

Item 4- Regional Review of Progress

**REGIONAL STATEMENT BY NGOS  
OF EASTERN AND SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE  
AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES  
FOR UN ECE BEIJING +15 REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING  
2-3 NOVEMBER 2009, GENEVA**

Speaker: Aida Jamangulova, NGO "Community Development Alliance"

Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential in order to achieve equitable and effective development and to foster a vibrant economy. The financial and economic crisis should not be an excuse for countries to backtrack on commitments made to gender equality and poverty reduction. Once undone, progress on development goals cannot easily be recovered without considerable re-investment and political re-commitment.

Measures undertaken should take into account gender differentiated impacts and be not only consistent with short-term measures but also set a direction that addresses long-term structural problems of the economy. This requires tackling **labour market segregation** and creating **decent work for women** across rural and urban settings and different social groups.

- Expansionary **fiscal policy** must be countercyclical. Progressive **taxation systems** that compensate for gender biases in revenue-collection should be developed along with measures to enhance tax revenues, including more efficient and broader-based tax collection.
- **Economic stimulus packages** should place a priority on **job creation and/or retention** through employment guarantee programmes both in the private and the public sector where so many women are still employed. Enforcement of **minimum-wage** regulations and implementation of **equal pay for equal work** policies should be part of the policy response.
- **Public spending measures** should support gender-sensitive investments in both physical and social infrastructure to support vulnerable groups, such as migrant women.
- **Support to individuals** should especially target those in low-income households, support formal, informal and unpaid care givers, such as including them in high enough unemployment benefits that cover the living cost; and ensure that women-owned SMEs and small producers are able to access credit and microcredit from formal institutions.
- For countries with a heavy economic concentration in the rural sector, long term planning means a **re-balancing of the sectors and investment**, especially private and foreign direct investments, in industrial policy **to reduce the commodity dependence and broaden the employment base for women by providing incentives to sectors which majority of the jobs are occupied by women.**
- Agricultural and trade policies should be formulated and implemented with the goal of assuring **food security. Ownership of land and productive assets** by both men and women needs to be protected to prevent deepening of poverty. In countries **where agriculture is a major source of employment (especially for women)** special attention should be given to the classification of unemployment and the eligibility for support to take into account of female farmers and agricultural workers.

- Rising unemployment rates particularly affect **migrant workers**, half of whom are women. **Joint initiatives between countries of origin and destination** are necessary to assure protection of the rights of migrant workers internally displaced people and their families: protection of human rights specifically right to personal safety, decent work, social security, including social insurance. **Unemployment schemes** in countries of origin and destination should extend to migrants and return migrants who have lost their jobs. **Regional coordinated responses** are necessary where migration and trade routes are interdependent.
- States should develop and enforce appropriate **national standards for the sectors of health and education, including child care and social services**, supported by **adequate state budgets**, and ensure quality, accessibility and reach to all parts of the country, ensuring coverage for vulnerable groups and citizens outside of main population centres. Some services could be delegated to the private sector and civil society organizations as long as quality control is ensured.
- Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies must **increase commitments** to development assistance in collaboration with civil society organizations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, through gender mainstreaming and targeted activities, and strengthen mechanisms to **effectively measure resources allocated to incorporating gender** perspectives in all areas of development assistance. Indicators for gender sensitive stimulus packages need to be developed, tracked and monitored.
- It is important to ensure that the **International Financial Institutions** take gender perspectives into account in loan approvals, debt servicing and debt relief equality. All **onerous debts** should be reviewed and cancelled as they burden national economies and their capacity to overcome the crisis.

Rights based gender responsive policies and their implementation can only be assured when **decisions are made in a transparent and inclusive manner**, with **monitoring mechanisms** in place. Nationally owned initiatives are essential to assure that policies respond to the real needs of the country and the most vulnerable within them. This requires sustained advocacy and informed demands by gender equality advocates and women's participation in all levels of policy and decision-making. **Support to women's organizing** should be matched by strengthened gender machineries to assure policies are gendered and monitored. In addition, the women's machineries need to be better positioned in policy and budget formulation and crisis response processes as well as public finance management to assure that needs of women are adequately addressed.

Thank you.

## **European including CIS Women's NGOs Statement**

### **Speaker: Brigitte Triems**

Women's NGOs from the European region including the CIS acknowledge the significance of the impact of the current economic and financial crisis and hereby wish to stress the importance of the multilayered and complex gender dimension pertaining to this recession. In this regard, we draw attention to the fact that the recovery packages proposed to overcome this crisis must pay due attention to addressing existing deep inequalities between women and men. Beyond economic-dominated solutions, in order to be effective future policies and legislation must notably address all forms of violence against women, ensure the equal participation of women and men in decision-making in

all areas, ensure the protection of women's sexual health and reproductive rights and acknowledge and address the existing inequalities between various groups of women.

Pursuant to this, Women's NGOs from the European region and CIS advance the following recommendations for the attention of national, European and international-level policy-makers:

1. **Guarantee continuous support and resourcing (financial and human) of existing institutional mechanisms, policies and programmes for gender equality and women's rights at all levels**, including in ODA and international cooperation and support for women's organizations. Further, ensure the swift creation of a strong new United Nations gender equality entity. The current cuts faced by gender equality institutions in several countries need to be addressed with strong political engagement on the part of decision-makers, especially in the context of the financial and economic crisis. Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies must **increase commitments** to development assistance that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment, through both gender mainstreaming and targeted activities, and strengthen mechanisms to **effectively measure resources allocated to incorporating gender** perspectives in all areas of development assistance. Indicators for gender sensitive stimulus packages need to be developed, tracked and monitored.
2. **Ensure that financial and economic recovery plans at all levels include a gender equality perspective** both in relation to analysis and to policy proposals. **Economic recovery packages** should place a priority on **job creation and/or retention** through employment guarantee programmes, not only in the private sector but also in the public sector where many women are employed. The reconstruction of the current financial and economic architecture must involve structural transformations, take into account the legal responsibilities for gender equality, introduce gender budgeting strategies and include a strong focus on sustainable development. Binding measures for the equal representation of women with men in high-level economic and financial decision-making must be central to the process of institutional restructuring.
3. **Ensure a consistent gender equality dimension to economic, employment and social policies** in order for them to contribute to gender equality, including equal pay and equality in pensions, and to the fight against women's poverty especially for older women. Governments should introduce and support policies and services for equality in training, equal access to lifelong learning, the reconciliation of work and private life, recognize the value of unpaid work and take measures to ensure the equal sharing of unpaid work between women and men.
4. **Implement a coordinated and multisectoral approach to ending all forms of violence against women** specifically at European Union level as well as in other countries in order to ensure a uniform protection of women's rights in the region. The framework of this approach should be the recognition of all forms of violence against women as a manifestation of the patriarchal system and of unequal power relations between women and men in public and private life. This approach must address specifically the root causes of male violence and include measures and resources for the prevention of violence against women, non sexist education and support and protection of victims and for their rehabilitation. The fight against violence against women should include measures tackling trafficking and prostitution, phenomena which are also directly linked to economic hardship.
5. **In the framework of human security, decisions on the disarmament of all weapons** should be carried out. Consistent with the provision of UNSC resolutions 1325, 1820 and 1880, a gender analysis of armed conflicts should be performed.
6. **Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights as a strategic priority** for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, both in internal and

external policies. All States should be accountable and ensure the establishment and implementation of a legislative framework to provide, universal access to information, education and services pertaining to sexual and reproductive health including prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, for both women and men, girls and boys.

7. **Take strong action against the use of arguments based on religious, cultural, customary or traditional values, beliefs or practices** to justify any violation of women's human rights. Member States should invest in transforming these institutions for them to support women's human rights.
8. **Develop and implement an intersectional approach, given that women are not a homogeneous group**, to include women's multiple identities within policies and actions which are gender specific and addressed to various groups of women. These policies must pay particular attention to those women in vulnerable situations.
9. **Ensure that migration, integration and asylum policies are based on a human rights approach** and take into account a gender perspective. **Joint initiatives between countries of origin and destination** are necessary to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant, refugee and internally displaced women and their families: the protection of these human rights include the right to an individual legal status, to personal safety, decent work, an individual right to social security, including social insurance. **Unemployment schemes** in countries of origin and destination should extend to migrant women and return migrant women who have lost their jobs. **Regional coordinated responses** are necessary, where migration and trade routes underlie the interdependence of the countries.
10. In countries that are predominantly rural and **where agriculture is a major source of employment (especially for women)** special attention should be given to the classification of unemployment and the eligibility for support that take into account of female farmers and agricultural workers. For countries with high farmer indebtedness, special funds and financing mechanisms need to be put in place to address the problem of agricultural debt. Financial sector reform should ensure that small producers can access credit and microcredit from formal institutions. Agricultural and trade policies should be formulated and implemented with the goal of assuring **food security. Ownership of land and productive assets** by both men and women needs to be protected to prevent deepening of poverty.
11. Rights based gender responsive policies and their implementation can only be assured when **decisions are made in a transparent and inclusive manner**, with **monitoring mechanisms** in place. Nationally owned and driven initiatives are essential to assure that policies respond to the real needs of the country and the most vulnerable populations within them. This requires **sustained advocacy and informed demands** by gender equality and women's groups. **Support to women's organizing** should be matched by strengthened investments in national institutions including national women's machineries to assure policies are gendered and monitored. In addition, the women's machineries need to be better positioned in policy and budget formulation and crisis response processes as well as public finance management to assure that needs of women are adequately addressed.

## **North America & Other High Income Countries**

Speaker: Margot Baruch, Center for Women's Global Leadership

### **General Recommendation**

1. **The financial crisis has disproportionately impacted poor and rural women.** In order to address this issue effectively, economic stimulus money needs to be supportive of public sector positions, which will have long-term impacts on social functions such as in health and education.

### **Specific to the Gender Equality Architecture Reform - GEAR**

2. **In reference to the institutional mechanisms in the Beijing Platform for Action, we call on North America and ECE countries** to support the launch of the new gender entity and the appointment of the USG by early 2010.
3. **Governments must also demonstrate leadership in resourcing the new gender entity.** We demand that all governments in the region should triple their funding by next year and increase funding annually in subsequent years.

### **General**

4. **Globally there must be a redirection of resources and reallocation of the way money is spent to reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.**
5. **We call on the US to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).** The US is the only country in the ECE region that has not ratified this international bill of rights for women.
6. **Given the financial crisis resources could be shifted to these other funding issues.**
7. **The US must include gender equality in all aspects of foreign assistance as well as overall increases in development assistance.**
8. **The US must support the ratification of Optional Protocol of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** for the establishment of a mechanism to access justice at an international level for people whose economic, social and cultural rights are violated.
9. **Finally, we call the North American governments to take action to achieve 50/50 participation of women in political decision making and on corporate boards.**

<b>Item 5- Gender Sensitive Economic Policies in the context of the economic and financial crisis</b>
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### **Conclusions of the Interactive Caucus on Migrant and Displaced Women and Trafficking**

**Speaker: Miriam Frendenberg**

Given that the current economic/financial crisis increased women's poverty, we demand that the governments of the region promote the economic empowerment of all women and urge governments to consider the following points;

- The ECE should take measures to eliminate the economic exploitation of developing countries.
- We demand that the governments of the ECE region condemn all forms of violence against women worldwide, including under the pretext of: tradition, customs, religion or culture.
- Governments of the region should put in place legislation that criminalizes the clients and completely decriminalizes women in prostitution. We further call for governments to establish, implement, and adequately fund services to enable women to leave prostitution.

- Governments of the ECE should recognize that prostitution is a violation of women`s human rights.
- Legislation in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings should be fully implemented and its adoption promoted as a minimum standard in our region.
- Member states of the ECE region should give priority to the centrality of a rights-based approach to international migration. The humanity and dignity of 200 million migrants in the world must be the primary concern of all State's and other actors. We urge that the governments of the region ensure that migrant and displaced women have access to:
  - Proper documentation (such as birth registration, marriage documents, working permits)
  - Adequate housing
  - The right to equal work for equal pay
  - Education
  - Health services
  - Social protection (including proper information service in a language they can understand)
  - Unemployment insurance
  - Services protecting their human rights and delivered with respect
  - Free legal assistance

In addition, we request that governments implement support evaluation mechanisms of the before mentioned measures and provide regular reports on these evaluations.

We insist that the governments of the region take proactive steps to sanction racist and discriminatory practices against migrant and displaced women.

Finally, we would like to recall that in the Beijing Platform of Action for Equality, Development and Peace in its section on Human Rights of Women Diagnosis and Actions to be taken in paragraph 233 h it is mentioned

*Take appropriate measures to ensure that refugee  
and displaced women migrant women and women migrant workers  
are made aware of their human rights and of the recourse mechanisms  
available to them*

**Minorities:**

Speaker: H  l  ne Sackstein International Alliance of Women

**For the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action –  
ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**

Contribution from the NGO caucus on minority women in the ECE region

NGOs participating in the caucus began by including in the category of minority women all those who are different in some way from the majority of women in their country because of their ethnicity, their religion, their culture, their extreme poverty, their real or perceived disabilities, their sexual orientation and gender identity, their marital status or their life style. The list is far from exhaustive, but the recommendations made are relevant to most minorities women victim of marginalization and/or social exclusion in the UNECE Member States.

Lack of access to education, health and status, an absence of legal rights along with the inability to have their voices heard has marginalized these women and girls and resulted in the inter-generational transmission of lives in poverty - a vicious cycle that can only be broken through an effort to develop anti-poverty policies and programmes that reach all members of society. This state of affairs is

exacerbated by the financial crisis.

It has been shown over and over that gender roles are key in either hindering or facilitating the integration of minority communities and it would prove cost-effective to invest in their women and girls

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provides a road map and already 15 years ago identified some of the shortcomings of economic policies.

In addition to acknowledging the need for social justice and noting the structural causes of poverty, Point 4 of the **Declaration**, among others, specifically invokes the need to listen to voices of women everywhere taking note of their diversity, their roles and circumstances.

Again, among many others, Point 18 of the Global framework of the **Platform for Action** in a specially relevant passage acknowledges that economic programmes are not designed to minimize their negative effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups or women, nor have they been designed to assure positive effect on them by preventing their further marginalization in economic and social activities but point 45 of the Strategic objectives emphasizes that the Platform of Action is intended to improve the situation of all women without exception while special attention should be paid to groups that are most disadvantaged.

15 years after The Women's World Conference in Beijing emphasized the shortcomings of economic programmes for millions of disadvantaged and marginalized women and girls and the need to heed their voices, both the states reviews and this meeting agenda appear to treat women as a monolithic mass with essentially similar demands. Little attention is paid to those who are more concerned by the need to put some food on the family table or place a roof above their head than by equal pay.

As a simple example of lack of progress in this area, there are some 8 million Roma in European region and, although they have been identified in every country, they are likely to be more prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe.

Most are poorer than their non-Roma neighbours; their children die twice as fast as the children of their neighbours; Maternal mortality statistics are equally dismal. Along with many other poor people, the Roma have difficulties maintaining property, paying rent, mortgages or utility bills and this has led to increasing homelessness, displacement, tensions with local authorities. They suffer conspicuous disadvantages in relation to the criminal justice system, are grossly over-represented among the region's prison population and are often the main victims of racial violence and discrimination.

These problems are partially related to declines in the quality and accessibility of public services - exacerbated by the financial crisis. In Eastern and Central Europe the introduction of a market economy has severely constrained their ability to cope by depriving them of income and employment. A World Bank study found an extensive impoverishment with a long-term and structural unemployment range between 45% and 70% and even 100% in some communities.

We can assume that these problems have grown exponentially with the financial crisis. We can also assume that they share them with many other minorities.

Minority women are further victimized by multiple disadvantages and discrimination, often within their own community as well as outside of it, by their female status.

Even a minority of 8 millions people in the European region – over 4 million women and girls - with the problems we have just outlined receives little attention in the states reviews or in this regional review agenda.

In an attempt to provide some remedies, we urge governments to, at the very least

- Develop and implement impact assessments on minority populations, particularly women and

girls before putting in place any new economic programme

- Review existing European and national legislation and socio-economic policies in the light of their impact on reducing gender inequalities, by addressing all forms of discrimination and social exclusion
- Ensure the participation of minority women in the development of more effective economic and social policies and programmes, giving real weight to their inputs; they are, after all the ones who know best the obstacles that they face and the type of support they need.
- Ensure that poverty reduction policies and programmes reach disadvantaged and vulnerable populations who may have few qualifications and little formal work experience
- Develop campaigns against violence, including homophobia, in business and industry as it has a negative impact on the physical and mental health of employees and their productivity
- Ensure equality of social protection for lesbian families, including in cases of immigration linked to employment
- In view of the increased numbers of widows of all ages, ensure that policies address not just their needs but also acknowledge and support their positive roles in society
- Ensure adequate funding for minority women organizations to enhance their collective voice and participation at all levels of decision-making regarding their status and needs
- Pay special attention to the situation of minority women during the 2010 European year to combat poverty and social exclusion

Finally, we reaffirm that, in spite of the financial crisis, woman's rights remain human rights as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and need to be mainstreamed throughout all socio-economic policies and programmes of the region

## Item 6- Gender and the Corporate Sector

### Environment and Climate Change

Speaker: Arielle Wagenknecht

Although women are more disproportionately affected by climate change due to the gender role in protecting the livelihoods of their families; and the fact that women are not equally represented in all decision making bodies, they are very powerful agents of change. The ecological footprints of women are significantly lighter than those of men. Therefore, strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change **must** recognize women's abilities and include them in the research, development and implementation process.

Pursuant to this, we demand:

- The inclusion of women in all phases of negotiating, planning and implementation of policies in order to stop the warming of the planet, in particular at the forth coming CPCCC;
- Empowerment of women on local, regional and national level, in all decision making bodies, to ensure that women's voices are heard strongly in the incorporation of gender aspects of climate change;
- Budgetary provisions to face the effect on women and children's health due to climate change and global warming, most importantly on access to clean water and food security;
- Transparency of budgeting and policies which could have negative effects on climate change, including the Member States' military operations;
- Reallocation of financial, technical and human resources from the military budget, to increase funding for gender-sensitive disaster preparedness and adaption programmes and the awareness and knowledge of the gender perspectives in the effects of climate change;

## Care Economy, Unpaid work and decent work, Macro Economics and Gender Budgeting

Speaker: Tatiana Isoo

1. European-wide study to determine quantitative and qualitative economic value of unpaid work, especially in transition economies, including girls working domestically in the care economy.
2. Develop special qualitative methodology to determine gender equality based on a multitude of indicators that take into account the lack of recognition of unpaid work and undervaluing of the care economy.
3. Access to education is not sufficient to gender equality, must evaluate content of textbook materials and curriculum to build attitude and behaviour to empower young girls to become future leaders and eradicate the male paradigm
4. Create a workplace environment of equality that promotes paternal leave and changes the male breadwinner model.
5. Workplaces must have effective punitive mechanisms that prevent sexual harassment and human resource management that prevents exploitation of women's care giving responsibilities
6. Qualify employment statistics by noting significant gender gap in part time and lower level jobs
7. Quantify cost of domestic violence and enact legislation to stop violence against women
8. Use gender mainstreaming as a consideration in government policy that protects social services and social security and provides decent work to decrease and prevent the feminization of poverty
9. Raise awareness in governments about the Beijing Platform and CEDAW and the significance of the interdependence of economic, social and cultural rights with civil and political rights focused on the economic and financial impact
10. Provide social services and protect all human rights for gay and lesbian families that suffer from multiple forms of discrimination
11. Continue to promote microcredit to start-up enterprises to empower women and encourage entrepreneurship development,
12. Promote the pursuit of employment outside of "traditional" female professions and safeguard decent work for women
13. We call on governments to be aware of and avoid the protection of so-called 'traditional values and customs' as a societal concept that could be abused to justify the oppression of women and exclusion from the active labour force and reinforces the unpaid care responsibilities of women
14. Create an Europe-wide Equal Pay Day to protest the gender pay gap and demand legislation for income equality.
15. Reduce military expenditures and reallocate tax payer money to social services and education for a more sustainable future
16. Mandate a 50-50 gender balance in government decision making on all levels and increased gender sensitivity within civil workplaces
17. Use gender budgeting to raise awareness of the plight of poor and marginalized women in transitional governments and conflict areas.
18. Use gender budgeting as a means to highlight the economic contributions of women in macroeconomics and make visible their roles in paid and unpaid work as smart business practice and not a welfare concept
19. Educate rural women and girls in new forms of technology including communications, computer sciences, agriculture and science
20. Provide preferential credit for women to increase female entrepreneurship and ownership
21. Create national campaigns to eliminate alcoholism and domestic violence

22. Reduce government agricultural subsidies to benefit the livelihood of female fieldworkers in poorer countries
23. Use international networks to create mentor partnerships for girls to learn from the experiences of successful women in “non-traditional” careers.

### **Employability, Education and Training**

#### Speaker:

Education is fundamental to sound economic development, peaceful societies and public health.

The current economic and financial crisis has caused governments to cut duets and change priorities. Unfortunately many of these cuts, as in education, have affected women disproportionately. We urge that education at all levels- formal, informal and non-formal, must be excluded from financial cuts as governments try to manage their debt.

Education at all levels, whether single sex or co-educational, must, from the beginning, have a gender aware curriculum, to enable women’ full participation in the economy and men’s’ participation in the household.

Formal education should prepare women and girls for responsible and informed citizenship as well as academic preparation for the career of their choice.

Governments and corporations must offer skills training including knowledge in micro-financing, use of new technologies, literacy and numeracy to women at all levels to improve their standard of living.

Corporation must be responsible actors and address the social and ethical obligations in the communities in which they operate, through programmes that enhance women’s’ education and economic advancement.

### **Item 7: New partnerships, networks, and alliances for gender equality**

*“The Challenges of gender equality in the context of the economic and financial crisis”*

Speaker: Elly Pradervand

#### ***Introduction***

**The implementation of human rights principles is at the core of responsibilities of all governments; human rights must underpin the development of all legislation and policies to ensure its implementation.**

**Women’s rights as human rights are not bargaining terms.** Ensuring women’s rights through policies has a positive impact on employment, economic growth, and the development of democratic societies and the lives of families.

**If governments fail to adopt human rights legislation then their inaction is perpetuating all forms of violence against women.** Since the Beijing conference in 1995, some governments of the ECE region have demonstrated a lack of commitment to embed women’s rights into all polices and legislation.

Women must not be seen as a homogenous group. We, the women of the world, urge the ECE governments to work in partnership with women's groups, human rights groups, trade unions and international agencies to:

1. **Impose** stronger legislation and adopt relevant policies with regards to the private and corporate sector, which continues to ignore the rights of women around the world by not complying with international employment legislation or exploiting the lack of legislation.
2. **Collect, analyze and publish** data of government gender budgeting to comply with human rights obligations under the various international human rights treaties, conventions, etc...
3. **Assist** governments within a limited time frame to develop relevant policies for the emerging issue of the older world population, that are mostly women; this should include protection through the adoption of a UN convention for older people.
4. **Adopt** policies that will **not** impede upon human rights core values when addressing traditional customs and religious practices, particularly those in relation to women and reproductive health.
5. **Ensure** full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 by all UN member states along with national action plans, which are measurable and time bound. The development of legislation and policy to implement these conventions needs to include women in the decision-making and implementation processes to foster the emergence of a culture of peace.
6. All ECE governments should **ratify**, and put pressure on other states that have not yet ratified, treaties and conventions that comply with universal human rights standards.

### ***Conclusion***

**It is the responsibility of governments to be accountable for their obligations and shortcomings under UN conventions and treaties.** It should be the policy of all states to support and encourage human rights through education and learning, specifically education of women's rights and the implementation in legislation and policies; this should be the embodiment of their responsibilities. Through the acceptance of their responsibilities, states empower their citizens to regard women's rights as a right to dignity.

### **New Gender Equality Architecture**

Speaker: June Zeitlin

On 14 September 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/63/L.103 on System-wide Coherence which supports the creation of a new UN gender equality entity, headed by an Under Secretary-General. The GEAR Campaign considers the UNGA resolution a historic moment, which has the potential to start a new era for women's rights globally. The ECE Regional consultation at the fifteen-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) will discuss, under Agenda Item 7 "New partnerships, networks, and alliances for gender equality". These recommendations are targeted towards that discussion, as well as the overall review of the BPfA especially in regards to Critical Area H- Institutional Mechanisms.

Women around the world have waited for the United Nations and member states to fulfil the promises made since the first International Women's Year in 1975, the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) thirty years ago, as well as the UN World Conferences in Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995).

### **Overall Recommendation**

Given the current economic and financial crisis and the disproportionate impact it is having on women, especially lower income women in every part of the world, the swift creation of a strong composite UN entity (combining policy and operational activities) focused on gender equality and women's empowerment that is well-resourced and led by an Under Secretary-General is critical. The new gender equality entity with its higher level leadership is necessary to ensure that gender equality issues are addressed and women's voices are heard at every decision making level, including globally at UN headquarters and the Bretton Woods institutions, regionally and at country level. While the crisis is having negative impacts on women's situation and the existing women's machineries, the creation of the new UN women's rights entity is critical as it will advance the economic empowerment of women as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

### **Key points**

The resolution's provisions on the new UN women's rights entity need to be implemented swiftly and effectively. In order to make this happen, the UN Secretary General has put a process in place that calls for a comprehensive report specifying the mission statement and organizational arrangement for the new gender entity by the end of the year 2009. We urge the SG to stay committed to this timetable.

UN member states still face a number of key issues concerning the mandate, mission, organizational structure, governance and funding which need to be addressed during the 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly session. We call on UN Member States to stay committed to this process and ensure that the establishment of the much-needed single women's UN agency is moving ahead without any further delay.

The President of the UN General Assembly (PGA) needs to ensure that the formal intergovernmental process is ready to begin expeditiously once the report is finalized.

### **The new UN women's rights entity must play a transformative role**

The current UN women's agencies must be consolidated to establish a transformative and visionary new gender equality entity. Combining and enhancing the normative and operational functions that will enhance synergies and promote an expanded field presence is essential to the success of the new entity. The entity must hold all countries accountable for women's rights.

In addition, the new gender entity should take the lead in promoting gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and women in decision-making in the entire UN system, and should hold other agencies accountable to their commitments to women (UNICEF serves as a model for this in how they hold other agencies accountable to their responsibilities for children).

### **The new UN women's rights entity has to be ambitiously funded**

Existing funding for gender equality within the UN is completely inadequate.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we believe that the new gender equality entity must have an initial **budget of \$ 1 billion USD per year** with annual increases. . The new entity should be funded from both voluntary and assessed contributions. Ensuring ambitious funding requires a broad donor basis involving all UN member states and countries that may not be part of the usual group of donors.

### **The new women's rights entity needs the participation of civil society**

The systematic and meaningful participation of civil society, especially women's organizations, needs to be part of the governance and the accountability structures of the

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<sup>1</sup> The existing UN gender equality architecture comprises the following: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). In 2008 the income of these entities was the following: UNIFEM \$215.4 million, DAW \$1.15 million, OSAGI \$0.418 million, and INSTRAW \$4.12 million.

new entity. This means that civil society should be represented on the Executive Board of the new entity. Of equal importance is a strong formal CSO involvement with the entity at country and regional level. The role of NGOs on the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS is a precedent that should be a model in the governance board of this new entity.

**Select the Under-Secretary General to lead the new entity by March 2010**

The UN Secretary-General should immediately initiate a transparent global recruitment process for the Under Secretary-General who will lead the new entity. We urge that the USG should be appointed by March 2010.

Candidates for this important post that includes securing funding and leading the transition towards the creation of the composite entity must have a vision for and demonstrated commitment to achieving gender equality and securing women's human rights. (See the selection criteria of the GEAR Campaign).

**Item 8- Chairperson's Conclusions**

**Recommendations from the NGO Forum**

Conchita Poncini, President NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva

During the two day NGO forum held in Geneva in preparation for the ECE consultation on the occasion of the fifteen year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), women from throughout the region came together and negotiated recommendations that reflect the desires and needs of women throughout the region. It is unfortunate that so little of the actual BPfA was to be reviewed in this, key, regional consultation, just as it is unfortunate that only two days have been allocated for this important consultation. While recognizing that specific attention must be paid to the global economic crisis at this time, we hope that NGO interventions have reflected a broad level of concern with the economic situation as well as provided suggestions on how to deal with the root causes of this situation with concrete suggestions to move forward.

The NGO forum recommends that:

1. Measures undertaken should take into account gender differentiated impacts and also set a direction that addresses long-term structural problems of the economy. This requires tackling **labour market segregation** and creating **decent work for women** across rural and urban settings and different social groups.

- Expansionary **fiscal policy** must be countercyclical. Progressive **taxation systems** that compensate for gender biases in revenue-collection should be developed along with measures to enhance tax revenues, including more efficient and broader-based tax collection.
- **Economic stimulus packages** should place a priority on **job creation and/or retention** through employment guarantee programmes both in the private and the public sector where so many women are still employed. Enforcement of **minimum-wage** regulations and implementation of **equal pay for equal work** policies should be part of the policy response.
- **Public spending measures** should support gender-sensitive investments in both physical and social infrastructure, particularly the education and health sectors, to support vulnerable groups, such as minority and migrant women.

2. Agricultural and trade policies should be formulated and implemented with the goal of assuring **food security. Ownership of land and productive assets** by both men and women needs to be protected to prevent deepening of poverty. In countries **where**

**agriculture is a major source of employment (especially for women)** special attention should be given to making farmers and agricultural workers eligible for unemployment benefits.

3. We insist that the governments of the ECE region give priority to the centrality of a rights-based approach to international migration. The humanity and dignity of 200 million migrants in the world must be the primary concern of all State's delegations and other actors. We demand that the governments of the region ensure that migrant and displaced women have access to:

- Proper documentation (such as birth registration, marriage documents, working permits, etc) and the full range of social and legal protections ( housing, health, unemployment etc).

4. We demand the full implementation of legislation in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings and to promote its adoption as a minimum standard worldwide

5. Given the current economic and financial crisis and the disproportionate impact it is having on all women, the swift creation of a composite UN entity (combining policy and operational activities) focused on gender equality and women's empowerment that is well-resourced and led by an Under Secretary-General is critical. The new gender equality entity is necessary to ensure that gender equality issues are addressed and women's voices are heard at every decision making level, including globally at the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, regionally and at country level. Governments in the region need to continue to support existing women's machineries to advance the economic empowerment of women as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

6. Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies must **increase their commitments** to development assistance in collaboration with civil society organizations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, through gender mainstreaming and targeted activities, and strengthen mechanisms to **effectively measure resources allocated to incorporating gender** perspectives in all areas of development assistance. Indicators for gender sensitive stimulus packages need to be developed, tracked and monitored.

7. Governments must develop and implement impact assessments on minority populations, particularly women and girls before putting in place any new economic programmes and Ensure the participation of minority women in the development of more effective economic and social policies and programmes, giving real weight to their inputs.

8. Although women are disproportionately affected by climate change due to their overrepresentation among the poor and their critical role in livelihoods and food security, they are not adequately represented in decision-making bodies. We urge governments and business and industry to include women's voices and experiences especially relating to access to clean water and food.

**9. We call on the US to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).** The US is the only country in the ECE region that has not ratified this international bill of rights for women.

10. Corporation must be responsible actors and address the social and ethical obligations in the communities in which they operate, through programmes that enhance women's' education and economic advancement. Governments and corporations must offer skills training including knowledge in micro-financing, use of new technologies, literacy and numeracy to women at all levels to improve their standard of living. We urge Governments

to implement policies to require corporations to comply with all employment and labour legislation.