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Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions

Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions 2002/1 of 26 July 2002, invited its functional commissions to provide input to the overall theme of the Council's coordination and high-level segments as they relate to their area of work. The present note has been prepared to assist the Commission on the Status of Women should it consider providing input to the high-level segment of the 2006 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development". The note provides examples of recommendations for action on full employment and decent work for women in the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women and at its 59th session. f recomme of 2002/6(f)1.7(recomme)1.7(T*

I. Background

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions 2002/1 of 26 July 2002, invited its functional commissions to provide input to the overall theme of the Council's coordination and high-level segments as they relate to their area of work. In accordance with its oral decision of 21 October 2005, the Economic and Social Council will consider, at the high-level segment of its 2006 substantive session, the theme "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development".

2. The present note has been prepared by the Secretariat to assist the Commission on the Status of Women should it consider providing input to the high-level segment of the 2006 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

3. The note highlights recommendations for action to promote women's full employment and access to decent work contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women since 1996, relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and provisions in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

II. Gender equality and employment

4. In paragraph 26 of the Beijing Declaration, Governments expressed their determination to, inter alia, "promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures".¹

5. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that women are key contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and the workplace, and that growing numbers of women have achieved economic independence through gainful employment. The Platform for Action highlighted that female-headed households were very often among the poorest because of wage discrimination, occupational segregation patterns in the labour market and other gender-based barriers.²

6. The Beijing Platform for Action also called for the development and promotion of employment programmes and services for women entering and/or re-entering the labour market, especially poor urban, rural and young women, the self-employed and those negatively affected by structural adjustment; the implementation and monitoring of positive public- and private-sector employment, equity and positive action programmes to address systemic discrimination against women in the labour force, in particular women with disabilities and women belonging to other disadvantaged groups, with respect to hiring, retention and promotion; and vocational training of women in all sectors. It also recalled the need to ensure access to and develop special programmes to enable women with disabilities to obtain and retain employment; to ensure access to education and training at all proper levels, in accordance with the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities; and to adjust working conditions, to the extent possible, in order to suit the needs of women with

disabilities, who should be assured legal protection against job loss on account of their disabilities (para. 178 (e), (f) and (j)).

7. The Platform called on Governments to introduce measures to integrate or reintegrate women living in poverty and socially marginalized women into productive employment and the economic mainstream; to ensure that internally displaced women have full access to economic opportunities; and to ensure that the qualifications and skills of immigrant and refugee women are recognized (para. 58 (j) and (l)).

8. In the Platform, Governments were called upon to ensure the full realization of the human rights of all women migrants, including women migrant workers, and their protection against violence and exploitation; introduce measures for the empowerment of documented women migrants, including women migrant workers; facilitate the productive employment of documented migrant women through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and training (para. 59 (e) and (f)).

12. The Commission on the Status of Women, in its agreed conclusions of 1997 on women and the economy, urged Governments to enhance the capacity of women to influence and make economic decisions as paid workers, managers, employers,

conditions in the health workforce, and to provide appropriate skills training and development.⁴

16. In 2002, the Commission adopted agreed conclusions on eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world, which urged Governments and other actors to promote income-generating activities and employment opportunities, including through the provision of microcredit and other financial instruments; ensure equal access to resources, in particular land and property ownership, including housing; and take measures to empower women as producers and consumers, in order to enhance the capacity of women to respond to disasters. The Commission urged Governments and other actors to enhance market access for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in particular for those sectors that provide greater employment opportunities for women, and expand access for women entrepreneurs to trade opportunities. The Commission also called for the development of strategies to increase employment of women and to ensure that women, including women living in poverty, are protected by law against discriminatory terms and conditions of employment and any form of exploitation, that they benefit fully from job creation through a balanced representation of women and men in all sectors and occupations and that women receive equal pay for equal work or work of equal value to diminish differentials in incomes between women and men.⁵

17. The Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000, resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable (General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 20). One of the indicators to monitor progress made towards Millennium Development Goal 3 on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. This indicator measures the degree to which labour markets are open to women in industry and service sectors, which affects not only equal opportunity for women but also economic efficiency through flexibility of the labour market and the economy's ability to adapt to change.⁶

18. The 2005 World Summit resolved to promote gender equality and eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by, inter alia, promoting women's equal access to labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate labour protection. The Summit strongly supported fair globalization and resolved to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of relevant national and international policies as well as national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. These measures should also encompass the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, as defined in ILO Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the

sex for monitoring and reporting on women's access to productive employment and decent work.

A. Gender-sensitive economic policies

26. The importance of gender-sensitive economic policies is emphasized, inter alia, in strategic objective A.1 and H.2 of the Beijing Platform for Action, which call for action to review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty and integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects. Actions proposed in the Beijing Platform for Action and other outcomes of intergovernmental processes include:

- Analysing, from a gender perspective, policies and programmes — including those related to employment, markets and all relevant sectors of the economy — with respect to their impact on poverty, on inequality and particularly on women; assessing their impact on family well-being and conditions; and adjusting them, as appropriate, to promote a more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services (Beijing Platform for Action, para. 58 (b));
- Generating economic policies that have a positive impact on the employment and income of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors and adopting specific measures to address women's unemployment, in particular their long-term unemployment (ibid., para. 58 (h));
- Regularly reviewing national policies, programmes and projects and their implementation while evaluating the impact of employment and income policies in order to guarantee that women are direct beneficiaries of development and that their full contribution to development, both remunerated and unremunerated, is considered in economic policy and planning (ibid., para. 204 (b));
- Analysing and responding, as necessary, to the major reasons why men and women may be affected differently by the process of job creation and retrenchment associated with economic transition and structural transformation of the economy, including globalization (General Assembly resolution S-23/3, para. 82 (1));
- Providing policy advice, technical assistance and financial support to member countries to minimize the negative impacts of the adjustment programmes on the vulnerable segments of society, while taking into account the importance of gender-sensitive employment and poverty eradication policies and strategies (General Assembly resolution 59/222, para. 17);
- Undertaking legislative, administrative and financial measures to create a strong enabling environment for all women entrepreneurs and women participating in the labour market, including a sound macroeconomic framework; accountable systems for managing public resources; a business climate that attracts investment and promotes movement from the informal to the formal sector through, inter alia, competitive markets, enforceable contracts, the absence of corruption, regulatory policies that promote public

- Eliminating discriminatory practices by employers on the basis of women's reproductive roles and functions, including refusal of employment and dismissal of women due to pregnancy and breastfeeding responsibilities (*ibid.*, para. 178 (d));
- Considering the monitoring and publicizing of enterprises and organizations that take initiatives for the advancement of women and publicizing information on the companies that violate anti-discrimination laws (Commission agreed conclusions 1997/3, para. 11);
- Promoting and protecting the rights of women workers and take action to remove structural and legal barriers and stereotypical attitudes to gender equality at work, addressing, *inter alia*

- Developing policies and programmes to enhance the employability of women and their access to quality jobs, through improving access to formal, informal and vocational training, life-long learning and retraining, long-distance education, including in information and communications technology and entrepreneurial skills, particularly in developing countries, to support women's empowerment in the different stages of their lives (General Assembly resolution S-23/3, para. 82 (e));
- Enabling equal access for women to information and communication technology-based economic activities, such as small business and home-based employment, to information systems and improved technologies and to new employment opportunities in this area and considering the development of telecentres, information centres, community access points and business incubators (Commission agreed conclusions 2003, para. 4 (k));
- Ensuring equal opportunities for women and monitoring gender representation, in different categories and levels of work, education and training in the media and information and communication technology areas, with a view to increasing women's participation in decision-making at all levels of information and communication technology and the media;⁷
- Working on removing the gender barriers to information and communication technology education and training and promoting equal training opportunities in information and communication technology-related fields for women and girls (early intervention programmes in science and technology should target young girls with the aim of increasing the number of women in information and communication technology careers); promoting the exchange of best practices on the integration of gender perspectives in information and communication technology education (see A/C.2/59/3, annex, chapter I.B., para. 11 (g));
- Encouraging the development of best practices for e-workers and e-employers built, at the national level, on principles of fairness and gender equality, respecting all relevant international norms (ibid., para. 19 (a));
- Promoting teleworking to allow citizens, particularly in the developing countries, least developed countries and small economies, to live in their societies and work anywhere and increasing employment opportunities for women and those with disabilities (ibid., para. 19 (c));
- Implementing effective training and education, particularly in information and communication technology science and technology, that motivates and promotes the participation and active involvement of girls and women in the decision-making process of building the information society (see para. 90 (d) of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society).

D. Education and training

31. Women's access to education and training is addressed, inter alia, in strategic objectives B.3 and F.2 of the Beijing Platform for Action, which call for action to improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education, and facilitate women's equal access to resources,

employment, markets and trade. Actions proposed in the Beijing Platform for Action and other outcomes of intergovernmental processes include:

- Developing and implementing education, training and retraining policies for women, especially young women and women re-entering the labour market, to provide skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context for improving their employment opportunities (Beijing Platform for Action, para. 82 (a));
 - Ensuring equal access for women to effective job training, retraining, counselling and placement services that are not limited to traditional employment areas (ibid., para. 166 (j));
 - Highlighting the interlinkage between education and training policies, on the one hand, and labour market policies, on the other hand, with an emphasis on the employment and employability of women. In order to enhance the employability of women, basic education and vocational qualifications, in particular in the fields of science and technology, are of great importance. In view of the high presence of women in flexible work-time schemes and atypical work, it is particularly important to facilitate women's participation in "on-the-job training" so that they can secure their jobs and promote their careers (1997 agreed conclusions of the Commission, para. 6);
 - Promoting and supporting the elimination of biases in the educational system so as to counteract the gender segregation of the labour market, enhance the employability of women and effectively improve women's skills and broaden women's access to career choices, in particular in science, new technologies and other potential and innovative areas of expansion in terms of employment (ibid., para. 3);
 - Developing policies and programmes to enhance the employability of women and their access to quality jobs, through improving access to formal, informal and vocational training, lifelong learning, retraining and long-distance education, including in information and communication technology and entrepreneurial skills, particularly in developing countries, to support women's empowerment in the different stages of thv7(ages)-6(G8(er)-5.4.8(er)-.6(ial)-6Assembly.8(s)TJT*0.0.
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- Providing data disaggregated by sex on training, including employer-sponsored training, present employment trends, income and future employment opportunities (ibid., para. 8);
- Supporting gender-specific research on the short- and long-term effects of the occupational and environmental health risks of work, including work in the formal and informal sector, performed by both women and men and taking effective legal and other measures to reduce these risks, including risks in the