



meeting is to build the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women and NIs to more effectively promote and protect women's human rights by contributing to a better understanding of the linkages between gender equality and human rights. The activity is part of the joint work-plan of OHCHR and DAW.

III. National machineries for the advancement of women

The role of national machineries for the advancement of women was discussed in a recommendation of the 1975 World Conference on the International Women's Year held in Mexico City. Since then, the subject of national machineries has been taken up systematically by the subsequent World Conferences on Women in 1980 (Copenhagen), 1985 (Nairobi) and 1995 (Beijing), as well as several sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. One of the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action deals with institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, including national machineries. The Platform for Action considers such machineries as the primary institutional mechanism entrusted with promoting and supporting all aspects of the implementation of the strategic objectives contained in the Platform for Action at the national level.

The Platform for Action identifies necessary conditions, and thereby defines them, for an effective functioning of national machineries including:

- (a) Location at the highest possible level in the government, falling under the responsibility of a Cabinet minister;
- (b) Institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate, as appropriate, decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring with a view to involving non-governmental organizations and community organizations from the grassroots upwards;
- (c) Sufficient resources in terms of budget and professional capacity;
- (d) Opportunity to influence development of all government policies.¹

The significance of national machineries in promoting equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming was reiterated at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) which reviewed the Beijing Platform for Action, and adopted an outcome document entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century."

As of March 2004, national machineries for the advancement of women have been established in 165 Member States of the United Nations.² In most countries, national machineries are mandated to both implement women-specific activities, and ensure that gender perspectives are integrated in all government legislation, policy, programmes, and budgetary processes. National machineries facilitate and support

¹ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, para. 201.

² DAW maintains a Directory of National Machineries for the Advancement of Women which is regularly updated and made available to Governments, entities of the United Nations system, and civil society.

gender mainstreaming and play a role in ensuring that Government fully considers the gender implications in laws, programmes and policies in all areas of responsibility.

Although national machineries for the advancement of women vary considerably, they largely tend to be located within government and are recognized as the official bodies responsible for promoting gender mainstreaming and gender equality across different government sectors. In some countries, bodies outside government, such as an equality commission or office of the ombudsman, also form part of the national machinery to promote gender equality.

In many States which are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention),³ national machineries for the advancement of women are entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating the preparation of reports to be considered by CEDAW under article 18 of the Convention. More generally, national machineries serve as catalysts for the implementation of the Convention, and disseminate information to encourage use of the Optional Protocol.

CEDAW, in the constructive dialogue with reporting States

- ◆ autonomy from government
- ◆ pluralism, including in membership
- ◆ a broad mandate based on universal human rights standards
- ◆ adequate powers of investigation
- ◆ adequate resources

In this sense, NIs can act as monitoring bodies and as follow-up mechanisms on

Paris Principles. There are approximately an additional 50 institutions which are moving towards compliance with the Principles.⁵

V. Expected outcomes

The Round Table will seek to identify opportunities for national machineries to enhance a rights-based approach to the advancement of women through more systematic use of the Convention and other international human rights instruments which give effect to gender equality. It will also seek to identify opportunities for NIs to increase attention to gender perspectives in all human rights-related work, as well as the elimination of discrimination against women and the promotion of gender equality. It will provide an opportunity for NIs to engage in dialogue and information exchange with national machineries for the advancement of women and members of CEDAW.

The Round Table aims to enhance cooperation between representatives of NIs and national machineries for the advancement of women in support of gender equality and women's human rights. It is expected that cooperation between these mechanisms will contribute to better implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

Participants will have a greater awareness of the links between gender equality and the promotion and protection of human rights. Representatives of NIs will have an enhanced capacity to apply and mainstream a gender perspective in their work and to address discrimination against women and promote gender equality. Representatives of national machineries for the advancement of women will be able to more systematically use a rights-based approach in their work on gender issues and the advancement of women. Both national machineries and NIs will,

The Round Table will be as informal as possible, with all participants having an opportunity to exchange experiences and practices around a table. Two initial interventions shall be made by DAW and OHCHR providing information on women's national machineries and NIs, respectively. One member of CEDAW will make a short presentation on the Committee's practice in regard to the role of national machineries and NIs. Each session of the Round Table will be guided by two short papers on experiences and good practices prepared by participants, for presentation and discussion. The focus will be on creating a participatory environment to enable full engagement by all present. Documentation will be in English, French and Spanish and the Round Table will be conducted in English, French and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation.

VII. Profile of Participants

The meeting will be attended by approximately 32 representatives of NIs and national machineries for the advancement of women (i.e. 2 participants from 16 countries – including the host country - from both institutions) and up to 3 members of CEDAW. Participating institutions will be selected from those States which are parties to the Convention. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance for the participants. In selecting participants, the criteria of geographical and gender balance will be respected. All participants will be expected to be familiar with the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

Annex I

Proposed list of participants

Africa

Cameroon, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms*
Morocco, Conseil consultative des droits de l'homme
Uganda, National Human Rights Commission*
Zambia, National Human Rights Commission*