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Advancement of women: implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/137, provides information on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women by examining the extent to which intergovernmental bodies have paid attention to gender perspectives in their work. The report also assesses, as requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 2006/9, the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women on discussions within the United Nations system.

* A/63/150.



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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/137, requested the Secretary-General to continue to report annually to the Assembly, under the agenda item “Advancement of women”, and to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Council, in its resolution 2006/9, requested the Secretary-General to include in the present report an assessment of the impact of the Commission’s input to discussions within the United Nations system (see E/2008/53).

2. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women monitor the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Reports on gender mainstreaming are submitted to those three bodies on an annual basis. Reports submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women focus on the progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes in relation to the priority theme under consideration by the Commission. Reports to the Economic and Social Council examine the initiatives being undertaken by the entities of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective into policies and programmes. Reports to the General Assembly focus on the attention given to gender equality in intergovernmental processes.

3. The present report examines the extent to which intergovernmental bodies have paid attention to gender perspectives in their work, focusing on the sixty-second session of the General Assembly and the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the work of its functional commissions, including the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.¹

II. Attention to gender equality in intergovernmental processes

A. Sixty-second session of the General Assembly

4. The General Assembly plays a critical role in advancing global policies for gender equality and the empowerment of women and promoting their full implementation. During its sixty-second session, documentation for and outcomes of the Assembly contributed to moving the policy agenda forward. Advances were made by the Assembly in particular in two key policy areas: violence against women and women and development. Attention was also paid to the importance of the gender mainstreaming strategy in achieving gender equality, including through collection and use of sex-disaggregated data to inform policymaking.

5. This section provides some illustrative examples of means by which the General Assembly advanced the policy agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women during its sixty-second session.

¹ The period under review for the preparation of the report is May 2007 to May 2008. Information contained herein is based on documentation and outcomes of intergovernmental processes as available in the United Nations Official Document System unless otherwise specified.

1. Work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees

6. Under the agenda item “Advancement of women”, the Third Committee paid specific attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women, including in relation to the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, violence against women migrant workers, and improvement of the situation of women in rural areas. The Second Committee considered women in development, under the agenda item “Eradication of poverty and other development issues”. In addition to considering agenda items specifically focused on women and gender equality, the General Assembly and its Main Committees, in particular its Second and Third Committees, continued to address gender perspectives across a broad spectrum of policy areas.

Violence against women and girls

7. The elimination of violence against women, a pervasive violation of women’s human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality, was an area of strong focus of the work of the General Assembly, including on social development and humanitarian emergencies and assistance.² Explicit attention was paid by the Assembly to violence against women and girls, including, inter alia, young women and girls affected by armed conflict, refugees and other persons of concern, survivors of genocide, internally displaced persons, women human rights defenders, victims of trafficking, women migrant workers, rural women, and victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel.³

8. The General Assembly’s consideration of the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women continued to move the global policy agenda forward. Building on the report of the Secretary-General before the Assembly (A/62/201), the Assembly reiterated the need to intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in resolution 62/133. It welcomed the decision of the Secretary-General to spearhead a multi-year system-wide campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls through 2015, focusing on global advocacy, United Nations leadership and strengthened efforts and partnerships at the national and regional levels. The Assembly called upon the international community, including the United Nations system and regional and subregional organizations, to support national efforts to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality in order to enhance national efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, including in the development and implementation of national action plans on the elimination of violence against women and girls. In addition, the Assembly stressed that adequate resources should be assigned to those bodies, specialized agencies, funds and programmes responsible for the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights and to efforts throughout the United Nations system to eliminate violence against women and girls.

9. The General Assembly took another critical step forward with the adoption of resolution 62/134 entitled “Eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations”, in which the Assembly urged Member States to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and to end impunity by ensuring that all rape victims,

² See resolutions 62/131 and 62/94 and 62/95, respectively.

³ See resolutions 62/126, 62/125, 62/96, 62/153, 62/152, 62/176, 62/132, 62/136 and 62/214, respectively.

particularly women and girls, have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice and by investigating, prosecuting and punishing any person responsible for rape and other forms of sexual violence.

10. The General Assembly adopted resolution 62/138 entitled “Supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula”, which stressed the interlinkages between, inter alia, early childbearing, early marriage, violence against young women and girls and gender discrimination as root causes of obstetric fistula. The Assembly stressed that States have the obligation to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, exercise due diligence in order to prevent, investigate and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls, and provide protection to the victims. It urged States to enact and strictly enforce laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage and to raise the minimum age for marriage where necessary, and called upon States to take all necessary measures to ensure the right of women and girls to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health.

11. Girls are often at greater risk of various forms of discrimination and violence, as recognized by the General Assembly in resolution 62/140 entitled “The girl child”.⁴ In the resolution the Assembly reaffirmed the need to achieve gender equality, including through partnering with men and boys as an important strategy for advancing the rights of the girl child. It stressed the importance of the substantive assessment of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action from a life-cycle approach. In resolution 62/141, “Rights of the child”, the Assembly urged States to address the gender dimension of all forms of violence against children, and to incorporate a gender perspective in all policies adopted and actions taken to protect children against all forms of violence. In particular, the Assembly called upon States to take all necessary and effective measures, including legal reforms, where appropriate, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and all forms of violence, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, rape, sexual abuse and harmful traditional or customary practices.

12. Drawing on documentation before it, including the biennial report of the Secretary-General (A/62/177),⁵ the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/132 entitled “Violence against women migrant workers”, which called upon all Governments to incorporate a human rights and gender perspective in legislation and policies on international migration and on labour and employment, inter alia, for the prevention and protection of migrant women from violence and discrimination, exploitation and abuse, and to take effective measures to ensure that these do not reinforce discrimination and bias against women.

Women and development

13. In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, Member States 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.

⁴ See also resolution 62/126.

⁵ See also A/62/218.

14. Drawing on the biennial report on women in development (A/62/187), the General Assembly, in resolution 62/206, urged an acceleration of efforts to increase the number of women in decision-making, build their capacity as agents of change, and empower them to participate actively and effectively in the development, implementation and evaluation of national development and/or poverty eradication policies, strategies and programmes. Member States were urged to incorporate a gender perspective, commensurate with gender equality goals, into the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of national development strategies, and to ensure inclusive and more effective participation of national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment in formulating such strategies, including poverty eradication strategies.

15. In addition to consideration of the sub-agenda item "Women in development", the General Assembly recognized the central importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women in development under other agenda items. For example, in resolution 62/131, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly", the Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to the empowerment of women and gender equality, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all development efforts, as critical for achieving sustainable development and for efforts to combat hunger, poverty and disease. The Assembly also called for strengthening of policies and programmes that increase the full participation of women in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life, as equal partners, and their access to all resources.

16. The General Assembly recognized the importance of the rights of women and implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy in the process of realizing the right to development.⁶ It noted that particular attention must be given, in the context of globalization, to the objective of protecting, promoting and enhancing the rights and welfare of women and girls.⁷ The Assembly recommended that global partnerships should foster the elimination of all forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination in employment and occupation,⁸ and called on multilateral financial institutions to take into account the importance of gender-sensitive employment and hunger and poverty eradication policies and strategies.⁹

17. Rural women play a critical role in enhancing rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty. Building on the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/62/202), the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/136 in which it urged Member States, in collaboration with the organizations of the United Nations and civil society, as appropriate, to attach greater importance to the improvement of the situation of rural women, including indigenous women, in their national, regional and global development strategies. Member States were called on to ensure that the perspectives of rural women are taken into account and that they participate in the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies and activities related to emergencies, including natural disasters, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding

⁶ See resolution 62/161.

⁷ See resolution 62/199.

⁸ See resolution 62/211.

⁹ See resolution 62/185.

and post-conflict reconstruction. The Assembly also declared October 15 the International Day of Rural Women.

18. In resolution 62/190 entitled “Agricultural technology for development”, the General Assembly reaffirmed that enhancing the role of women at all levels and in all aspects of rural development, agriculture, nutrition and food security is imperative to the implementation of an integrated approach to increasing food production and enhancing food security and food safety in an environmentally sustainable way.

19. In resolution 62/164 entitled “The right to food”, the General Assembly encouraged all States to take action to address gender inequality and discrimination against women, in particular where it contributes to the malnutrition of women and girls, including measures to ensure the full and equal realization of the right to food and equal access to resources, including income, land and water. The Assembly encouraged the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and all other United Nations bodies and mechanisms addressing the right to food and food insecurity, to integrate a gender perspective into their relevant policies, programmes and activities.

20. Gender equality in access to, and control over, resources is of paramount importance to achieving sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. In resolution 62/196 entitled “Sustainable mountain development”, which built on the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/292), the General Assembly underlined the need for improved access to resources, including land, for women in mountain regions. The need to strengthen the role of women in mountain regions in decision-making processes that affect their communities, cultures and environments was also noted. The Assembly encouraged Governments and intergovernmental organizations to integrate gender dimensions, including gender-disaggregated indicators, in mountain development activities, programmes and projects.

21. The General Assembly recognized that cooperatives, in their various forms, promote the fullest possible participation in economic and social development of all people, including women. In resolution 62/128, “Cooperatives in social development”, which built on the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/154), the Assembly urged Governments, relevant international organizations and specialized agencies, in collaboration with national and international cooperative organizations, to give due consideration to the role and contribution of cooperatives in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits, including the Fourth World Conference on Women.

22. The General Assembly recognized the importance of science and technology in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in resolution 62/207 entitled “Human resources development”, which built on the report by the Secretary-General (A/62/308). It called for steps to integrate gender perspectives into human resources development, including through policies, strategies and targeted actions aimed at promoting women’s capacities and access to productive activities, and in this regard emphasized the need to ensure the full participation of women.

Gender mainstreaming

23. The General Assembly continued to promote the gender mainstreaming strategy as a critical means for achieving equality between women and men. The report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: the Millennium Development Goals and synergies with other United Nations disability instruments (A/62/157) identified the gender mainstreaming strategy as a model to be followed in the promotion of disability as a cross-cutting theme and to develop programming that effectively addresses all such issues.

24. The General Assembly highlighted the importance of the work of the United Nations system in promoting and achieving gender equality at the national level. A section in resolution 62/208 entitled “Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” addressed gender equality and women’s empowerment.¹⁰ The Assembly reiterated its call to organizations of the United Nations system, within their organizational mandates, to mainstream a gender perspective and to pursue gender equality and the empowerment of women in their country programmes, planning instruments and sector-wide programmes, and articulate specific country-level goals and targets in accordance with national development strategies. It encouraged the governing bodies of United Nations entities to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into all aspects of their monitoring functions in relation to medium-term plans, multi-year funding frameworks and operational activities. The Assembly called for further improvement of institutional accountability mechanisms and qualitative and quantitative reporting on gender equality. It also called for attention to the role of men and boys in gender mainstreaming policies.

25. Noting the adoption of the United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women and the strategy on gender mainstreaming in resolution 62/208, the General Assembly further urged entities to take a coherent and coordinated approach in their work on gender-related issues and to share good practices, tools and methodologies. It called for further enhancement of the effectiveness of gender specialist resources, inter alia, by establishing clear mandates, ensuring adequate training and access to information and to adequate and stable resources, and by increasing the support and participation of senior staff. It also called on entities to continue efforts to achieve gender balance in appointments within the United Nations development system, including appointments of resident coordinators and other high-level posts.

26. The importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes was addressed in a number of different areas, including, inter alia, development,¹¹ implementation and international support for the New Partnership for Africa’s Development,¹² and emergency humanitarian assistance and disaster reduction.¹³ In resolution 62/99 entitled “Assistance in mine action”, for example, the General Assembly urged all States and the United Nations system and relevant organizations and institutions involved in mine action, as appropriate, to provide support for national programmes to reduce the risks posed by landmines and

¹⁰ See also E/2007/52-A/62/73.

¹¹ See, for example, resolutions 62/131, 62/136, 62/185, 62/196 and 62/207.

¹² See resolution 62/179.

¹³ See resolutions 62/91, 62/94 and 62/192.

explosive remnants of war, taking into consideration the differing impacts on women, men, girls and boys. The Assembly also called for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the promotion of human rights including the right to food; the rights of the child; human rights in the administration of justice; measures to prevent and combat torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.¹⁴

27. The availability of reliable data disaggregated by sex is critical to effectively mainstream gender perspectives in policies and programmes. The collection and use of sex-disaggregated data was highlighted by the General Assembly as a means to inform gender-responsive policymaking and implementation. For example, in resolution 62/132 entitled “Violence against women migrant workers”, the Assembly invited Governments, the United Nations system, and other concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to cooperate towards a better understanding of the issues concerning women and international migration, and to improve the collection, dissemination and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data and information, in order to both assist in the formulation of migration and labour policies that are gender-sensitive and protect human rights, and facilitate policy assessment.

28. Other instances in which the General Assembly incorporated attention to the importance of sex-disaggregated data for gender-sensitive policymaking included resolution 62/130, “Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing”; resolution 62/127, “Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities”; and resolution 62/126, “Policies and programmes involving youth: youth in the global economy — promoting youth participation in social and economic development”.

2. Follow-up to major international conferences and summits and high-level events of the General Assembly

29. In resolution 62/137, the General Assembly urged Governments and all entities of the United Nations system, including United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and all relevant actors of civil society, to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in the implementation of and follow-up to all United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions. Governments were also urged to give attention to gender perspectives in preparation for such events.

Commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

30. The General Assembly convened a commemorative high-level plenary meeting to evaluate progress made in the implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action contained in the document entitled “A world fit for children”¹⁵ in December 2007. In the “Declaration of the commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children”, adopted by the Assembly in resolution 62/88, representatives of States were encouraged by

¹⁴ See resolutions 62/164, 62/141, 62/158, 62/148 and 62/220, respectively.

¹⁵ Resolution S-27/2, annex.

progress achieved since 2002 in creating a world fit for children. It was noted, for example, that more educational opportunities are being equally extended to girls and boys. Many challenges were, however, also cited, for example, the fact that a large number of children are still subject to violence, exploitation and abuses, as well as inequity and discrimination, in particular the girl child.

United Nations Climate Change Conference and related events

31. In preparation for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, the General Assembly held a high-level event on climate change entitled “The future in our hands: addressing the leadership challenge of climate change” in September 2007. The background note prepared for the event did not contain attention to gender perspectives.¹⁶ The Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, resulted in the adoption of the Bali Road Map, including the Bali Action Plan (see FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1), which did not reflect gender perspectives.

32. The General Assembly held a thematic debate entitled “Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work” in February 2008. The report of the Secretary-General, “Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change” (A/62/644), noted that the challenge of climate change is unlikely to be gender-neutral as it increases the risk to the most vulnerable and less empowered social groups. In the formulation of global and national approaches, as well as in the strategic responses to specific sectors, gender awareness, substantive analysis and inclusive engagement will be necessary. Attention to gender equality was also included in the report with regard to human settlements and agriculture. It noted that, if not properly managed, the switch in use of productive land from food to biofuels production risks increasing prices of food crops, aggravating food insecurity, and exacerbating rural poverty and gender inequality. Despite these references, gender perspectives were not taken into account in resolution 62/86 entitled “Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind”.

High-level event on the Millennium Development Goals

33. The General Assembly held a thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals in April 2008 on the theme “Recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015”.¹⁷ Panel discussions focused on the Goals related to poverty and hunger, education and health, and took gender perspectives into account. During the panel discussion on education, it was noted that the target of goal 3 to eliminate gender disparity in enrolment for primary and secondary education by 2005 had been missed, but that 118 countries of the 188 with data available were on track or had already achieved gender parity at the primary level. In the panel discussion on health, it was noted that the education and empowerment of women significantly contributed to the improvement of maternal health and a decrease in child mortality.

¹⁶ Background note by the Secretary-General, available at www.un.org/climatechange/2007highlevel/pdf/HLE_Background_Note.pdf.

¹⁷ See www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/MDGsStatements/mdgsummary.pdf.

General Assembly preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus

34. In preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha, the General Assembly held reviews of the leading action areas of the Monterrey Consensus in the first half of 2008.¹⁸ Gender perspectives were raised in all of the review sessions. In the review of “Mobilizing domestic financial resources for development”, it was recognized that although increasing women’s contribution to development could benefit all, the Monterrey Consensus had not paid sufficient attention to their role. It was noted that the role of women was critical in formulating and implementing poverty eradication policies, and that the gender aspects of development should be considered beyond the social sectors and encompass other policy areas such as economic growth, the environment, peacebuilding and reconstruction. The review of “Mobilizing international resources for development: foreign direct investment and other private flows” noted the importance of the business sector respecting labour standards, becoming more socially responsible and gender-sensitive, and considering the implications of their undertakings. Emphasis should be given to promoting investments in the social sectors, with a view to addressing asymmetries in resource distribution, furthering social insurance and benefiting women.

35. The review of “International trade as an engine for development” noted that some developed countries had been working with developing country partners to focus efforts on increasing trade benefits for the weakest groups, empowering women and strengthening their participation in trade, and supporting environmental sustainability and trade. During the review of “Increasing international financial and technical cooperation for development”, it was noted that aid effectiveness should focus on related issues such as human resource development, gender equality and environmental protection. It was also stressed that the use of official development assistance (ODA) for the empowerment of women could yield a high rate of economic and social return. References were made to proposals for policy targets to increase the share of ODA for gender equality to 10 per cent by 2010 and to 20 per cent by 2050. It was reiterated that all actors should pay attention to gender equality issues in the preparations for the Review Conference. The review of “External debt” noted that additional social expenditures as a result of debt reduction should take especially into account the gender perspective.

36. The review of “Addressing systemic issues: enhancing the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development” highlighted the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective into development policies. It was noted that, while significant gender-responsive efforts had been made, further actions were needed to ensure the shift from analysis to implementation. It was also noted that the Commission on the Status of Women had considered various ways to strengthen the advancement of women through the financing for development process at its fifty-second session.

37. In addition to the review sessions on leading action areas, the General Assembly also took up the issue of financing for development in its Second

¹⁸ See www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/roadmap.htm.

Committee. The report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development (A/62/217) indicated that there are recent innovative experiences of broad social participation and incorporation of gender-responsive approaches in the formulation and monitoring of national and local budgets which have led to increased social expenditures, including a better focus on gender equality. The application of tools such as gender-responsive budgeting is important to improve the effectiveness and targeting of public expenditures. Resolution 62/187 entitled “Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus”, which was largely procedural in nature, did not contain attention to gender perspectives.

3. Assessment of the work of the General Assembly

38. To facilitate gender-sensitive outcomes, the General Assembly requested, in resolution 62/137, that reports of the Secretary-General submitted for its consideration should systematically address gender perspectives through qualitative gender analysis and the use of quantitative data where available. Research and analysis for this report indicated that attention to gender perspectives in the work of the Assembly was not systematically included in documentation before or in outcomes of the Assembly, including those related to the follow-up to major international conferences and summits, and high-level dialogues of the Assembly.

39. Overall, documentation submitted to the Third Committee contained significantly more gender analysis than that of other Main Committees. Documentation before the Second Committee and before the General Assembly without reference to a Main Committee also contained attention to gender perspectives, although to a lesser extent.

40. Notably, many reports before the Fifth Committee highlighted work undertaken by United Nations peacekeeping operations to promote gender equality and the advancement of women in their activities, as well as gender balance in personnel.¹⁹ Reports also addressed gender balance in the overall staffing of the United Nations.²⁰ The report of the Secretary-General on improving the effective and efficient delivery of the mandates of development-related activities and revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/708) contained attention to critical gaps in gender equality work in the process of strengthening the development pillar of the United Nations.

41. Documentation before the First, Fourth and Sixth Committees contained minimal gender analysis or attention to gender perspectives. Examples of exceptions included the report on assistance in mine action before the Fourth Committee (A/62/307 and Corr.1-3), the report on the rule of law at the national and international levels: comments and information received from Governments (A/62/121 and Add.1) before the Sixth Committee, and the report entitled “Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards” (A/62/278 (Part II)) before the First Committee.

¹⁹ See, for example, A/62/631, A/62/632, A/62/642, A/62/645, A/62/648, A/62/679, A/62/737 and A/62/741. See also reports before the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

²⁰ See, for example, A/62/215 and A/62/707.

42. Gender analysis and/or specific recommendations for action in documentation before the General Assembly did not necessarily translate into gender-sensitive outcomes. In some instances, including the Assembly's consideration of climate change and financing for development, links between gender equality and policy areas presented in documentation before the Assembly were not reflected in outcomes. Other examples included the implementation of United Nations environmental conventions²¹ and Agenda 21.²²

43. A little more than one quarter of the resolutions analysed in preparation for this report contained attention to gender equality issues.²³ Greater attention was paid to gender perspectives in outcomes of the Third Committee than any other Main Committee, with over two thirds of its outcomes drawing attention to gender equality issues and most calling for concrete action to be taken. Over one third of resolutions adopted in the Second Committee, and resolutions adopted without reference to a Main Committee, contained attention to gender perspectives. The outcomes of the Fourth and Fifth Committees took gender perspectives into account to a lesser extent. The First and Sixth Committees did not take gender perspectives into account in their outcomes.

44. Despite the Assembly's call to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in the preparation for as well as in implementation of and follow-up to United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions, this was not systematically done.

4. Subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly

Peacebuilding Commission

45. The report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its first session (A/62/137-S/2007/458) indicated that, in accordance with the system-wide mandate to incorporate a gender perspective in its work, the Commission considered human rights and gender equality issues in both its country-specific work and in thematic discussions. The Commission considered the situations of Burundi and Sierra Leone during its inaugural session. Gender equality was identified as one of the critical priorities to peace consolidation and reduction of the risk of relapse into conflict in Burundi. Gender equality was highlighted as one of the cross-cutting issues needed to address the root causes of conflict in Sierra Leone and lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. In its engagement with Guinea-Bissau, during its second session, the Commission advocated for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of the country's peacebuilding priorities and existing national strategies and plans.²⁴

Human Rights Council

46. The Human Rights Council considered the human rights of women, including the elimination of violence against women, at its sixth and seventh sessions. At its sixth session, the Council adopted resolution 6/30 in which it decided to incorporate into its programme of work sufficient and adequate time, at minimum an annual

²¹ See document A/62/276 and resolutions 62/86, 62/193 and 62/194.

²² See document A/62/262 and resolution 62/198.

²³ Includes resolutions available through 25 May 2008 available in the United Nations Official Document System.

²⁴ Based on information received from the Peacebuilding Support Office.

full-day meeting, to discuss the human rights of women, including measures that can be adopted by States and other stakeholders, to address human rights violations experienced by women. The Council also decided that the first such meeting should include a discussion on violence against women pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/143.²⁵ The decision also urged all stakeholders to take into full account the rights of women and a gender perspective in the universal periodic review.

47. At its seventh session, the Council considered the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on indicators on violence against women and State response (A/HRC/7/6). The report noted that the adoption by States, in intergovernmental forums, of a common understanding of violence against women and a set of indicators will stimulate and enhance initiatives to standardize data at the national and international levels, inform the general public and mobilize action. In resolution 7/24 on elimination of violence against women, the Council decided to continue consideration of the issue of the elimination of all forms of violence against women, its causes and consequences, as a matter of high priority, in conformity with its annual programme of work. It also welcomed the February 2008 launch of the campaign of the Secretary-General to end violence against women.

48. A number of reports before the Council during its sixth and seventh sessions incorporated gender perspectives,²⁶ including reports of special rapporteurs and independent experts.²⁷ The report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment (A/HRC/7/3) focused exclusively on strengthening the protection of women from torture.

49. Council resolutions and decisions also took gender equality into account, including resolution 7/9 on human rights of persons with disabilities, resolution 7/10 on human rights and arbitrary deprivation of nationality and resolution 7/14 on the right to food. In resolution 7/29 on the rights of the child, the Council underlined the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective and recognizing the child as a rights holder, in all policies and programmes relating to children.

50. The Council also called on special rapporteurs and other mechanisms to integrate a gender perspective in their respective mandates.²⁸ In resolution 7/22 on human rights and access to safe drinking water and sanitation, the Council decided to appoint, for a period of three years, an independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to safe drinking water and sanitation whose task would include applying a gender perspective, including through the identification of gender-specific vulnerabilities. In its resolution 7/12, the Council encouraged the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to apply a gender perspective in its reporting process, including in information collection and the formulation of recommendations.

²⁵ Per this decision, a meeting was held on 8 June 2008.

²⁶ See, for example, A/HRC/6/3 and A/HRC/7/32.

²⁷ See, for example, A/HRC/6/5 and Corr.1, A/HRC/6/6, A/HRC/7/8 and A/HRC/7/11 and Corr.1.

²⁸ See, for example, resolutions 6/2, 6/12, 6/14, 7/34 and 7/36.

B. 2007 session of the Economic and Social Council

51. During its 2007 session, the Economic and Social Council paid explicit attention to gender equality in some of its segments and during high-level meetings. Gender perspectives were also reflected in some of the Secretary-General's reports before the Council and in Council outcomes, including the Ministerial Declaration.²⁹

52. The Ministerial Declaration of the Council's high-level segment, "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development", reaffirmed that gender equality and the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are essential to eradicate poverty and hunger. The ministers and heads of delegations reiterated that all countries should promote gender equality and empowerment of women and identify and accelerate actions towards that end, as called for, inter alia, in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

53. Under the coordination segment, the two reports of the Secretary-General before the Council on the role of the United Nations system in providing full and productive employment and decent work for all (E/2007/49) and the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits (A/62/89-E/2007/76) paid attention to gender equality. The Council adopted resolution 2007/2, "The role of the United Nations system in providing full and productive employment and decent work for all", under its coordination segment. The Council requested the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, as appropriate within their respective mandates, to coordinate their employment and decent work-related activities and programmes in order to promote coherent and mutually supportive multidisciplinary and multisectoral approaches, including those mainstreaming a gender perspective.

54. Under its humanitarian affairs segment, the Council adopted resolution 2007/3, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations", in which it requested the Secretary-General to provide an update on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee review of its 1999 policy statement on the integration of a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance and to report on steps taken in this regard. In resolution 2007/13, the Council noted the progress made by the Government of Haiti in terms of gender equality as well as the importance of gender equality as a necessary dimension of any strategy for development.

55. Under the operational activities segment, the Economic and Social Council reviewed a report on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations development system (A/62/73-E/2007/52), in preparation for review by the General Assembly. The report noted that, at country level, United Nations system-capacity development processes supported national efforts for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. Some progress on accountability through gender-responsive budgeting and gender auditing was noted.

²⁹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/62/3/Rev.1), E/2007/INF/2/Add.1, A/62/72-E/2007/73, A/62/73-E/2007/52, A/62/87-E/2007/70, A/62/89-E/2007/76 and E/2007/49.

However, there had been insufficient gender analysis to identify and address gender perspectives in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes. A major remaining challenge was to establish linkages between the United Nations system's gender equality interventions and concrete results in terms of changes in national policies, legislation, programmes, social attitudes and behaviours.

56. During the general segment, the Council considered the annual report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (E/2007/64) under the agenda item "Advancement of women". The Council acknowledged that enhancing women's opportunities, potential and activities required a dual focus that included programmes aimed at both meeting specific needs of women and ensuring gender mainstreaming in programme formulation and implementation activities. It adopted resolution 2007/33, "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system", in which all United Nations entities were encouraged to continue investing in capacity development, including through mandatory training for all staff and personnel and training for senior managers, as a critical means of increasing the awareness, knowledge, commitment and competencies of staff with regard to mainstreaming a gender perspective in all United Nations policies and programmes.

57. In its decision 2007/238, the Council decided to transmit the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session to the commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children in the General Assembly.

58. The Council also adopted resolution 2007/32, "Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)", under the general segment. In the resolution the Council urged Governments, donors and the Joint Programme to significantly expand efforts to address inequality and inequity between men and women, gender-based violence, including sexual and physical abuse of women, girls and boys, harmful gender-based practices and social and cultural norms, stigma, discrimination, deficiencies in sexual and reproductive health and lack of respect for human rights, as major factors that heighten vulnerability to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

59. The special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, on 16 April 2008, focused on the theme "Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus". Measures leading to the empowerment of women and their full participation in economic activity were identified as important aspects of good governance.³⁰

Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

60. Most of the functional commissions took gender perspectives into account, to some extent, in their deliberations. However, apart from the Commission on the Status of Women, only three functional commissions of the Council, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Crime Prevention and

³⁰ See www.un.org/esa/ffd/ecosoc/springmeetings/2008/index.htm.

Criminal Justice and the Commission on Population and Development, paid attention to gender perspectives in their outcomes across a range of policy areas, including population ageing, crime prevention, social development and population.

61. The Commission for Social Development adopted a draft resolution, adopted by the Economic and Social Council as resolution 2007/28, entitled, “Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development”, in which the Council welcomed efforts to mainstream a gender perspective and the empowerment of women in implementation of the New Partnership. The Commission also adopted resolution 45/1, “Modalities for the first review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing”, in which it drew attention to the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in global agendas on ageing.

62. Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/27,³¹ entitled “Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond”, adopted on the basis of a draft resolution of the Commission for Social Development, highlighted women’s equal access to information communication technologies, the vulnerability of young women to HIV/AIDS, and the equal rights of young women and men to participate at the local, national, regional and international levels in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The situation of young women and girls was also highlighted in the context of access to information communication technologies, HIV/AIDS and armed conflict. Governments were called on to promote greater participation of young women in the labour force, including those living in rural and remote areas.

63. The Commission on Population and Development adopted resolution 2007/1 entitled “Changing age structures of populations and their implications for development” in which it encouraged Governments to apply policies that support gender equality, protect the human rights of older persons, particularly older women, and assist abused older persons.

64. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted a draft resolution entitled “Supporting national efforts for child justice reform, in particular through technical assistance and improved United Nations system-wide coordination”, adopted by the Economic and Social Council as resolution 2007/23. Member States were urged to pay particular attention to the issue of child justice and to take into consideration applicable United Nations standards and norms for the treatment of children in conflict with the law, particularly those deprived of their liberty, taking into account, inter alia, the gender-specific needs of such children.

C. Fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Assessment of the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women to discussions in the United Nations system

65. At its fifty-first session in 2007, the Commission focused on “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” as its priority theme. In the adopted agreed conclusions,³² the Commission invited the entities of

³¹ See also resolution 62/126.

³² See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council 2007, Supplement No. 7* (E/2007/27-E/CN.6/2007/9), chap. I, sect. A.

the United Nations system, especially its funds and programmes, to increase their efforts, including through, as appropriate, the United Nations country teams, to strengthen their country-level advocacy and their technical capacities to address all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, a number of United Nations entities provided input to the preparation of the report.³³

66. In support of the Commission's work on the theme, a number of entities undertook outreach activities, carried out research which highlighted the situation of marginalized adolescent girls and those living in vulnerable situations, and identified gaps in policies and strategies aimed at protecting the girl child from commercial sexual exploitation.

67. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) played an active role in preparation for and during the fifty-first session of the Commission. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions, UNICEF has prepared a learning package on the complementarity of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)). UNICEF also renewed efforts to reach the most marginalized girls; facilitated the sharing of girls' views during the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers and efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and contributed to the body of data used to inform and monitor national policies and actions, giving specific attention to girls aged 10-14 and 15-19.

68. Initiatives were taken by entities to address discrimination and violence against girls. The World Food Programme collaborated with partners to provide necessary non-food items, minimizing the risk of violence against girls in schools. The increased visibility of the problem of violence against girls encouraged the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to examine ways to address the issue more effectively.

69. The work of the Commission on the Status of Women created momentum for the recently launched inter-agency statement on the elimination of female genital mutilation, coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and co-sponsored by 10 United Nations agencies,³⁴ to strengthen commitments of United Nations entities at the highest level. UNFPA organized a meeting of United Nations organizations, Governments and civil society to discuss the development of a road map which aims to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting within one generation. It also published *A Holistic Approach to the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*. UNFPA and UNICEF recently launched a joint programme and

³³ The Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Food Programme, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

³⁴ The Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization.

trust fund that aims to reduce female genital mutilation/cutting by 40 per cent in 17 countries by the year 2012.

70. Entities, including the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, reported on awareness-raising activities undertaken to address discrimination and violence against the girl child. The Department worked actively to inform global audiences on the need to end discrimination and violence against the girl child. The Division for the Advancement of Women produced a brochure of the agreed conclusions on “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” to facilitate their dissemination and use by a wide range of stakeholders, including in the United Nations system. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East held workshops to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and discussion groups, including for girls, on the issue of domestic violence.

71. Entities gathered information on the specific situation of girls and policy implications. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in partnership with UNICEF and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) undertook a project on the commercial sexual exploitation of children that highlighted the situation of girls and policies to address their needs. The Commission carried out a gender analysis to highlight the vulnerability of girls to commercial sexual exploitation in the Pacific subregion. WHO supported research to define evidence-based interventions for improving women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health.

72. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reported working with partners to clarify linkages and define effective programmes on violence and HIV for emergency-affected populations, and advocates to channel resources towards programmes that address girls as well as women, violence, and HIV in emergency and humanitarian situations.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

73. The full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly requires systematic integration of gender perspectives in social, political and economic development at all levels. Intergovernmental bodies have a critical role to play in providing policy guidance on the gender dimensions in all policy areas to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development and effective implementation at the national level. Increased and systematic attention to the gender dimensions of issues under consideration by the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, is critical to moving the global policy agenda on gender equality forward.

74. Progress in gender mainstreaming in the intergovernmental process can be measured by the extent to which gender perspectives are integrated into documentation provided to facilitate consideration of issues by intergovernmental bodies; in thematic discussions and interactive events to stimulate an exchange of ideas, lessons learned and good practices during consideration of agenda items; and in outcomes such as resolutions and decisions.

75. During its sixty-second session, the General Assembly advanced global policy on gender equality in a number of critical areas. Attention to gender perspectives was, however, not systematically included in all documentation before or outcomes of the Assembly.

76. The Assembly paid some attention to gender perspectives in the preparation of and follow-up to major international conferences and summits, and high-level dialogues and events. A noticeable gap was identified in the area of climate change. Efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in preparation for and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits should be strengthened. Attention to gender perspectives should, for example, be included in documentation, interactive activities and outcomes of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in 2008 and the Durban Review Conference in 2009, as well as in other high-level dialogues and events of the Assembly.

77. The Economic and Social Council and several of its functional commissions continued to make efforts to incorporate gender perspectives into their discussions and outcomes. Greater efforts are needed, however, to facilitate more systematic attention to gender perspectives in the work of all the functional commissions, including through increased consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, which continues to play a catalytic role in advancing gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system and at the national level.

78. To enhance the role of the Commission on the Status of Women in promoting and monitoring the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, its outcomes should be systematically transmitted through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly, the functional commissions of the Council and other relevant intergovernmental bodies. The outcomes should also be systematically disseminated to entities of the United Nations, including specialized agencies, funds and programmes, to ensure effective support to Member States at the national level.

79. Regular reporting on intergovernmental outcomes on gender equality and their impact on the work of intergovernmental bodies and United Nations entities can help advance the global policy agenda on gender equality and women's empowerment and ensure follow-up and implementation at the national level.