

**2002/5**

## **Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on thematic issues**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Endorses* the following agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women with respect to the thematic issues addressed by the Commission at its forty-sixth session:

### **A. Agreed conclusions on eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, in a globalizing world**

1. The Commission on the Status of Women recalls and reiterates the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>61</sup> and the outcome document adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>62</sup> which emphasized the multidimensional nature of poverty and identified gender equality and the empowerment of women as critical factors in the eradication of poverty. It also recalls the United Nations Millennium Declaration<sup>63</sup> and the development goals contained there-in, as well as the resolve 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.

2. The Commission on the Status of Women recognizes that, while it is the primary responsibility of States to attain economic and social development and to achieve the development and poverty eradication goals as set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the international community

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<sup>61</sup> *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.

<sup>62</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>63</sup> See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

should support the efforts of the developing countries to eradicate poverty and ensure basic social protection and to promote an enabling international environment.

3. While globalization has brought greater economic opportunities and autonomy to some women, many others, owing to the deepening inequalities among and within countries, have been marginalized and deprived of the benefits of this process. Globalization should be fully inclusive and equitable. To that end, there is a strong need for policies and measures at the national and international levels, formulated and implemented with the full and effective participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to help them to respond effectively to those challenges and opportunities. Further efforts at the national and international levels should be made to eliminate the obstacles facing the integration of developing countries in the global economy.

4. The empowerment of women is the process by which women take control over their lives, acquiring the ability to make strategic choices. Empowerment is an important strategy to eradicate poverty. Special attention must be given to the situation of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of extreme poverty.

5. The Commission urges Governments and, as appropriate, the relevant funds and programmes, organizations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, civil society, including the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to take the following actions to accelerate implementation of these strategic objectives to address the needs of all women:

- (a) Ensure that all actions to achieve the poverty eradication goals established in the United Nations Millennium Declaration include the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle;
- (b) Ensure that, in order to eradicate poverty and promote gender equality and democracy and strengthen the rule of law, both women and men are involved in decision-making, political agenda-setting and allocation of resources;
- (c) Ensure that women and men have equal access to full and effective participation in all processes and that a gender perspective is mainstreamed in development, trade and financial institutions;

- (d) Create an enabling environment and design and implement policies that promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, including the right to development — and fundamental freedoms, as part of the efforts to achieve gender equality, development and peace;
- (e) Evaluate the relationship between the empowerment of women and poverty eradication in different stages of women's life cycle and analyse the intersection of gender and other factors, reflect the implications for policies and programmes and compile and widely disseminate good practices and lessons learned;
- (f) Strengthen efforts to mainstream gender perspectives and the empowerment of women through the whole policy process, from the identification to the formulation, implementation, evaluation and follow-up of macroeconomic policies, as well as economic and social policy formulation and implementation and poverty eradication policies, programmes, development frameworks and strategies;
- (g) Establish or improve gender-specific analysis of poverty and strengthen institutional capacities at all levels, including relevant national machineries, in order to undertake gender analysis in poverty eradication initiatives by, inter alia, the allocation of sufficient resources;
- (h) Improve the collection, compilation and dissemination of timely, reliable, comparable data disaggregated by sex and age and further develop quantitative and qualitative indicators, including social indicators, by national and international statistical organizations so as to increase capacity to measure, assess and analyse poverty among women and men, including at the household level, and make progress in the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle;
- (i) Encourage the inclusion of data on women's equal access to land and other property in United Nations reports;
- (j) Identify and take all appropriate measures to address obstacles to the empowerment of women and to their full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the life cycle with a view to eradicating poverty;
- (k) Take the strongest measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls;

- (l) Incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all budgetary processes, as well as economic and financial policies, in a transparent manner so as to ensure, where appropriate, that national budget policies and priorities as well as resource allocations support the eradication of poverty, the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality goals, and ensure full participation by women in all such processes;
- (m) Review and reform, where appropriate, fiscal policies, particularly taxation policies, to ensure equality between women and men in this regard;
- (n) Strengthen the provision of and ensure access to adequate, affordable and accessible public and social services to meet the needs of all women, in particular women living in poverty;
- (o) Design, implement and promote family-friendly policies and services, including affordable, accessible and quality care services for children and other dependants, parental and other leave schemes and campaigns to sensitize public opinion and other relevant actors on equal sharing of employment and family responsibilities between women and men;
- (p) Improve and develop physical and mental health programmes and services, including preventive health care, for women, particularly women living in poverty;
- (q) Strengthen policies and programmes at the national level to provide equal access to health-care services for all women and girls, particularly for those living in poverty;
- (r) Create and ensure equal access to all types of permanent and sustainable social protection/social security systems at all stages throughout women's life cycle, taking into account the specific needs of all women living in poverty;
- (s) Ensure full and equal access at all levels to formal and non-formal education and training for women and girls, including pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers, as key to their empowerment by, inter alia, the reallocation of resources, as necessary;
- (t) Take urgent and effective measures in accordance with international law with a view to alleviating the negative impact of economic sanctions on women and children;

- (u) Enhance market access for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in particular for those sectors that provide greater employment opportunities for women, and expand access for women entrepreneurs to trade opportunities;
- (v) Undertake socio-economic policies that promote sustainable development and support and ensure poverty eradication programmes, especially for women, by, inter alia, providing skills training, equal access to and control over resources, finance, credit, including microcredit, information and technology and equal access to markets to benefit women of all ages, in particular those living in poverty and marginalized women, including rural women, indigenous women and female-headed households;
- (w) Take measures to develop and implement gender-sensitive programmes aimed at stimulating women's entrepreneurship and private initiative and assist women-owned business in participating in and benefiting from, inter alia, international trade, technological innovation and investment;
- (x) Develop strategies to increase employment of women and to ensure that women, including women living in poverty, are protected by law against discriminatory terms and conditions of employment and any form of exploitation, that they benefit fully from job creation through a balanced representation of women and men in all sectors and occupations and that women receive equal pay for equal work or work of equal value to diminish differentials in incomes between women and men;
- (y) Facilitate the transfer to developing countries and countries with economies in transition of appropriate technology, particularly new and modern technology, and encourage efforts by the international community to eliminate restrictions on such transfers as an effective means of complementing national efforts for further acceleration in achieving the goals of gender equality, development and peace;
- (z) Promote and facilitate the equal access of women and girls, including those living in rural areas, to information and communications technologies, including newly developed technologies, and promote women's and girls' access to education and training in their use, access to, investment and use of these technologies for, inter alia, networking, advocacy, exchange of information, business, education, media consultation and e-commerce initiatives;

- (aa) Ensure that national legislative and administrative reform processes, including those linked to land reform, decentralization and reorientation of the economy, promote the rights of women, particularly those of rural women and women living in poverty, and take measures to promote and implement those rights through women's equal access to and control over economic resources, including land, property rights, the right to inheritance, credit and traditional saving schemes, such as women's banks and cooperatives;
- (bb) Ensure that clean water is available and accessible to all, particularly to women living in poverty;
- (cc) Provide additional international financing and assistance to developing countries in support of their efforts to empower women and eradicate poverty and mainstream gender perspectives in the official development assistance process, including specific provisions for meeting the needs of women living in poverty in areas such as education, training, employment and health, as well as in social and economic policies, including macroeconomic policies, with a view of achieving sustainable development, and urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) as official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNP of developed countries to least developed countries, as reconfirmed at the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, and encourage developing countries to build on progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help to achieve development goals and targets;
- (dd) Promote, in the spirit of solidarity, international cooperation, including through voluntary contributions, in order to undertake actions in the field of poverty eradication, particularly among women and girls;
- (ee) Ensure that women, especially poor women in developing countries, benefit from the pursuit of effective, equitable, development-oriented and durable solutions to the external debt and debt-servicing problems of developing countries, including the option of official development assistance debt cancellation, and call for continued international cooperation;
- (ff) Forge constructive partnerships among Governments, NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders to promote gender equality and the

empowerment of women in poverty eradication efforts and to further support and encourage women and men, girls and boys, to form new advocacy networks and alliances.

6. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes the convening of the International Conference on Financing for Development, and underlines the importance of its objectives in relation to gender equality, the empowerment of women and poverty eradication.

7. The Commission on the Status of Women also welcomes the convening of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, stresses the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the preparations, work and outcome of the Assembly, including the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002,<sup>64</sup> and welcomes the involvement of all women in the work of the Assembly, and the inclusion of women in delegations to the Assembly. Recognition should be given to the contribution of older women and special attention paid to their empowerment and well-being.

8. The Commission on the Status of Women further welcomes the convening of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, stresses the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective and of the involvement of women in the preparations, work and outcome of the World Summit, and encourages the inclusion of women in delegations to the Summit.

## **B. Agreed conclusions on environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters**

1. The Commission on the Status of Women recalls that, in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>65</sup> it was recognized that environmental degradation and disasters affect all human lives and often have a more direct impact on women and that it was recommended that the role of women and the environment be further investigated. The twenty-third special session of

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<sup>64</sup> *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>65</sup> *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, annexes I and II.

the General Assembly identified natural disasters as a current challenge affecting the full implementation of the Platform for Action and emphasized the need to incorporate a gender perspective in the development and implementation of disaster prevention, mitigation and recovery strategies. The Commission also recalls the resolve in the United Nations Millennium Declaration<sup>66</sup> to intensify cooperation to reduce the number and effects of natural and man-made disasters, as well as General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, the annex to which contained the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance.

2. Deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people.

3. The Commission reiterates the strategic objectives and actions adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995,<sup>67</sup> and in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, held in New York in 2000.<sup>68</sup>

4. The Commission recognizes that women play a vital role in disaster reduction (prevention, mitigation and preparedness), response and recovery and in natural resources management, that disaster situations aggravate vulnerable conditions and that some women face particular vulnerabilities in this context.

5. The Commission also recognizes that women’s strengths in dealing with disasters and supporting their families and communities should be built upon following disasters to rebuild and restore their communities and mitigate against future disasters.

6. The Commission further recognizes the need to enhance women’s capacities and institutional mechanisms to respond to disasters in order to enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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<sup>66</sup> See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

<sup>67</sup> *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 I, annex II.

<sup>68</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.



7. The Commission urges Governments and, as appropriate, also urges the relevant funds and programmes, organizations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, civil society, including the private sector and NGOs, and other stakeholders to take the following actions to accelerate implementation of these strategic objectives to address the needs of all women:

- (a) Pursue gender equality and gender-sensitive environmental management and disaster reduction, response and recovery as an integral part of sustainable development;
- (b) Take measures to integrate a gender perspective in the design and implementation of, among other things, environmentally sound and sustainable resource and disaster management mechanisms and establish mechanisms to review such efforts;
- (c) Ensure the full participation of women in sustainable development decision-making and disaster reduction management at all levels;
- (d) Ensure the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social, including the right to development — including in disaster reduction, response and recovery; in this context, special attention should be given to the prevention and prosecution of gender-based violence;
- (e) Mainstream a gender perspective into ongoing research by, inter alia, the academic sector on the impact of climate change, natural hazards, disasters and related environmental vulnerability, including their root causes, and encourage the application of the results of this research in policies and programmes;
- (f) Collect demographic and socio-economic data and information disaggregated by sex and age, develop national gender-sensitive indicators and analyse gender differences with regard to environmental management, disaster occurrence and associated losses and risks and vulnerability reduction;
- (g) Develop, review and implement, as appropriate, with the involvement and participation of women's groups, gender-sensitive laws, policies and programmes, including on land-use and urbanization planning, natural resource and environmental management and integrated water resources management, to provide opportunities to prevent and mitigate damage;

- (h) Encourage, as appropriate, the development and implementation of national building standards that take into account natural hazards so that women, men and their families are not exposed to high risk from disasters;
- (i) Include gender analysis and methods of mapping hazards and vulnerabilities at the design stage of all relevant development programmes and projects in order to improve the effectiveness of disaster risk management, involving women and men equally;
- (j) Ensure women's equal access to information and formal and non-formal education on disaster reduction, including through gender-sensitive early warning systems, and empower women to take related action in a timely and appropriate manner;
- (k) Promote income-generating activities and employment opportunities, including through the provision of microcredit and other financial instruments, ensure equal access to resources, in particular land and property ownership, including housing, and take measures to empower women as producers and consumers, in order to enhance the capacity of women to respond to disasters;
- (l) Design and implement gender-sensitive economic relief and recovery projects and ensure equal economic opportunities for women, including in both the formal and the non-formal sectors, taking into account the loss of land and property, including housing and other productive and personal assets;
- (m) Make women full and equal partners in the development of safer communities and in determining national or local priorities for disaster reduction and incorporate local and indigenous knowledge, skills and capacities into environmental management and disaster reduction;
- (n) Support capacity-building at all levels aimed at disaster reduction, based on knowledge about women's and men's needs and opportunities;
- (o) Introduce formal and non-formal education and training programmes at all levels, including in the areas of science, technology and economics, with an integrated and gender-sensitive approach to environmentally sound and sustainable resource management and disaster reduction, response and recovery in order to change behaviour and attitudes in rural and urban areas;

- (p) Ensure the implementation of their commitments by all Governments made in Agenda 21<sup>69</sup> and the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>70</sup> and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including those in the areas of financial and technical assistance and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to the developing countries, and ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed into all such assistance and transfers;
- (q) Document good practice and lessons learned, particularly from effective community-based strategies for disaster reduction, response and recovery, which actively involve women as well as men, and widely disseminate this information to all stakeholders;
- (r) Improve and develop physical and mental health programmes, services and social support networks for women who suffer from the effects of natural disasters, including trauma;
- (s) Strengthen the capacities of ministries, emergency authorities, practitioners and communities to apply a gender-sensitive approach to environmental management and disaster reduction and the involvement of women professionals and field workers;
- (t) Forge constructive partnerships between Governments, international organizations and civil society, including the private sector and NGOs, and other stakeholders in integrated and gender-sensitive sustainable development initiatives to reduce environmental risks;
- (u) Encourage civil society, including NGOs, to mainstream a gender perspective in the promotion of sustainable development initiatives, including in disaster reduction;
- (v) Ensure coordination in the United Nations system, including the full and active participation of funds, programmes and specialized agencies to mainstream a gender perspective in sustainable development including, inter alia, environmental management and disaster reduction activities.

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<sup>69</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>70</sup> *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.

8. The Commission on the Status of Women calls for the integration of a gender perspective in the implementation of all policies and treaties related to sustainable development and in the review of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action, scheduled for 2004.

9. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in the mitigation of disasters.

10. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes also the policy statement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance, of 31 May 1999.

11. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes further the convening of the International Conference on Financing for Development<sup>71</sup> and takes note of the recognition, contained in the Monterrey Consensus, of the particular needs of women and the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the recognition of the impact of disasters.

12. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes the convening of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming throughout the process and urges gender balance in the composition of delegations as well as the involvement and full participation of women in the preparations, work and outcome of the World Summit, thus renewing the commitment to gender equality objectives at the international level. The Commission on the Status of Women further reiterates that all States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for

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<sup>71</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world.