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**INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND
THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

**Integrating the human rights of women throughout the
United Nations system**

Report of the Secretary-General*

* The present document is submitted late so as to include the most up-to-date information possible.

Summary

The report examines new steps taken by human rights treaty bodies, the Commission on Human Rights and its human rights mechanisms and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to integrate gender perspectives and the human rights of women into human rights activities. The report notes the continuing progress being made in improving the integration of gender and women's rights issues into the United Nations human rights system. It also reveals that progress is uneven, with some treaty bodies, some Commission resolutions and some special procedures integrating gender and women's rights issues to a greater extent than other bodies, resolutions and mechanisms.

The report includes a particular focus on efforts being made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to improve its capacity to support and facilitate the integration of gender and human rights of women in its technical cooperation activities. It also focuses on similar efforts undertaken by United Nations human rights field presences.

The report notes that participation by women in the work of human rights mechanism is important in ensuring sufficient attention is paid to women's rights and gender issues. The report suggests that the Commission may wish to propose steps to encourage greater gender balance in the nomination, designation and election of experts and to give greater attention to the proportion of women participating in human rights meetings and benefiting from human rights activities.

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Introduction

1. The present report updates the reports submitted since 1997 (most recently E/CN.4/2003/72) and is submitted to the Commission on Human Rights in accordance with its resolution 2003/44. The report considers the steps and initiatives taken by human rights treaty monitoring bodies, the Commission on Human Rights and its human rights mechanisms, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and United Nations human rights field presences. It should be read together with the report on the Joint Work Plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.4/2004/65-E/CN.6/2004/7).

2. Relevant information is also contained in the reports of the Secretary-General entitled “Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations” (most recently A/58/89-E/2003/85) which reflects the impact of the 1999 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) “Policy statement for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance”,¹ referred to in Commission resolution 2003/44. The IASC Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance supports and reviews the implementation of the IASC policy statement. Information on integration of gender perspectives and the human rights of women can also be found in reports of the Secretary-General submitted to other intergovernmental bodies, including those presented to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the follow-up to, and progress in, the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (most recently E/CN.6/2004/3, E/2003/69 and A/58/166).

3. The World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993 reaffirmed that the human rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. So did the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Beijing Conference held in 2000 and recent global conferences, including the Millennium Summit (2000) and World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001), have endorsed the objective of gender equality.

I. STEPS TAKEN BY THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES

4. This section focuses in particular on the integration of gender and women’s rights into the thematic special procedures of the Commission. More detailed information on the resolutions of the Commission and the mandates and activities of special procedures was included in previous reports, and particularly in the report submitted to the Commission at its fifty-ninth session (E/CN.4/2003/72) and in the report prepared in 1996 by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

5. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, was renewed for three more years by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/45. Subsequently, Yakin Ertürk (Turkey) was appointed as Special Rapporteur. The first regional consultation on violence against women in the Arab region was held on 12 and 13 May 2003 in Cairo, organized by the Arab Alliance for Women. The Special Rapporteur

presented a report on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly (A/58/421). She also convened an agenda-setting meeting for the mandate in Istanbul from 7 to 8 December 2003. Participants at the meeting included the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), representatives of OHCHR, the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions.

6. Radhika Coomaraswamy, who served as Special Rapporteur on violence against women from 1994 to 2003, presented in her final report to the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2003/75 and Add.1) a review of developments aimed at eliminating violence against women since 1994 when the mandate was created. The former Special Rapporteur stated that while at the normative level the needs of women are generally adequately addressed, the challenges lie in ensuring respect for and effective implementation of existing laws and standards. Addendum 1 contains a detailed review of international, regional and national developments and best practices.

7. It is important to note that the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixtieth session (E/CN.4/2004/76) is devoted to an analysis of the situation of women migrant domestic workers. In her most recent report to the General Assembly (A/58/275), she devoted a section to combating trafficking, especially of women and unaccompanied minors.

8. Since his appointment, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has always dedicated a part of his preventive activities to the situation of women vis-à-vis religions. Since 1996, the Commission on Human Rights has asked the Special Rapporteur to devote part of his report to the Commission to the situation of women. In his last report (E/CN.4/2004/63), the Special Rapporteur gives a brief description of what he has completed over a period of 11 years in his activities on follow-up to Commission resolutions on women, which includes his "Etude sur la liberté de religion ou de conviction et la conditions de la femme au regard de la religion et des traditions" (E/CN.4/2002/73/Add.2).

9. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders has systematically included references to women human rights defenders in her reports to the General Assembly and to the Commission on Human Rights. From 4 to 6 April 2003, the Special Representative attended in Bangkok a consultation on women human rights defenders convened by the Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) with the support of the Women's Human Rights Task Force. The meeting brought together a significant group of women defenders from the Asian-Pacific region, as well as some women defenders from Latin and North America, Africa, and Europe. Participants discussed the risks and vulnerability confronted by women human rights defenders, including killings, arrest and detention, harassment, the use of religious arguments to silence women defenders, and societal prejudice that can lead to women defenders being portrayed as troublemakers. Participants also highlighted the particular strengths of women defenders and concluded with a series of recommendations, including that women defenders should be recognized as such. One of the meeting's objectives was to support greater implementation of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, on behalf of women defenders. The

meeting also provided momentum for additional meetings of women defenders in other regions of the world, with the objective of organizing an international conference on women defenders in 2005. A report of the meeting was subsequently published by APWLD.

10. The Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons consistently includes a gender perspective in his work. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement include a specific non-discrimination clause (principle 4.1), and mention the situation, rights and needs of women in several contexts. The Representative highlights the situation of women in the reports on the missions undertaken to Turkey and to Mexico (E/CN.4/2003/86/Add.2 And E/CN.4/2004/86/Add.3) in which, inter alia, he recommends that the Governments concerned implement measures to address the specific needs of displaced women. In the context of the research he carries out with the Brookings/Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Project on Internal Displacement, one of the research topics currently on the agenda relates to development strategies for internally displaced women.

11. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression mentions in his report (E/CN.4/2004/62) that, through a press release, on 17 October 2003, he and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders expressed their deep concern over the conviction, on 16 October, of Irene Fernandez, director of Tenaganita - a women's NGO based in Kuala Lumpur, who was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment by a magistrates court, in the Malaysian capital.

12. The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has systematically referred to violations of the right to life of women in her reports to the Commission. In the general section regarding situations involving violations of the right to life, she consistently devotes a specific section to the situation of women. In her report to the Commission at its fifty-ninth session (E/CN.4/2003/3), she referred to the question of honour killings and the issue of adultery, especially in the Sudan and Nigeria. In her report following her visit to Afghanistan (E/CN.4/2003/3/Add.4), she referred to the fact that the lives of women remain vulnerable in that country and she also recalled that she received reports of women being killed by their family members in the name of morality. In her report to the Commission at its sixtieth session (E/CN.4/2004/7), she focuses on the issue of honour killings.

13. During his missions to Mexico and Chile, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples held specific meetings with indigenous women and heard testimonies on their situation. He has noted that indigenous leaders refer increasingly to the situation of women within their communities. His reports on both missions include specific recommendations in this regard. In the report on the mission to Mexico (E/CN.4/2004/80/Add.2), the Special Rapporteur draws the attention of the indigenous communities to their obligation to respect the rights enshrined in national and international instruments while applying their customary law. In the report on his mission to Chile (E/CN.4/2004/80/Add.3), the Special Rapporteur draws particular attention to the extent of extreme poverty among Mapuche women and recommends that the Government strengthen its efforts to collect disaggregated data concerning, in particular, the situation of indigenous rural women.

14. In resolution 2003/22 on women's equal ownership of, access to and control over land and the equal rights to own property and adequate housing, the Commission mandated the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living to prepare a study on women and housing, to be submitted to the Commission at its sixty-first session in 2005. The Special Rapporteur held a regional consultation and training session for civil society on the issue of women and housing in New Delhi from 28 to 31 October 2003, organized by the APWLD. A second regional consultation and training session was held in Mexico from 2 to 4 December 2003, hosted by the Government of Mexico and organized by the International Habitat Coalition Regional Office for Latin America. The Special Rapporteur continues to devote extensive attention to gender and women's rights issues within his mandate, including during the missions he has conducted to Peru (E/CN.4/2004/48/Add.1) and to Afghanistan (E/CN.4/2004/48/Add.2), where he paid particular attention to the difficulties faced by widows and other female-headed households.

15. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education also continues to pay particular attention to the gender dimensions of her mandate. In her annual report to the Commission (E/CN.4/2004/45), the Special Rapporteur reviews the developments concerning her mandate during the previous five years, drawing particular attention to issues concerning girls, and devoting a specific chapter to the issue of inequality, focusing on girls and schools and on access to sex education. The Special Rapporteur has also continued to address relevant issues during her missions. The report on the mission to China (E/CN.4/2004/45/Add.1) draws particular attention to the role of education with regard to gender discrimination, and the report on the mission to Colombia (E/CN.4/2004/45/Add.2) notes that girls are victims of violence and abuse also in the school environment.

16. In his most recent report to the General Assembly (A/58/330), the Special Rapporteur on the right to food focuses on gender as one of its two themes, presenting a conceptual overview and some preliminary observations on the linkages between gender and the right to food.

17. The Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health also pays close attention to the gender dimensions of his mandate. In his report to the Commission (E/CN.4/2004/49), he addresses the issue of traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls.

18. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar addresses the allegations of rape of women in Shan State. In his report to the General Assembly (A/58/219), the Special Rapporteur refers to research conducted in Thailand that has included interviews with victims and witnesses of human rights violations, including rape and other sexual violence.

II. STEPS TAKEN BY HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

19. The treaty bodies continue to integrate a gender perspective and the human rights of women and girls in their work. More detailed information on their activities was contained in the reports submitted to the Commission at its fifty-third to fifty-fifth sessions (E/CN.4/1997/40, E/CN.4/1998/49 and Add.1, and E/CN.4/1999/67 and Add.1), and the study carried out by the Division for the Advancement of Women (HRI/MC/1998/6).

20. CEDAW adopted at its thirtieth session, held in January 2004, general recommendation No. 25, dealing with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (on temporary special measures).

21. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recently adopted several general comments, including some of particular relevance to gender issues and the rights of girls. At its thirty-second session, in January 2003, it adopted general comment No. 3 on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child. At its thirty-third session, in June 2003, it adopted general comment No. 4, on adolescent health and development.

III. STEPS TAKEN BY THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD PRESENCES

22. OHCHR has a project to strengthen support to the integration of gender perspectives and women's rights into all its activities. The Office adopted in July 2002 a "Gender Mainstreaming Strategy". The late High Commissioner, Sergio Vieira de Mello, highlighted gender equality and the human rights of women's as one of the key priorities for his mandate. He participated, on 8 March 2003, in the commemoration of International Women's Day at United Nations Headquarters, contributing to a discussion of gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals, with a particular focus on the right to education. While reviewing the achievements and challenges regarding the human rights of women since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the late High Commissioner paid particular attention to the issue of violence against women and to the impact on women and their involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflict.

23. The Office continues to devote attention to women's rights throughout its advocacy, research and other activities. In particular, activities conducted to follow up on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action continue to reflect the acknowledgement of the intersection of gender and racism.² Particular efforts are also being made to devote specific attention to the rights of women within activities focusing on the rights of indigenous peoples. The situation of women and girls was one of the four themes discussed at the International Expert Seminar on Administration of Justice and Indigenous Peoples organized in Madrid from 12 to 14 November 2003, and problems of discrimination and violence facing women are underlined in the joint research undertaken with the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) on indigenous issues.

24. A global review of its technical cooperation programme, commissioned by OHCHR, and completed in September 2003,³ concluded inter alia that the Office is committed to gender mainstreaming. The technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina provided a clear example of the positive impact of specific gender mainstreaming policies, indicating the priority given to implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the important role played by gender centres. The review found that OHCHR has provided the lead in activities addressing trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, within a Gender Trafficking Sub-Group of the Inter-Agency Gender Coordination Group, since 1998. Since 2001, the Office

has worked closely with civil society organizations, focusing attention on issues concerning domestic violence as well as gender equality with regard to inheritance and property rights. In the framework of the project Assisting Communities Together (ACT) providing small grants for grass roots initiatives, the Office and UNDP also supported in Bosnia and Herzegovina, projects specifically addressing the rights of women and children.

25. The global review found the work of the Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina particularly successful in the areas of women's rights and trafficking in persons, ensuring effectively that gender concerns and women's rights are mainstreamed into all human rights initiatives within the country, and contributing to effective gender mainstreaming with regard to the activities of the international community. For example, explicit gender components have been present in all advice offered with regard to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the design of the rights-based Municipal Assessments Programme.

26. Another instance in which the review of technical cooperation found specific attention to gender issues were the meetings of national human rights institutions facilitated by the activities of the Office. The review also found that although other technical cooperation country programmes and activities address gender and women's rights issues in a variety of ways (including through collaboration with women's organizations, or specific training projects) they can lack an explicit gender mainstreaming policy, and although gender components are usually included in technical cooperation projects, this can take different forms and technical cooperation activities do not always succeed in targeting men and women equally in the design and implementation of activities, or in ensuring the equal participation and inclusion of women among the beneficiaries of technical cooperation activities.

27. The review also noted that gender and women's rights issues are effectively included in the technical cooperation guidelines provided by the Office, including in manuals on needs assessment missions and technical cooperation, guidance on the content and format of project documents, advice on the preparation of terms of references and checklists for project formulation missions.

28. The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the global review pointed out that in some countries gender programming needs to be strengthened within a more strategic approach, in close cooperation with other partners. It also noted that there is a need to consider the perception of gender equality in the local culture (including among local staff) and the role it is assigned within the overall development programming approach. Where women's rights and gender issues are at risk of encountering local ignorance or resistance, the knowledge and qualifications of staff can be a decisive factor in ensuring the integration of gender issues in project activities.

29. The global review recommended that additional efforts be made to ensure a more systematic and explicit integration of gender mainstreaming strategies into all technical cooperation projects. It also suggested that development of additional tools and improved exchange of information regarding best practices could play a particularly useful role in that regard.

30. In addition, a simple informal survey on the status of gender mainstreaming was conducted during the annual meeting of heads of human rights field presences held in Geneva from 17 to 21 November 2003. The survey provides partial, but useful, data about the self-assessment of gender mainstreaming efforts and achievements in approximately half of the human rights field presences.⁴

31. Preliminary conclusions highlight that gender mainstreaming is often greatly influenced by the size and nature of the field presence (including both OHCHR field offices and human rights units in United Nations missions), with a general tendency towards larger field presences to be more likely to include gender specialists and to devote considerable efforts to gender mainstreaming and women's rights issues. However, there are also smaller field presences that report greater success in integrating gender perspectives than other, much larger ones. A second factor that has a clear influence is the extent and political visibility of major women's rights problems in the particular country or region.

32. The degree to which gender perspectives and women's human rights are integrated into the activities of the field presences is, of course, closely correlated with the presence of gender specialists, and the experience and training in gender and women's rights issues among the staff. It needs to be pointed out that close collaboration with relevant United Nations bodies and agencies also facilitates integration of gender perspectives and women's rights. Several field presences note the important role played by gender theme groups, where they exist, and the particularly important impact of close collaboration with UNIFEM.

33. Regional factors also play a role, with field presences in Eastern Europe showing a particularly strong tendency to address women's rights issues and reporting no difficulties in ensuring gender balance among the beneficiaries of their activities or even a majority of women involved in human rights activities. The specific circumstances of each country or region have a particular impact on the type of women's rights issues addressed by human rights field presences. The two most likely issues to receive sustained attention are the impact of conflict on the human rights of women (including both monitoring violations of human rights that victimize women, and participation of women in the resolution of the conflict) and addressing sexual and gender-based violence (covering a broad spectrum of issues, from conflict-related problems to domestic violence to sexual abuse and exploitation).

34. Most field presences include among their women's rights activities the involvement of women and of women's organizations in their capacity-building activities and the provision of training on women's rights issues within broader programmes of human rights education for public officials as well as for civil society, or within the United Nations system. Two common themes for activities are also promotion of ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol and provision of support to States for reporting under the treaty, as well as for drafting relevant legislation.

35. Among thematic issues, in addition to discrimination based on sex as a broad theme, violence against women is the issue most commonly addressed by field presences. A significant number also carry out activities to address trafficking. While basically not covered by a majority of field presences, support for increased political participation of women is still a more common area of activity than promotion of women's economic, social and cultural rights.

36. Gender balance patterns among staff and among participants in the activities conducted by field presences reflect common trends. Thus, the gender balance among staff tends to be affected by seniority, with more women among the junior professionals than in more senior positions. One field presence noted the particular difficulties faced by women working under contract arrangements that do not provide coverage for maternity leave or other staff benefits.

37. As for participants in activities women tend, not unusually, to be a very large majority of those involved in activities specifically focusing on women's rights or gender issues. The proportion of women participating in general activities can differ by region, from the over 50 per cent reported by Eastern European field presences to the 30-40 per cent most typically reported by other field presences. Particular problems are clearly experienced in some activities targeting specific professional groups where women can be excluded, or represent less than 10 per cent of those participating in activities designed for prison officers or other law enforcement officials (including in some cases prosecutors or judges). Many field presences experienced difficulties reporting on the gender balance among participants and beneficiaries in their activities, as such data are not systematically collected and monitored.

38. The survey highlighted priority needs identified by the field presences to facilitate further improvement in gender mainstreaming. The most common requests were for relevant training to be provided to staff and for increased availability of simple tools and materials (including in local languages), closely followed by requests for additional experts on gender and women's rights to be included among the staff and for increased collaboration with partners that can facilitate action in this area. Interestingly, field presences that reported greater success in addressing women's rights and integrating gender perspectives were the only ones to give priority to mechanisms for gender review (of project proposals, reports, etc.). They were also the ones to note that, rather than providing gender training for all staff, a more useful way to build staff capacity is to ensure the inclusion of a critical number of staff members with significant expertise who can help other staff members develop capacity through their involvement in specific activities with adequate attention to gender and women's rights issues.

IV. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS AND ACTIVITIES

39. Commission on Human Rights resolutions strongly encourage Member States to promote gender balance by nominating more women candidates for appointment to United Nations bodies. However, gender balance continues to be a problem among individuals mandated to carry out the thematic and country-specific procedures of the Commission on Human Rights. As of February 2004, with two mandates awaiting nominations, only 2 of the 10 country mandates had women as mandate holders. Among the thematic mandates, 3 of the 5 members of one working group were women, and there were no women members for the other, and there were 7 women and 15 men among the special rapporteurs, independent experts and special representatives. Overall, the 12 women involved represent only slightly over one quarter of the 42 mandate-holders, a proportion that has not increased over the last year; women continue to be nominated to serve more frequently by the Eastern European Group of States and least frequently by the Western European and Other States Group.

40. Gender balance is greater among participants in the work of the Commission, where, overall, women represented more than 40 per cent of participants at the fifty-ninth session in 2003. Gender balance varies by type of participant, with women being more than 50 per cent of the delegates representing international organizations and non-governmental organizations and approximately one third of the delegates representing States members of the Commission and observer States. The proportion of women is also lower among dignitaries addressing the Commission (less than one fifth from Member States and none from United Nations bodies) and among delegates from national human rights institutions (one quarter). As States' delegations are more frequent speakers in the debates of the Commission than those of NGOs, the actual participation of women in the session tends to be lower than the proportion of women participants would suggest.

41. Seven of the 25 (28 per cent) members of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights who participated in the fifty-fourth session in 2003 were women (as were two out of the six alternates). Women represented a slightly lower percentage of participants in the session of the Sub-Commission than in that of the Commission, a difference reflected across all groups, with women representing less than one quarter of State delegations and slightly under half of delegations representing international and non-governmental organizations.

42. It is interesting to note that in 2003 both the Sub-Commission and the Commission sessions were chaired by women. Given the significant proportion of women involved in the work of these human rights bodies, in particular among the representatives of NGOs, it is intriguing to note the continuing gender imbalance among the experts nominated and elected by States to serve in the Commission's subsidiary bodies and special procedures.

43. There are striking imbalances in the composition of the membership of the treaty bodies. On the one hand, 7 men and 11 women are members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and 2 men and 21 women are members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. On the other hand, the Committee against Torture continued to have one woman and nine men among its members and the Human Rights Committee has 2 women and 16 men among its members.

44. The last election did improve the gender balance in the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as the number of women went from 2 to 4, and the number of men decreased from 16 to 14. For the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the 2004 election provided an interesting case study: the proportion of women nominated for election increased significantly as the request for nominations reminded States parties that Commission resolution 2003/44 had strongly encouraged States to nominate more women candidates. For the previous three elections, States parties had nominated 3 women among 17 candidates in 1998, 2 women among 13 candidates in 2000 and 1 woman among 14 candidates in 2002. For the 2004 election, they nominated 5 women among 18 candidates. The result of the election was less favourable, with 2 out of the 5 women and 7 out of the 13 men nominated having been elected. However, the number of women members of the Committee has increased from 1 to 2 (of the total of 18), and the nomination of more women candidates should lead in future to an increased gender balance in the membership.

45. Strikingly, there are only 2 women among the 10 members of the newly established Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Overall, women continue to represent only 37 per cent of treaty body members, an insignificant increase over 36 per cent one year ago; the imbalance in the new treaty body offset the number of women among the expanded membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the improved balance in the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Women continue to represent 78 per cent of the two treaty bodies dealing with women and children, while in the other five treaty bodies women represent less than 15 per cent of members, still an improvement over less than 12 per cent one year ago.

46. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations encourages indigenous organizations and communities applying for travel grants to consider gender balance; for the most recent cycle of travel grants, women represented 42 per cent of the 138 beneficiaries. For the much smaller United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, women benefited from seven of the eight travel grants.

47. Information is not collected systematically on gender balance among participants taking part in seminars, workshops, training courses, fellowship programmes, or other meetings organized by the Office, although greater efforts are being made to compile such information. As a general observation, women tend to be overrepresented in activities organized in Eastern Europe. Activities in Latin America tend to be approximately gender balanced, and there is often a slight majority of women among participants nominated by Governments (while men tend to be a slight majority among those representing national human rights institutions). The proportion of women participants is much lower when government and public officials in the Arab and West Asian regions gather. Women are also underrepresented in activities involving female participants in some regions (from approximately one third of participants in Eastern Asia to almost none in Western Asia). The overall participation of women in such activities can be distorted by the near absence of men from activities focusing on women's rights, while the representation of women appears to be much lower (typically ranging from almost none to one third) in activities targeting a particular professional group than in those involving participants from many disciplines. The number of women often increases when specific organizations can nominate more than one participant, and the gender imbalance can be striking (with many more women than men participating) in human rights capacity-building activities targeting United Nations agencies and bodies or among representatives of such bodies involved in joint activities with government and NGO participants. The proportion of women is also often smaller among experts leading the activities than among the rest of the participants.

48. For the indigenous fellowship programmes supported by the Office, gender balance tends to oscillate around parity. Among the interns, the balance reflects that among junior staff members, with women representing two thirds of the interns serving at the Office (30 out of 44 interns serving from January to December 2003).

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

49. The Commission and its subsidiary bodies and special procedures, as well as human rights treaty bodies, continue to take steps to address gender and women's rights issues in their human rights work. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is pursuing

implementation of its gender mainstreaming strategy. Assessment of the integration of women's human rights and gender perspectives into the technical cooperation activities of the Office and by the human rights field presences show a wide diversity, both in terms of efforts and of achievements. Additional efforts are still needed to ensure the thorough and systematic integration of the human rights of women and gender perspectives in the United Nations human rights system. **A similar preliminary assessment of the integration of gender and women's rights issues into other areas of work (such as normative, thematic or methodological activities) and consideration of the results by the Commission may be an important contribution to this process.**

50. In the framework of its gender mainstreaming strategy, the Office of the High Commissioner needs to increase further its efforts to ensure that gender perspectives and women's human rights issues are integrated into its activities, including in the technical assistance it can offer at the request of Member States. Human rights field presences are involved to differing extents in the promotion and protection of the rights of women. The provision of gender training for staff, availability of simple tools and materials, inclusion of gender and women's rights experts in human rights teams and increased collaboration with partners are perceived as key factors to improving gender mainstreaming. **More systematic monitoring of the integration of gender and women's rights into technical cooperation activities and those of the human rights field presences is also essential. The Commission may wish to consider that possibility.**

51. Women experts have often led treaty body efforts to integrate gender perspectives and human rights of women into their work. **The Commission may wish to reiterate the importance of the relevant provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action and of Commission resolutions, and invite the Secretary-General to bring gender trends in the membership of treaty bodies to the attention of States parties when inviting their nominations for the election of members. The Commission may also wish to reinforce its encouragement to States parties to consider the need for gender balance in the election, as well as the nomination, of treaty body members.**

52. The integration of gender perspectives and human rights of women in the work of special procedures appears to be facilitated also by the individual background and expertise of mandate-holders. **The Commission may wish to consider ways to ensure greater attention to gender balance and gender expertise in the designation of experts by the Commission or by its Chairperson.**

53. Increased participation of women in human rights activities can be an effective way to improve attention to women's rights. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that gender balance among participants and beneficiaries of the activities of the United Nations human rights system can vary greatly depending on the region, size of the meeting, role of organizers in selecting participants, or professional group targeted by each activity. **All relevant actors, including Governments, United Nations agencies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to work for more gender-balanced participation in human rights activities, including in technical cooperation projects. Systematic collection of data on the gender balance among participants in such activities may strengthen those efforts.**

Notes

¹ Available from the IASC web site at
<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/IASConGender.doc>.

² See Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.189/12).

³ See Cees Flinterman and Marcel Zwamborn, "From Development of Human Rights to Managing Human Rights Development: Global Review of the OHCHR Technical Cooperation Programme, Synthesis Report", Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SMI) in partnership with MEDE European Consultancy.

⁴ Please note that the self-assessment data collected through this informal survey is particularly representative for the field presences in the Eastern European and Central Asian regions, with a significant response rate also among the field presences in the Asian-Pacific and Arab regions. The data collected through the basic survey are less comprehensive for the field presences in Africa, and are particularly limited for those in Latin America.
