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Agenda item 3 (a)

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on women



Alpízar Durán, Executive Director, Association for Women's Rights in Development. Representatives of Member States exchanged information on the progress made in the implementation of the Platform for Action in their countries and made proposals for future action. Invited representatives of United Nations entities (United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and non-governmental organizations (Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange and International Indigenous Women's Forum) responded and contributed to the interactive dialogue.

3. The full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality and empowerment of women is a key development goal in its own right and an important means to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. While Goal 3 and Goal 5 are gender-specific, there are clear gender equality dimensions in all the Goals. Progress has been made, but it has been slow and uneven. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of the Platform for Action and achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. Attention was drawn to the need to further strengthen linkages between implementation of the Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. Gender perspectives need to be more clearly articulated and addressed in strategies to achieve all the Goals at national and local levels. There is a need to develop better mechanisms and tools for ensuring accountability of States and other stakeholders for promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women in all sectors.

4. The annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to review progress in the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010 provide an important opportunity to reaffirm the centrality of gender equality and the empowerment of women for the achievement of all the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

5. Education plays a critical role in the empowerment of women and girls. Good practices, such as abolishing school fees, have resulted in steady advances towards meeting international targets in improving girls' access to education, particularly at the primary level. However, progress remains uneven between and within regions and countries. Secondary and university education remains crucial for expanding opportunities for women and girls. Non-formal education, including vocational

systems are critical for addressing the specific health needs of women and girls. During the last decade, funding for women's health remained stagnant. It is estimated that US\$ 24 billion per year is needed to significantly decrease maternal deaths, an amount that is equivalent to six days of global military spending.

7. Pregnancy rates remain high for adolescent girls owing to teenage pregnancies, as well as the practice of early and child marriages in some countries. National laws are needed to prevent child marriage, together with other measures, including marriage registration systems, incentive schemes to keep girls in school and programmes to mobilize communities.

8. Within the context of Millennium Development Goal 6, the feminization of HIV and AIDS continues to be a cause of great concern. Young women are more susceptible to HIV infection and in many countries they have a higher HIV prevalence rate than men. Measures are needed to ensure women's access to prevention, treatment and care. Other key interventions include sex education for girls and boys and behaviour change programmes.

9. Violence against women is an obstacle to the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and carries great economic costs and personal suffering. International and national initiatives to address violence against women have increased, as many countries have strengthened laws, policies and institutions to end violence against women. Participants commended the Secretary-General's Campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" in increasing momentum for efforts to address violence against women. Action is needed to ensure that interventions to prevent and eliminate violence against women are comprehensive, fully implemented and monitored, and sustainable across all sectors, including health, education and employment.

against women in the labour market. In recent years, women's access to employment opportunities has increased. However, women continue to be concentrated in vulnerable and low-paid jobs with little security. Occupational segregation and gender wage-gaps persist in all parts of the world. Unequal sharing of unpaid work, including caregiving, between women and men constrains women's ability to fully participate in the labour market.

14. Promising practices to increase women's participation in the labour market and support the redistribution of unpaid work between women and men include parental leave policies for both women and men. Investment in infrastructure, such as energy, water and sanitation, childcare facilities and transportation systems, can reduce women's time burdens leading to increased opportunity to participate in the labour market. It is also important to ensure that women have access to newly created jobs, such as green jobs.

15. In many countries, social protection measures such as unemployment insurance schemes, universal health coverage and social pensions have played critical roles in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as realizing poverty reduction, economic growth and development. Good and promising practices also include extension of social security coverage to groups that have traditionally been excluded or marginalized, including domestic workers. Basic social security for all would contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as would the establishment of a global social protection floor.

16. Wars, natural disasters and related crisis situations have profoundly different impacts on women and girls. All forms of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, may be exacerbated and access to health care, education and livelihood severely affected. Effective responses require that such differences be taken into account in needs assessments and planning in the aftermath of an armed conflict or crisis. They also require the soPundl

- Integrate in future national censuses and household surveys questions that would provide for better data disaggregated by sex, age and other variables
- Put in place comprehensive legal and policy frameworks to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women
- Ensure that economic stimulus packages, including public job creation programmes, investments for technological upgrading and green energy, are gender-sensitive and create jobs for women
- Expand social protection measures and eliminate inequalities between women and men in access to coverage and explore opportunities for establishing a global social protection floor
- Carry out gender-sensitive analysis of revenues and expenditures in all policy areas and take into account the review and evaluation results in budget planning, allocation and revenue-raising
- Strengthen the focus and impact of development assistance, specifically targeting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.
