

**Joint Statement  
Of  
The five United Nations Regional Commissions**

**Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)  
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)  
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)  
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

**To**

**The 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission on Status of Women  
(New York, 2 - 13 March 2009)**

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**Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)  
African Centre for Gender & Social Development (ACGS)**

**Mister Chair**  
**Distinguished delegates**  
**Representatives of NGOs**  
**Ladies and gentlemen**

It is a great honour for me to address the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the CSW on behalf of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

I would like to congratulate the Bureau and all delegates for selecting the priority theme of the session. *The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including car-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS*, that raises important moral, legislative and policy issues, which surely requires a complex set of policy responses. Focusing on the regional dimension of this issue under examination in this session is important for the work of the UN as it provides a link between national and global levels and translates global commitments and processes into region specific contexts, priorities and adequate policy responses.

Women and men's choices regarding the sharing of paid work and unpaid care are embedded in a complex constellation of cultural norms, government policies, work environments and local care infrastructures. Building new partnerships and alliances between different societal actors and across regional, national and local levels is necessary for mobilising support for more equal sharing of work and care responsibilities, and will enable a more comprehensive approach to creating supportive environments for greater gender equality.

\* The European Alliance for Families for example, which was set up following a decision by EU heads of state at the European Summit in March 2007, provides a platform for the exchange of ideas and experience between EU Member States to formulate and implement more family-friendly policies and foster cooperation and learning.

At the national level, alliances between gender equality advocates and economic actors can help in order to sensitise economic actors to gender aspects by highlighting the mutual benefits of greater gender equality to men and women, but also to businesses and society at large.

The role of the corporate sector is crucial in providing supporting working environments and flexible working arrangements to both men and women with care responsibilities. Men are still significantly less likely than women to request part-time work in order to take a greater share of the unpaid care for children or elderly relatives. The decision to take a more active part in childrearing can be facilitated by "father-friendly" workplaces in which family-friendly arrangements are also explicitly targeted at men and in which decisions to make use of such flexible arrangements are not penalised in terms of career advancement and job security.

\*\* In Latin America and the Caribbean, ministers of gender gathered in Quito, Ecuador, from 6 to 9 August 2007 at the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women, have agreed that two themes were of strategic importance for the region: 1) political participation and gender parity in decision-making processes at all levels and 2) the contribution of women to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work. Therefore they decided to adopt measures of co-responsibility in family and working life that apply equally to women and men in all spheres to ensure recognition of unpaid work and its contribution to countries' economic development. An agreement was reached to promote the inclusion of unpaid work in national accounts, implement comprehensive public social security systems capable of ensuring women's well-being and full citizenship; and formulate policies and programmes for providing quality employment, social security and economic incentives to women who have no income of their own.

\*\* In Africa, ECA is implementing a strategy to support governments to invest in unpaid work and to integrate it into national planning instruments. With regards to the specific theme of the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS, ECA has just finished the implementation of a programme called The Treatment Acceleration Program (TAP) in a number of African countries. TAP aims especially at piloting strategies for strengthening the capacity of these countries to scale up comprehensive programs for providing care and treatment and enabling infected people to live longer and be productive. **Low male involvement** is one the major weaknesses of the Programme that we need to recognize, highlight and address.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The financial crisis poses a challenge to progress on gender equality but also provides an opportunity to revisit the agenda so as to effectively incorporate gender equality in economic and financial policies. As a result of regional consultations, a high-level side event was organized at the Doha Follow-up conference on Financing for Development in cooperation with Norway and the participation of all regional commission. The main purpose of the event was to draw attention to women's potential for economic growth and development. It underlined that gender equality is not only an inalienable human right but also an economic asset in the process of development. It should be adequately funded.

Besides, reaching MDG 3 is equally relevant to all regions and requires adequate financing. In accepting the MDG 3 Torch, the five regional commissions have accepted the commitment to strengthen even further their efforts to mobilize women's potential for economic growth. At this point, just allow me, Mr. Chair, two more minutes to highlight few examples in this context:

· **ECA:** The Sixth African Development Forum organized by ECA, the African Union Commission, and the African Development Bank (in November 2008 in Addis Ababa) issued a Consensus Statement that there are three critical areas, which need urgent and

sustainable action: **ending violence against women and girls; financing gender equality and women's empowerment and developing reliable data on these issues.**

In this connection, ECA is implementing several activities under its gender and macro-economic programme, namely:

- i) Piloting its African Gender and development index (AGDI) in 25 new African countries (the first round of trials covered 18 countries);
- ii) Building the capacity of member countries to use the Africa- specific Easy Reference Guidebook for integrating household production into national poverty reduction policies and the engendered macro-economic model. This Guidebook is a compendium of methodologies and tools to engender national planning instruments; and
- iii) Developing a methodology for data collection on gender-based violence.

· **ESCWA** has focused on capacity building and substantive assistance to governments, through training, mainstreaming gender into national plans and strategies, and promoting gender budgeting. It is also working on gender statistics. Related to this, ESCWA intends to publish a study on women's access to economic resources, including micro-finance, with policy recommendations.

· **ESCAP** focuses on improving economic opportunities for women and men, namely in the areas of export industries and migration. It is also endeavouring to improve the access of rural women to markets through information and communications technology. Other areas of interest include improving women's access to health and education and promoting gender statistics, including the development of additional indicators for MDG3.

· **ECLAC** is using national time-use surveys to assess the different contributions of men and women to productive and community work. In this regard, it organizes training for government officials, civil society, and the private sector, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). ECLAC is also setting up a network of experts in time-use, and will also coordinate an inter-regional project on violence against women which includes data and measurements of violence.

· **ECE** is focusing primarily on promoting the economics of gender, as well as mainstreaming gender into Small and Medium Enterprise policies and into its sectoral work, which includes housing and the environment. ECE is establishing a Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender to provide information for policy makers on how to mainstream gender into economic policies at the macro and micro levels. ECE also hosts a gender statistics and MDG data base, developed in cooperation with UNICEF and UNDP.

This was a brief summary of the main scope and areas of intervention that the Regional Commissions are focusing on in relation to the themes of this session.

**Thank you for your attention**