiences on media education and other measures can benefit legislators, national broadcasting authorities and media professionals.

D. Creating an enabling environment

12. The creation of a positive environment is a condition to promote measures intended to achieve a balanced portrayal of women and girls. Changes should be promoted in an enabling way and not through prescription. Ongoing research, including the establishment of indicators and monitoring, is important for assessing progress.

13. An enabling environment should also be created for women's media, including at the international level, such as the development of Womenwatch, a World Wide Web home page to link the United Nations and its activities for women with non-governmental organizations, academics and other users of the Internet. The vital role of non-governmental organizations in media education, research, consumer advocacy and monitoring should be recognized and enhanced.

14. Media networks should be encouraged to make a commitment or strengthen their commitment to

gender equality. Public media, where they exist, should be encouraged to set an example for private media by their commitment and contribution to the advancement of women.

15. Governments should support research into all aspects of women and the media so as to define areas needing attention and action, and should review existing media policies with a view to integrating a gender perspective.

16. To the extent consistent with freedom of expression, Governments should take effective measures or institute such measures, including appropriate legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.

E. Women and global communications

17. Advances in information technology have opened up boundaries. The role of women in global communication networks needs to be strengthened. Barriers to such information technology and to women's involvement at every level of its development should be reduced.

1996/3. Child and dependant care, including sharing of work and family responsibilities*

1. Questions relating to child and dependant care, to sharing of family tasks and responsibilities and to unremunerated work must be taken fully into account in mainstreaming a gender perspective, in gender analysis and in all other relevant methodologies used to promote equality between men and women.

2. The main lines of action suggested in order to reduce the burden of family responsibilities on women and bring about the sharing of these responsibilities are set out below.

A.. Recognizing change

3. Economic, social and demographic changes - particularly the growing participation of women in economic and social life, the evolving nature of family structures, the feminization of poverty and the link that exists with unremunerated work - and their impact on the capacity of families to ensure the care of children and dependants, as well as the sharing of family responsibilities, including for domestic work, is an issue that affects not only women but society as a whole.

4. As was emphasized in the first plans and strategies drawn up at the national level for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the sharing of family responsibilities and their reconciliation with professional life must constitute a priority objective.

* For the discussion, see chap. II, paras. 92-95.

B. Increasing the role of men in family responsibilities

5. Family responsibilities rest equally with men and with women. Greater participation of men in family responsibilities, including domestic work and child and dependant care, would contribute to the welfare of children, women and men themselves. Even though this change is bound to be slow and difficult, it remains essential.

6. These changes, which imply a change in outlook, can be encouraged by Governments, notably through education and by promoting greater access on the part of men to activities hitherto regarded as women's activities.

C. Changing attitudes and stereotypes

7. It is important to change attitudes towards the status of unremunerated work and the relative role of women and men in the family, the community, the workplace and society at large. Measures taken to this end must be aimed as much at women as at men, and at the different generations, with particular attention to adolescents.

8. These measures should include recognition of the social and economic importance of unremunerated work, and should aim at desegregating the labour market through, inter alia, the adoption and application of laws embodying the principle of equal pay for women and men for equal work or work of equal value.

9. The essential role of the educational system, particularly in primary schools, in changing the perception of the role of girls and boys, must be recognized. The role of national mechanisms and of non-governmental organizations in promoting change is a major one.

D. Adapting the legal system

10. There is a need, through legislation and/or other appropriate measures, to rebalance the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, and to inform them of the existing legislative provisions.

11. Reconciliation of work-related and family responsibilities and the development of a legislative framework for ensuring child and dependant care (particularly of the elderly and disabled) must be promoted by society as a whole, including social partners, and by Governments. The latter must be the main agents of change.

12. Action is needed to:

(a) Promulgate and apply laws and other measures to prohibit all forms of direct or indirect discrimination based on gender or matrimonial status, inter alia, by making reference to family responsibilities;

(b) Promote laws on maternity leave;

(c) Promote legislative measures, incentives and/or measures of encouragement that would enable men and women to take parental leave and receive social security benefits. Such measures should protect working men and women against dismissal and guarantee their right to re-enter employment in an equivalent post;

(d) Promote conditions and a way of organizing work that would enable women and men to reconcile their family and professional life, particularly through the introduction of flexi-time for women and men;

(e) Eliminate the differences in remuneration between women and men for equal work or work of equal value, and promote the development of non-discriminatory methods of evaluating work and their inclusion in wage negotiations;

(f) Work actively towards ratification of or accession to and implementation of international and regional human rights treaties;

(g) Ratify and accede to and ensure implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women so that universal ratification can be achieved by the year 2000;

(h) Ensure the application of laws and guidelines and encourage the adoption of voluntary codes of conduct which guarantee that international labour standards, such as International Labour Organization Convention No. 100 on equality of remuneration of men and women for equal work or work of equal value, apply equally to working women and working men;

(i) Encourage the participation of women in bodies responsible for negotiating working conditions. In this respect, it is interesting to note the relationship that exists between the proportion of women participating in negotiations on working conditions and the importance attached to this problem;

(j) Encourage social security regimes to take into account the time spent by working men and women on child and dependant care.

E. Adopting and promoting a family support policy and encouraging reconciliation of family and professional life for women and men

13. It is essential to define, at the national, regional and local levels, a family support policy that is based on the principle of equal sharing of family responsibilities and is consistent with the policies for promoting equality in the labour market and protecting the rights of the child. Particular attention should be paid to single-parent families. There is a need, where necessary, to revise legislation so that women are no longer defined as "minors" and/or dependants and to ensure that they enjoy the same access to resources as men.

14. The State and society at large have a responsibility for child and dependant care. This responsibility is reflected in the adoption of an integrated approach at the local and national levels in order

to ensure access to affordable and reliable services for the children and dependants (particularly those who are elderly and disabled) of women and men who are working, undergoing training, studying or seeking employment. This responsibility can also take the form of incentives for parents and employers, of a partnership between local authorities, management and labour, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and of the provision of technical assistance and access to vocational training.

15. With a view to complementing the efforts being made in this direction by Governments, international financial institutions should be encouraged to take into account the growing need for financing to establish day-care nurseries, particularly in areas where there is a greater concentration of poverty, in order to facilitate the training of mothers or their entry into paid employment.

16. Child and dependant care can constitute a major source of new jobs for women and men.

17. The burden of domestic work needs to be eased by making use of appropriate technologies to provide drinking water and an energy supply.

F. Developing research and information exchange

18. Research could be conducted drawing on the capabilities of the various United Nations organizations, particularly in the following areas, when compatible with the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001;

(a) Changes in the situation and attitudes of men and women with regard to the reconciliation of family and professional life and the sharing of family responsibilities - in particular, a study should be conducted in the context of sub-Saharan Africa;

(b) Compilation of data on the unremunerated work which is already taken into account in the System of National Accounts, ^{7/} for example in agriculture and other types of non-mercantile production activity;

(c) Collection and exchange of information on the different systems that exist for alimony payments;

(d) Unremunerated work which addresses the measuring and value of this work, within the framework of the implementation of the Platform for Action;

(e) Time-use surveys of unremunerated work of women and men, with a view to measuring its impact on the use and monitoring of economic and social policies.

G. Promoting change through international cooperation

^{7/} United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4.

19. The Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council that all the strategies and policies of the United Nations and of Member States designed to promote gender equality should take fully into account child and dependant care, sharing of family work and responsibilities between men and women, and unremunerated work, as integral parts of the concept of equality between men and women.

20. The Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council that the suggestions set out above be taken into account in defining the policies of the United Nations system, as well as those of Member States.