

**52<sup>nd</sup> session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women  
25 February to 7 March 2008**

**High Level Round Table on Financing for Gender Equality and the  
Empowerment of Women**

**25 February 2008**

**Moderator's Summary**

1. At its third meeting, on 25 February 2008, the Commission on the Status of Women held a high-level round table on the priority theme "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" to follow-up on actions taken subsequent to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The interactive high-level round table focused on experiences, lessons learned and good practices, including results with supporting data where available, in relation to the implementation of the previous commitments with regard to the priority theme. A discussion guide provided the framework for the interactive dialogue.
2. The high-level round table was organized in two parallel sessions in order to allow for interaction among the large number of participants. The sessions were chaired, respectively, by H. E. Olivier Belle, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, and H. E. Iya Tidjani, Deputy Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations. The dialogue followed a format consisting of two segments. The first segment was devoted to a dialogue among representatives of Member States who exchanged information on the progress made in their respective countries on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women and made proposals for future action. In the second segment, invited representatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations contributed to the discussion.
3. A total of 65 speakers participated in the high-level round table: 52 Government representatives, four representatives of United Nations entities and six representatives of non-governmental organizations. Mr. Dioniso Pérez-Jácome, Vice-Minister of Expenditures of the Ministry of Finance, Mexico, and Mr. Mohamed Chafiki, Director of Study and Forecast, Ministry of Finance, Morocco, were the keynote speakers for the sessions.
4. Commitments on financing for gender equality and women's empowerment have been made by Governments, including at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000, and the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002. The Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, emphasized that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors. At its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly called upon Governments to, inter alia, incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of

all budgetary processes. In the Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development, the importance of a holistic approach to the interconnected national, international and systemic challenges of financing for development to ensure sustainable, gender-sensitive and people-centred development, was highlighted.

5. Participants agreed that the implementation of international obligations and political commitments for gender equality and women's full enjoyment of their human rights required the allocation of human and financial resources. Such financing for gender equality should be pursued in a holistic manner across all sectors of Government action at all levels, including the local level. Participants also noted the importance of strong legislative and policy frameworks for the promotion of gender equality, including national action plans for gender equality.

6. Participants noted a direct relationship between a country's economic performance and the extent of women's participation in the economy. Investing in gender equality was shown to have positive and lasting impacts on poverty reduction, productivity, and sustained economic growth. Gender equality was also critical for the full achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals.

7. Participants suggested that there was a growing awareness of the critical role of budgetary allocations for the achievement of gender equality goals. Many participants discussed their efforts at introducing gender-responsive budgeting as a tool for strengthening investments in women and for financing gender equality. Gender-responsive budget processes allowed for an analysis of the impact of budget allocations and expenditures on women and men, respectively. Such analysis took into account the differences and inequalities between women and men in relation to, inter alia, incomes, assets, decision-making power, service needs and social responsibilities for care. Gender-responsive budgets were results-oriented, and aimed to ensure a more equitable distribution of public resources and the benefits of development to women as well as men.

8. Participants provided examples of measures to integrate gender perspectives into national budgets. In a number of countries, gender perspectives were considered as a matter of course in every budget line. In other countries, a specific percentage of the national budget was earmarked for women. Steps had also been taken to integrate gender equality perspectives in the development and implementation of national development strategies and/or poverty reduction strategies. In several instances, efforts to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting were undertaken in response to legislation, for example where laws required the costing of bills, the preparation of a gender impact statement for the budget, or resource allocation with gender equality considerations. Participants noted that it was also important to give greater attention to taxation systems and their impact on gender equality.

9. Participants acknowledged that more work was necessary in the effective and systematic use of gender-responsive budgeting. In several countries where gender-responsive budgets were now used, this approach had been introduced in a progressive

manner over a number of years. Advocacy had been the first step in this process. The need for technical expertise as well as for political will to strengthen the use of this approach, were highlighted. The importance of a participatory approach in gender-responsive budgeting, with the involvement of non-governmental organizations, and especially women's groups, and Parliament, was noted.

10. Several participants suggested that, given the specific circumstances in some countries, including high poverty and illiteracy rates, the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting was premature, and that targeted expenditures for women and girls remained at present a more viable strategy. Participants expressed support for the continuing use of a two-track strategy that took advantage of both approaches.

11. Participants described initiatives that had been undertaken to strengthen the capacity of Government officials in regard to gender equality issues and the use of the gender mainstreaming strategy in the area of financing. Several countries had prepared guidelines or manuals to support gender-responsive budgeting and similar financing initiatives. Availability and use of sex-disaggregated data were critical for gender-responsive budgeting. There was also a need for effective tools and mechanisms for measuring the impact of resource allocations on gender equality, such as gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and tracking expenditures to enhance accountability. Gender budget audits were also an important tool for securing enhanced financing.

12. Collaboration of national machineries for the advancement of women with different stakeholders, and especially with NGOs, was important to strengthen awareness and advocate for gender-responsive budgeting.

13. Participants discussed a range of other actions to strengthen financing for gender equality. In many countries, resources for targeted measures for women had been increased, including for women's health, education and poverty eradication, and for addressing gender stereotypes and violence against women. Women's access to micro-credit and microfinance had been strengthened in an effort to support women's entrepreneurial activities. National women's funds had also been established, including to support housing loans for women and create economic opportunities for rural women.

14. Participants discussed the importance of strong institutional mechanisms for securing adequate resources for gender equality. In some countries, funding for national machineries for the advancement of women had been increased, although most remained under-resourced. Enhanced collaboration of national machineries with ministries of finance and planning was essential. There was also a need to ensure that direct funding was made available to NGOs, including women's organizations.

15. Participants also noted a number of global trends that had an impact on financing for gender equality, such as trade liberalization measures, the international security agenda, and external debt and debt servicing requirements. The gender perspectives of these issues and their impact on availability of resources for gender equality required more attention. There was a need for further opening of markets for women to increase

economic opportunities, as well as for affording greater recognition and value to women's unpaid work, especially in the care economy. Decent work was critical for achieving women's empowerment and gender equality.

16. Participants highlighted a number of challenges in regard to financing for gender equality and empowerment of women. In general, resources for the promotion of gender equality in national budgets remained insufficient. Gender equality work was often dependent on external funding, including through international development cooperation. Expertise to implement gender-responsive reforms in budgetary policy was limited, or absent. Although some progress was being made, cooperation between ministries of finance and national machineries for the advancement of women was in many instances weak or ineffective. It had also been difficult to establish strong networks of gender focal points to support gender-responsive budgeting. Methodologies and tools to implement this approach were underdeveloped. Availability of sex-disaggregated data was still limited in many areas. There was also a need to ensure greater awareness and understanding among women's organizations and the public at large of budget processes and the impact of budgets on people's lives.

17. Participants noted that the Follow-Up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha, Qatar, in December 2008, was an important opportunity to make concrete progress in securing financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and holding stakeholders accountable to previously made commitments. It was hoped that the work of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and most especially the agreed conclusions on the priority theme, would feed directly into the upcoming Follow-up Conference to ensure that gender equality perspectives are fully incorporated into the discussions and negotiations on financing for development.