

5. The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly titled “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century”, identified child labour, violence, lack of access to education, and sexual abuse as some of the obstacles that the girl child continues to face⁴.

6. The report of the Secretary-General on the ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action concluded that progress has been made by many countries in the advancement of the girl child, in particular in the recognition of the human rights of the girl child through the adoption of appropriate legislation, and in increasing access to primary education. It noted, however, further efforts were needed, *inter alia*, to ensure equal access to secondary education and to job opportunities, to eradicate sex work by children, to ensure reintegration of the girl child after armed conflicts, and to improve collection of data on the situation of the girl child.⁵

7. At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders reaffirmed their previous commitments to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls⁶. At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/141 on the girl child, in which it expressed deep concern, *inter alia*, about discrimination against the girl child and the violation of her rights and stressed the importance of a substantive assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action with a life-cycle perspective.

8. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷

II. Conceptual Framework for the Expert Group Meeting

10. The Expert Group Meeting will be structured around four main conceptual issues related to the girl child: protection, especially vulnerable situations, empowerment, and institutional arrangements to accelerate elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child. .

(a) Protection of the girl child

11. Despite the existing international legal framework, girls continue to face de jure and de facto inequalities in virtually all societies. Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream. Discrimination and violence against girls takes many forms, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection and sex selective abortions, early and/or forced marriage, early childbearing, and child labour. Girls may be denied basic rights including access to food and clean water, education and health care. Girls are more vulnerable than boys to all forms of violence, including in the family, community and institutions such as schools or in the context of sports activities. Violence against girls includes domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, including rape during armed conflict; commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting, as well as discriminatory legislation and practices in areas such as inheritance rights. Poverty also threatens girls' well-being and development. Specific groups of girls, such as girls between the age of 10 and 14 as well as adolescent married and unmarried girls, are among the most underserved groups in terms of access to education and health care, including reproductive health services.

12. Creating an environment that provides full protection to the girl child requires a broad range of actions including, *inter alia* effective legislation and its enforcement; support services; and awareness raising and training of public officials and other stakeholders. Creating an

~~and by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in cooperation with the Government of the State of Palestine. The~~

14. Conflict heightens the risk of girls being exposed to abuse and exploitation, and sexual violence such as torture, rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, forced prostitution and trafficking.¹¹ Girls are often abducted for sexual and other purposes by armed groups and forces. The Special Rapporteur on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women have drawn attention to the human rights violations, including sexual slavery, which are perpetrated against women and girls in times of armed conflict.¹²

(d) Institutional arrangements to accelerate elimination of discrimination and violence against girls

17. Effectively eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child will require attention to critical institutional mechanisms, including sex disaggregated data on the girl child for further development of policies and programmes to address their specific needs.¹⁸ The United Nations Statistics Division publication, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, reported a mixed record on preparation of data disaggregated by sex and age and called for increased collaboration to review concepts, definitions and methods of collecting data, including the development of appropriate indicators.

18. There is growing worldwide interest in child-focused budgets which could prove beneficial to the girl child by providing analysis that highlights specific impacts on girls, and suggesting methods for targeting their needs more accurately.¹⁹ Few countries currently incorporate a children's rights perspective into their budgetary processes and few donors request it when working with countries on poverty-reduction strategies or similar frameworks.²⁰

19. The renewed commitment to the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, has implications for the girl child. Increased attention to the girl child in national policy development and monitoring and reporting processes, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the national MDG reports, is critical for accelerating the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

III. Objectives of the Expert Group Meeting

20. The overall objective of the Expert Group Meeting is to share achievements, lessons learned, and good practices, critically examine factors that impede the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, and provide concrete policy recommendations for governments, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders.

IV. Profile of the participants

21. The Expert Group Meeting will be attended by 10 to 12 experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The expert group meeting will also be attended by observers from Governments, the United Nations, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia.

22. In selecting the experts, the criteria of geographical balance and, to the extent possible, gender balance, will be taken into consideration. Experts will include academics and practitioners from relevant fields, in accordance with the objectives identified above. The

¹⁸ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paragraph 206 (b) and A/RES/S-23/3, paragraph 77 (a)

¹⁹ UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*, page 65

²⁰ UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*, page 65

