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**“The role of national mechanisms in promoting
gender equality and the empowerment of women:
achievements, gaps and challenges”**
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BACKGROUND PAPER

on

**The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and The
Empowerment of Women: Achievements, Gaps and Challenges for the Future**

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Introduction

The First World Conference on Women, in 1975, called for the establishment of national machineries for the advancement of women. By the end of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), 127 Member States of the United Nations had established some form of national machinery¹. As of 2004, 165 countries had established national machineries².

Defined by the United Nations as a body “recognized by the government as the institution dealing with the promotion of the status of women,”³ the role, structure and functions of a national machinery have evolved over the years. Initially the machineries tended to be isolated structures within the government bureaucracy focusing on the implementation of discreet projects to promote women’s advancement in different sectors. The machineries were often under-staffed and under-funded, with unclear mandates, frequent shifts in structural location and weak capacity to perform the myriad functions assigned to them. By the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing in September 1995, there was a growing consensus on the role, structure and functions of the national machinery, that the machinery should act as a catalyst rather than an implementer and that its main function was mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in all policy areas.

¹ As listed in the Directory of National Focal Points for the Advancement of Women, quoted in *Women 2000*, No. 3. 1987:7.

² As listed in the Directory of National Machineries for the Advancement of Women, DAW, March 2004

³ E/CN.6/1988/3, para. 21. The definition is based on the outcomes of the Seminar on “National Machinery for Monitoring and Improving the Status of Women”

The Platform for Action (PFA) adopted at FWCW in Beijing included institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women as one of the 12 critical areas of concern. The PFA adopted three strategic objectives with many recommendable concrete categories of actions. The three objectives were:

- Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies;
- Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects; and
- Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

Following Fourth World Conference on Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations, organized several sub-regional and regional meetings on the implementation of PFA's recommendations regarding national machineries⁴. These meetings identified the problems faced by the national machineries and elaborated further recommendations to strengthen them. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted agreed conclusions 1997/2, which emphasized the need to enhance interaction among UN entities and national machineries. It also adopted resolution E/2004/L.14 which reinforced the role of national machineries as key actors in the promotion of gender mainstreaming. The agreed conclusions 1999/2 adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1999 on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women recommended that the national machineries be placed at the highest possible level of government and be invested with the authority and resources needed to fulfill their mandates. It further emphasized the gender-mainstreaming role of national machineries.

The outcome document adopted by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000, reviewing the implementation of PFA, acknowledged the contributions of national machineries as catalysts for promoting gender equality, gender-mainstreaming and monitoring of the implementation of PFA and in many instances, implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). While noting many areas of progress “in terms of visibility, status, outreach and co-ordination of activities” (Para 24), the document also acknowledged many obstacles such as inadequate financial and human resources; lack of political will; insufficient understanding of gender equality and gender-mainstreaming among government structures; prevailing gender stereotypes; discriminatory attitudes; competing government priorities; and in some countries, unclear mandates, a marginalized location within the national government structures, paucity of authority, lack of data disaggregated by sex, insufficiently applied methods for assessing progress and insufficient links to civil society (Para 25).

Since FWCW in Beijing, in addition to national machineries, new mechanisms for promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment were set up at national level in many countries. Focal points were established in line ministries, facilitated by the national machinery. In some countries, parliamentary caucuses – of women parliamentarians or of male and female parliamentarians – were established which focused on gender equality in the work of parliaments. Other countries established separate gender equality or women’s commissions, and a few have appointed Ombudspersons for gender equality.

⁴ Expert Group Meeting on “National Machineries for Gender Equality”, 1998, Santiago, Chile, 31 August-4 September (EGM/NM/1998/Rep.1)

This paper attempts to review the achievements of the national machineries as well as other national mechanisms. It identifies the gaps and the challenges these mechanisms face, and recommends potential areas for future action. The assessment of the achievements and the challenges is primarily based on the responses sent by 134 Member States to DAW. Several other documents have also been used to review national level implementation of the PFA and identify the gaps and challenges (see bibliography). In all cases, the dearth of independent research constrains the analysis of national mechanisms

The paper is structured in four sections. Following the introduction, the achievements are presented and gaps and challenges discussed. The concluding section proposes some policy recommendations.

Achievements

Most of the responses sent to DAW by 134 Member States described numerous achievements made in implementing the Platform for Action and recommendations of the outcome of the twenty-third Special Session. An overwhelming majority highlighted their efforts to create or strengthen national machineries and other mechanisms to mainstream gender concerns. They also reported on other areas of achievements such as the integration of gender issues in legislation, policies and programmes and in development plans and budgets; the development and strengthening of monitoring and accountability; the establishment of building capacity initiatives for work on gender equality issues; improvement of data collection and research; enhanced public awareness through media and consultation with citizens; and increased collaboration with non-governmental organizations and regional and international bodies.

Strengthening national machineries

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, global progress was achieved in the establishment and strengthening of national machineries. Only a few countries reported an absence of national machinery. After Beijing, national machineries were created (for the first time) in many countries as an integral part of the government. In countries that already had such machineries, measures have been taken to strengthen them. The strengthening efforts included upgrading in status, increased budget and staff, enhanced authority, vertical extension into municipal, district, regional and provincial government structures, as well as horizontal extension in various line ministries and agencies and through improved inter-governmental co-ordination.

Many countries upgraded the status of the national machinery by making it either a full-fledged Ministry or giving it status just below a Ministry such as Vice-Ministry. Some countries created posts of deputy or full ministers in charge of women or gender affairs. An upgrade in status also occurred in several countries as a result of a strategic shift in location of the machinery to more central or powerful offices such as in the President's Office, the Prime Minister's Office or the Planning Ministry. Some countries reported making the machinery autonomous so that it could independently assess the performance of the government. A few countries continued with the NGO status of the machinery with increased function and activities.

Several countries reported increases in budgetary resources while others reported increases in the number of staff. However the most significant increase occurred in the number of special offices created to address women and gender issues in municipal, district and provincial governments and in gender focal points in line ministries and agencies. The

majority of countries established gender focal points in various ministries, government departments, and agencies such as those related to agriculture, education, health, but also to law, security, justice, interior, police, prisons, foreign affairs, trade and many other sectors. These focal points and special units were primarily created to promote and mainstream gender issues in the work of all sectors and levels of government. To coordinate the activities of these different sectors and levels, many governments created special mechanisms such as an interagency commission or committee. Several other Member States attempted coordination through agreements and letters of intention among line ministries and between governments, private sector and non-government organizations.

Other mechanisms to mainstream gender concerns

In addition to special government offices at national, provincial and local levels and gender focal points in line ministries and agencies, a variety of other mechanisms were created to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Equal Employment Opportunity Offices were established in many countries. Several countries reported the operation of special advisory groups or committees and caucuses in parliament to address gender equality issues. Some Member States created posts of Ombudsperson to monitor progress of gender equality and to handle complaints about discriminatory treatment in employment and legal statutes. Other countries established national commissions that acted as statutory Ombudspersons and reported to parliament.

Gender issues in legislation, policies, and programmes

Many countries enacted gender equality laws, which mandated all government agencies to pursue policies and measures to achieve gender equality. Legal reforms encompassed equal opportunities in the work place, combating of sexual discrimination and

sexual harassment and punishment for violence against women. These laws have enabled countries to monitor progress towards gender equality and to investigate violations.

Many more countries adopted national gender equality policies, which are less binding than gender equality acts but nevertheless set the nation's goals. Still others developed national action plans or national strategies. The majority of countries used the gender mainstreaming approach to develop policies, strategies, plans and programmes. Several countries devised specific tools to mainstream gender issues.

Gender concerns in development plans and budgets

Many countries reported that their national machineries played an important catalytic role in advocating to different sectoral ministries and agencies, that they address gender concerns in their own sectoral and agencies' plans. Gender focal points in sectoral ministries and agencies played a key role in this mainstreaming effort. In some countries planning commissions or planning ministries, which oversaw the preparation of annual and long-term development plans, were mandated to integrate gender concerns.

Several countries reported using the tool of gender-sensitive budgets. The methodology used varied from country to country, but all countries attempted to disaggregate budget expenditures to assess impact on both women and men. Some produced information which highlighted new, continuing and ongoing measures designed to promote and assist women in all facets of life annually in conjunction with the government's annual budget. Some countries mandated preparation of annual gender equality or women's empowerment plans with an earmarked budget, together with each agency's regular annual plan and budget. Some countries introduced gender classification into the system of financial administration,

and others reported preparation of an informative appendix to the budget describing governments' financial effort to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Monitoring and accountability

The majority of countries reported on the existence of mechanisms and tools to monitor progress of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as, their national policies, programmes, and plans. The mechanisms included special units or committees to monitor implementation of measures undertaken by different ministries and agencies. In many cases the national machineries provided their monitoring results and recommendations to particular ministries for follow up action. In other instances, the machinery presented an annual white paper on gender equality to parliament describing progress. This information was made accessible to the citizens through websites. In some countries, the national machineries sent monitoring missions to ministries/ agencies/ cities/ provinces to assess progress and submitted reports to the chief executive. Other countries used management tools such as the Performance Management Contract of senior public officials to monitor progress and hold governments accountable.

In many countries, civil society played an important role in monitoring progress and demanding accountability from the government. In several countries the government established monitoring bodies with membership from civil society and non-government organizations. This facilitated the incorporation of citizens' voices in government structures. In other Member States, NGOs initiated independent progress monitoring.

Capacity-building

Many countries reported taking steps to build capacity for work on gender equality issues. Capacity-building efforts included training of the staff of national machineries as well

as gender equality focal points of various ministries and agencies. Capacity-building in several countries encompassed sensitivity training of senior managers in different ministries and agencies. Capacity-building included training in specific technical methods, such as gender-based analysis, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. Some countries trained gender advisors, gender trainers or gender analysts to work as consultants with line ministries and agencies. In addition to training, other mechanisms were used for capacity building such as organizing seminars, conferences, roundtables and workshops to raise awareness.

Data, indicators and research

Many Member States reported on efforts to improve data collection, develop indicators and support gender-related research in collaboration with the central statistical office and research and science institutions. Countries collected and published data on different aspects of life which impact on women's status. The database in some countries was disseminated through cyber system (ICTs). Many countries have developed and improved indicators and gender statistics, which were key elements in the government's monitoring and evaluation system.

Research on women and gender issues has increased and in many countries there was growing support for women's studies departments/institutions. An annual publication of a statistical profile of women and men is now available in many countries. Some countries reported on the presence of gender research forums or networks of researchers that provided a public opportunity to exchange information on current gender related research.

Public awareness and use of media

Many Member States noted national campaigns to raise public awareness about gender equality and women's empowerment. Use of mass media was an important strategy in this regard. Increasingly, national machineries used websites to provide information and to engage in dialogue with civil society. Nation-wide dialogue with community-based organizations and civil society was another strategy pursued in several countries to involve citizens and raise public awareness. Some countries used widespread stakeholder consultations to develop policies and plans for women. Such participatory planning processes have contributed to raising public awareness. Many Member States developed strategies to present positive images of women in the mass media. Some had begun to use the mass media to publicize national and international agreements and legal instruments to raise citizen's awareness.

Collaboration with non-governmental organizations and civil society

Since the FWCW, collaboration with non-governmental organizations and civil society increased in many countries. Several countries reported having established various committees or commissions with joint government-civil society membership. These committees and commissions were tasked with a wide number of functions. Countries also reported on partnership between government and a wide variety of social partners including trade unions and professional organizations. The number of NGOs also increased in the majority of countries.

In many cases, governments provided financial assistance to NGOs to undertake joint projects. Some Member States recently undertook a systematic process of government-civil society dialogue.

Linkages with regional and international bodies

Many Member States reported drawing upon international and regional agreements and bodies to bolster their national efforts. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and other such international agreements were powerful instruments which many countries used to reform their own laws to conform to these global standards. Countries also submitted periodic reports to various United Nations bodies which served as monitoring tools to assess progress towards the achievement of global objectives. Additionally, these reports provided transparency to governments' efforts when placed in the public domain. NGOs often prepared shadow reports to provide their assessments of the governments' efforts.

Regional intergovernmental bodies such as the European Union, Nordic Council and the regional commissions of the United Nations also contributed to the establishment of standards and guidelines for improving gender equality and women's empowerment. Several countries reported on actions undertaken to meet these regional standards and guidelines.

Challenges

While all 134 countries reporting to DAW elaborated on their achievements, only a limited number reported on obstacles they faced in implementation of the strategic objectives of PFA and identified future actions to meet the challenges. Resource constraint was the most often cited obstacle. Other obstacles included weak capacities of the national machineries;

political instability as well as instability in the staffing of national machineries; lack of coordination between different ministries, departments and planning systems at different levels of government; lack of statistics, data and tools; shortage of specialized permanent staff in different sectors; gaps between policy and plan formulation and implementation; negative impacts of macroeconomic policies such as trade liberalization; weak monitoring and accountability structures to enforce compliance with gender equality mandates, policies and programmes; lack of public awareness about the work of various institutional mechanisms; weak support from women parliamentarians; and lack of support from civil society, particularly women's movements.

While responses from the Member State highlighted the above obstacles, the independent assessments of researchers and other observers noted some additional gaps and obstacles. These included the undemocratic and partisan nature of many national machineries created by undemocratic governments; conflict and competition between the government and civil society organizations; withdrawal of affirmative actions and special measures in the name of mainstreaming; emergence of market liberalism and social conservatism; and a weakening of feminist movements in many countries⁵.

Some of the challenges are old and continuing and some are new. The major challenges that continue to hamper the effectiveness of these national mechanisms are noted below.

⁵ Bell, Emma et al. "National Machineries for Women in Development: Experience, lessons and strategies", Bridge. Report No. 66, February 2002, Dzodzi, Tsikata. "National Machineries for the Advancement of Women in Africa: Are they transforming gender relations?", <http://www.socwatch.organization.uy/en/informestematicos/29.html>, Sawer, Marian. "Gender Equality in the Age of Governing for the Mainstream", Expert paper prepared for the Experts Group Meeting on "The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Achievements, gaps, and challenges" on November 29- December 2, 2004, Rome.

Mandate, location and leadership

The mandates of many national mechanisms remained unclear and they continued to face frequent restructuring and location shifts. For example, in one country the location of the national machinery shifted six times between 1975 and 2001⁶. In another, it changed four times between 1988 and 1998⁷. In yet another, the Office of the Status of Women was shifted from its central location in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Department of Family and Community Services⁸.

Leadership of these machineries also changed frequently. One country saw a change of six ministers since 1996⁹. Compared to the leadership of other ministries and agencies, leadership of national machineries tended to be weak. In several countries, the leadership was in the hands of the wives of the heads of states. In many countries, national machineries have to compete for scarce resources with several organizations including NGOs and Civil Society groups.

In many countries, the machineries were used for political mobilization purposes by the ruling party. In one country, the women's ministry's food assistance programme

⁶ Dzodzi, Tsikata. "National Machineries for the Advancement of Women in Africa: Are they transforming gender relations?", <<http://www.socwatch.organization.uy/en/informestematicos/29.html>>

⁷ Bantebya – Kyomuhendo, Grace. "The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women: achievements, gaps and challenges". Expert paper prepared for the Experts Group Meeting on "The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Achievements, gaps, and challenges" on November 29- December 2, 2004, Rome.

⁸ Sawer, Marian. "Gender Equality in the Age of Governing for the Mainstream'. Expert paper prepared for the Experts Group Meeting on "The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Achievements, gaps, and challenges" on November 29- December 2, 2004, Rome.

⁹ Blondit, Cecilia. "National Machineries for Gender Equality", Expert paper prepared for the Experts Group Meeting on "The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Achievements, gaps, and challenges" on November 29- December 2, 2004, Rome.

helped to create political support for the regime in power¹⁰. This type of partisan political work inhibited the work of bipartisan constituency building for the broader agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. Additionally in many countries, the machineries still tended to have too many functions which were either difficult or inappropriate.

Resources: staff and funds

Although a few countries reported an increase in staff and funds, many noted cuts in staff and budget. For example in one country the number of staff with gender budget had decreased from 30 to 10¹¹. In another country the gender analysis unit was dismantled¹². Many Member States have cited weak capacity of staff in the national machinery as well as in the various ministries and agencies as a major constraint. Gender focal points were still overburdened with many other routine tasks and gender equality work was often an add on.

Shortage of funds was identified as another major obstacle. Funding constraints impeded not only the work of the national machineries but also that of the other provincial and local level machineries. In many countries budget cuts have negatively affected not only the national machinery but also other sectoral ministries such as health and education which contribute to women's empowerment.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bantebya – Kyomuhendo, Grace. "The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women: achievements, gaps and challenges", Expert paper prepared for the Experts Group Meeting on "The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Achievements, gaps, and challenges" on November 29- December 2, 2004, Rome.

¹² Sawer, Marian. "Gender Equality in the Age of Governing for the Mainstream", Expert paper prepared for the Experts Group Meeting on "The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and

Donor dependence was another significant constraint. In many countries national machineries were dependent on external donors for their work on capacity building, policy development, legal reforms and other important issues. This often skewed the national agenda as donors imposed their own priority themes and concerns. Donor dependence also created uncertainty as reduction in donors funds resulted in discontinuity of activities and initiatives.

Statistics and data

Absence of sex disaggregated statistics and data were frequently cited by the Member States as significant obstacles to implementing the PFA. While most of the countries reported gains, some noted gaps in information in certain areas such as violence against women, gender based wage differentials, gender differentiated health indicators, gender differentials in decision making, as well as, gender-differentiated returns on investment in human development. Lack of information inhibited development of appropriate tools for planning and programming. It also constrained establishment of monitoring systems. While many countries still needed to build capacity for the production of sex disaggregated statistics, data and analyses, some countries faced the challenge of maintaining the capacity which was developed over years but faced erosion as a result of policy shifts that undercut gender analysis.

Globalization and shifts in macro-economic, political and social environments.

As a result of rapid process of globalization, there has been a significant shift in macroeconomic, political and social environment in the decade since Beijing. Markets have emerged as the dominant force and the states have receded. The process of globalization has eroded the boundaries of state sovereignty and transnational actors have emerged as a powerful force shaping global economy and politics. Globalization and trade liberalization impacted the economies of all nations, creating both benefits and negative impacts. Overall wealth and income increased and new employment opportunities were created. But at the same time, inequalities were exacerbated within and between nations. Intensification of economic competition in a globalized market had, in some countries, led to erosion of social security and social protection policies, which have the potential of differentially impacting men and women. Very few studies had looked into the gender-differentiated impact of these global and macro economic policy trends.

Similarly the political landscapes had changed tremendously globally and within countries. Many more countries had officially elected governments as a first step towards a democratic transition. At the same time, however, there was an increase in political conflicts and war resulting in the destruction of lives and livelihoods of millions of people and the creation of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Research and analysis has not adequately addressed how these political changes had affected men and women differentially, whether new opportunities were created for women to participate meaningfully in these new democracies and in peace building/peace

keeping or if they had lost their previously protected political opportunities, and have become mostly victims of war and conflict.

There has also been a rise of social conservatism in many countries and a weakening of the women's movements. This again is a constraint on the work of the national mechanisms as the social conservatives' promote a vision of gender relations and women's rights which are at odds with the gender equality perspective of the women's movements.

The gaps in understanding the gender differentiated opportunities and impacts created by globalization and changes in macro-economic-political and social policies pose a major challenge to the work of the national mechanisms. In many countries, the national mechanisms are still working with the pre-Beijing framework of formulating national policies, plans and programmes, without due cognizance of the paradigm shift that has taken place from a national to a global framework of policy/action process.

Monitoring and accountability

Monitoring progress of the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment, and holding different actors accountable, were another major challenge for the national mechanisms. The national machineries tended to monitor the progress of their various actions. Their reports to DAW clearly indicated that they had implemented many of the recommended actions in the Platform for Action. They had established mechanisms; developed national policies and plans; supported integration of gender issues in the work of various sectors; attempted to co-ordinate various activities; and developed collaboration with civil society and non-government organizations. While

monitoring results of the progress of implementation of these various actions gave a positive picture of achievements, gender-differentiated statistical data on indicators of socio-economic-political life provided a far less optimistic picture. Definition of indicators of progress, tracking the indicators and establishing causal links between policies/programmes and results remained problematic.

Accountability was another major challenge. Many actors, national and transnational, government, civil society, and private sector were responsible for taking actions to promote the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. While many national governments attempted to demonstrate their accountability through reports to parliaments and publication through websites, the accountability of the private sector, civil society and transnational actors was less apparent.

Co-ordination and collaboration among the national mechanisms

The proliferation of women/gender offices and focal points vertically at the provincial and local levels, and horizontally in different ministries and agencies, was another major challenge for the national machineries. Human and financial resource constraints limited the capacity of the national machineries to co-ordinate the activities of the many offices.

Even more problematic was co-ordination and collaboration with other autonomous mechanisms such as parliamentary caucuses/committees and statutory bodies. The relationship between these various mechanisms was ill defined. In some countries, they were able to work in collaboration, in others they worked in isolation, without creating a synergetic impact.

Collaboration with civil society

Records of countries varied as to how successful the national machineries were in building a collaborative work relationship with civil society. In some countries, national machineries built alliances with civil society and women's movements, creating a successful strategy of inside-outside advocacy to advance the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. But, in many countries national machineries and civil society developed adversarial relationships. They often competed over scarce donor resources. Civil society complained about the national machinery's tendency to control NGO actors, and the national machinery was reluctant to give civil society access to government policy processes. This competition and lack of collaboration had detrimental effects on the work of both the national machineries and civil society.

Political will

Lack of political will was cited by many Member States as a major obstacle to their work on gender equality and women's empowerment. This was manifested in different ways. In some cases, where there was a change in government, national machineries lost the support of top political leadership. In other countries the leadership is officially committed to gender issues but there was a gap in implementation of these commitments. Support of wide constituencies was another ingredient of political will. In this respect, some countries were successful in mobilizing political support of wide-ranging constituencies. The strength of women's movement also varied. In some countries, the movement was successful in mobilizing widespread popular support but in

others the women's movement became weakened over the years. Mobilizing and sustaining political will remain a continuing challenge.

Further Actions

In their responses to DAW, Member States have recommended various actions for the future. The recommendations generally involved strengthening the various actions adopted in the PFA and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. However, several challenges identified by independent assessments of national machineries must also be addressed. The suggested areas of action are noted below:

Enhance resources: staff and budget

The Member States stressed the need to improve the capacity of staff and increase budgetary resources. The suggested areas of action included recruitment of qualified and gender sensitive staff from within government bureaucracy and infusion of outside qualified consultants; training of existing staff and gender focal points as well as training of senior management to be sensitive to gender concerns; increasing financial allocation from the national budget, earmarking a portion of the budget and increasing resource flow from international agencies.

Since the gap in resources between the central and local government levels and between government and NGOs is noted as a constraint by several countries, a fair distribution of financial resources between (levels and sectors) will be an important future step.

Improve co-ordination and collaboration among different national mechanisms

Member States reported on the creation of several national mechanisms in addition to national machineries. Some of these mechanisms, such as parliamentary committees and caucuses and ombudspersons, work independently of governments and monitor government action and establish accountability. The national machineries need to improve co-ordination and collaboration with other mechanisms in order to improve implementation of their goals and reinforce synergies.

Build capacity to identify opportunities and minimize losses from changes in global and macro-policy environment

As noted earlier, changes in global and macro-policy environment impact the lives of citizens in all countries. How these changes will differentially impact men and women in different countries and socio-economic groups is not yet fully known. National machineries need to pay greater attention to these macro policy changes in order to promote appropriate actions to identify opportunities and minimize losses for women. Supporting research, which will illuminate the gender dimensions of macro policy changes, will be an important step for the future.

Strengthen monitoring and accountability

Indicators of progress and tools for tracking these indicators were relatively undeveloped. Lack of statistics and data was a major constraint. As discussed earlier, many of the previously established monitoring indicators need to be revisited. Some of these indicators tracked progress of various actions but not results. If outcomes are to be monitored

there needs to be a better understanding of the causality between policy/action and outcome and design of appropriate monitoring indicators.

Similarly, accountability measures for the future need to capture the changes in the restructuring of states and new management approaches in governance. Increasingly the public sector is shrinking and there is greater emphasis on the role of the private sector and the public-private partnerships. The Public sector has borrowed the management approach of private sector. The pre-Beijing accountability models, which emphasized accountability of the public sector, need to be supplemented by the design of accountability measures for the private sector, civil society and transnational actors.

Mobilize and sustain political will

The agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment was established nationally and globally by the women's movement and the intergovernmental processes of the UN. However, in many countries the women's movement is facing a backlash from the emergence of socially conservative forces. In many countries, women's movements have been unable to expand the popular base of their support. Women parliamentarians can play an important role in supporting the women's movements by piloting legislation, advocating policy reforms facilitating and sustaining the political will needed for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Civil society groups and the media can also play a significant role in mobilizing and sustaining political will. Although countries have undertaken various measures to increase public awareness and support and enter into partnerships with civil society, there are differences among Member States. Some have launched extensive mass campaigns through widespread citizen consultation and participatory planning, while others are relying on the

implementation of national policies and plans, using a more narrow bureaucratic/technocratic approach. In future, greater effort needs to be made to mobilize widespread citizen support which is necessary to overcome the deeply held social and cultural obstacles to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

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