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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Proposals for a multi-year programme of work for the period 2010-2014 of the Commission on the Status of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolutions 1998/46 and 2006/9, provides an overview of the functioning of the working methods of the Commission during the period 2007-2009, including in the context of the strengthening of the Council, and proposes a multi-year programme of work for 2010-2014 for consideration by the Commission.



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I. Background

1. Since 1987, the Commission on the Status of Women has developed a multi-year programme of work. Following the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995,¹ and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/203, a multi-year programme of work for the period 1997-2000 was adopted, which took up a cluster of the Critical Areas of Concern from the Beijing Platform for Action at each session, in a focused and thematic approach (see Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/6). In 2001, the Commission developed a multi-year programme of work for the period 2002-2006, building on the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” (see General Assembly resolutions S-23/2 and S-27/3). At its fiftieth session, in 2006, the Commission, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/140, approved the multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2009 (see Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9).

2. The preparation of multi-year programmes of work is consistent with Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, in which the Council noted the importance of its functional commissions adopting a multi-year thematic programme, especially in relation to follow-up to major United Nations conferences.

3. In 2006, the Commission also revised its working methods, recognizing that the organization of its work should contribute to accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as called for in the Declaration adopted at the ten-year review and appraisal in 2005 (see Economic and Social Council decision 2005/232).

4. In order to ensure the effective functioning of the Commission in the context of the reform of the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/9, the Council requested the Commission to review its working methods in the light of the strengthening of the Council, and to discuss at its fifty-third session the possibility of conducting in 2010 a review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

5. The present report, prepared in accordance with Council resolutions 1998/46 and 2006/9, provides an overview of the functioning of the working methods of the Commission during the period 2007-2009, including in the context of the strengthening of the Council, and proposes a multi-year programme of work for 2010-2014 for consideration by the Commission.

II. Organization and methods of work of the Commission adopted in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9

6. The methods of work adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 2006 sought to enhance the focus of the Commission on national-level implementation

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.B), chap. I, resolution I, annexes I and II.

and provide increased opportunities for exchange of ideas, experiences, lessons learned and good practices at the national level through interactive activities with the participation of experts.

7. Under the revised methods of work, in Council resolution 2006/9, the Commission considers one priority theme at each session, with a negotiated outcome in the form of agreed conclusions. A variety of methods are used to ensure a sustained focus on the priority theme. The high-level round table focuses on experiences, lessons learned and good practices related to the priority theme, including results with supporting data. Ways and means to accelerate implementation of previous commitments with regard to the priority theme are addressed in two interactive expert panels. The general discussion on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly has an enhanced emphasis on implementation in relation to the priority theme.

8. The Secretary-General provides an analytical report on the priority theme, which includes reliable statistics, sex-disaggregated data and other quantitative and qualitative information to illustrate monitoring and reporting on implementation. To enhance its catalytic role, the Commission also considers progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes with a particular focus on the priority theme.

9. As an innovation in its revised working methods, the Commission's interactive expert dialogues review the implementation of agreed conclusions from previous sessions. The Bureau of the Commission, in consultation with regional groups, identifies emerging issues pertinent to gender equality and women's empowerment for consideration by the Commission.

10. At the request of the Commission, a panel event is organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women on the margins of each annual session, on the priority theme of the following session for Member States and other participants to engage in preliminary discussions on the theme.

Review of the implementation of the multi-year programme of work for 2007-2009 under the revised working methods of the Commission

11. To enhance the focus of the Commission on implementation, reviews of national-level implementation of the agreed conclusions on priority themes from previous sessions were undertaken through interactive expert dialogues. At its fifty-first session, in 2007, the Commission reviewed agreed conclusions on "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality", adopted at its forty-eighth session, and agreed conclusions on "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding", also adopted at the forty-eighth session, were reviewed by the Commission at its fifty-second session, in 2008. The review session at the fifty-third session, in 2009, will focus on the implementation of the agreed conclusions on "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels", adopted at the fiftieth session, in 2005. Moderators' summaries are prepared as outcomes of these interactive dialogues.

12. To strengthen its catalytic role, the agreed conclusions of the Commission on "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child",

adopted by the Commission at its fifty-first session, were transmitted by the Economic and Social Council to the commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (Economic and Social Council decision 2007/238). The agreed conclusions on “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”, adopted at the fifty-second session, in 2008, were transmitted through the Council as input to the preparations for and outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, in Doha in 2008 (Economic and Social Council decision 2008/235).

13. The agreed conclusions on the priority theme for the fifty-third session, in 2009, “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS”, are also expected to contribute to the Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Review on “Implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women” in 2010. Subsequently, they will be transmitted, through the Council, to the General Assembly for its comprehensive review in 2011 of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, entitled “Global Crisis — Global Action” (see General Assembly resolution S-26/2, annex).

14. At its fifty-first session, the Commission discussed the emerging issue of violence against women, in follow-up to the presentation of the in-depth study of the Secretary-General on violence against women at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly (A/61/122/Add.1) and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/143. The gender perspectives of the emerging global issue of climate change were addressed by the Commission at its fifty-second session. The emerging issue to be considered at the fifty-third session will be “The gender perspectives of the global financial crisis”. The outcomes of the interactive expert panels on emerging issues are moderators’ summaries.

15. By focusing on one priority theme instead of two, as in previous multi-year programmes of work, the Commission was able to have a more systematic and comprehensive consideration of the selected theme, with action-oriented recommendations as outcomes. The involvement of experts and the increased interaction between participants has significantly enhanced the substantive quality of discussions. The increased emphasis on implementation at the national level, including through these interactive events, has increased the exchange of ideas, experiences, lessons learned and good practices on progress made and on constraints and challenges identified at the national level.

16. The review of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on a priority theme from previous sessions through interactive dialogues has provided an important opportunity for the Commission to maintain a focus on policy recommendations previously adopted. The exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices enables the Commission to further monitor progress as well as gaps and challenges in these substantive areas at the national level and to promote accelerated implementation.

17. In response to the request of the Council for the broad dissemination of the agreed conclusions of the Commission, the Division for the Advancement of Women has prepared the agreed conclusions adopted at the fifty-first and fifty-second sessions in brochure form. This more user-friendly format has been broadly

disseminated both within and outside the United Nations. The agreed conclusions from previous sessions reviewed at the fifty-first and fifty-second sessions are also being made available in brochure form.

Measuring progress on implementation

18. As part of its revised methods of work, the Commission increased its focus on measurement of progress in implementation through statistics and indicators, including through enhanced collaboration with the Statistical Commission. Following the adoption of resolution 2006/9, consultations were held in 2006 with the secretariat for the Statistical Commission and other personnel in the United Nations Statistics Division in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the process involved in the development of indicators on the priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women and the possible involvement of the Statistical Commission. The Statistical Commission first discussed the modalities of the collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women on indicators at its thirty-eighth session, in 2007.

19. In order to benefit from the technical expertise of the Statistical Commission, a joint parallel event, co-chaired by the Vice-Chairpersons of the two Commissions, was organized during the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women to discuss the further development of indicators to assess progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Vice-Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women highlighted the strengthened focus of the Commission on national-level implementation and the need for statistics and indicators to more effectively and systematically review progress. The Vice-Chairperson of the Statistical Commission provided information on the purpose of indicators; the importance of fully utilizing any existing indicators; the process of adopting further indicators at the global level; and the importance of the availability of reliable, comparable statistics for measuring indicators. The panel discussion highlighted that, in initiating the development of indicators, the Commission on the Status of Women, as the users of statistics and indicators on gender equality, had to first identify priority areas for the development of indicators; the Statistical Commission could then provide technical expertise in identifying appropriate data and relevant sources.²

20. The Expert Group Meetings on the priority themes organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women prior to the annual sessions of the Commission under the current multi-year programme of work considered the need for indicators to facilitate measurement of progress in implementation. In preparation for the Commission's fifty-first session, the Expert Group Meeting in 2006 identified indicators for monitoring progress on ending discrimination and violence against girls.³ At the Expert Group Meeting in 2007 on the priority theme for the fifty-second session of the Commission on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women", indicators were proposed on trade, macroeconomic

² Joint Parallel Event of the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women, 1 March 2007, moderators' summary.

³ Report of the Expert Group Meeting on elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, 25-28 September 2006 (EGM/Girl Child/2006/REPORT).

policy and public finances.⁴ The Expert Group Meeting on “Equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS”, organized in 2008, discussed indicators on, inter alia, men’s involvement in caregiving, family-friendly policies, and reconciling work and family life.⁵

21. A useful model for the development of indicators, involving close collaboration between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission, has been developed on the issue of violence against women. In 2007 at its fifty-first session, the Commission on the Status of Women considered violence against women as its emerging theme. In order to support the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission in developing indicators on violence against women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and the regional commissions, organized an Expert Group Meeting in Geneva in October 2007. The Expert Group Meeting proposed a set of five global indicators for measuring violence against women, covering physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence and certain harmful practices (female genital mutilation and early marriage).

22. In paragraph 17 of its resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly invited the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions to discuss, by 2008, within their respective mandates, the question of violence against women in all its forms and manifestations. In follow-up to the resolution, the Commission on the Status of Women held a joint panel discussion with the Statistical Commission during its fifty-second session, in 2008, to consider the development of indicators on violence against women.⁶ The discussions built on the outcome of the Expert Group Meeting on indicators on violence against women in October 2007.⁷

23. At its thirty-ninth session, in 2008, in its decision 39/116, the Statistical Commission established a Friends of the Chair group to conduct an in-depth review of proposed indicators to measure violence against women and requested the group to report back to the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session in 2009. The action by the Statistical Commission was welcomed by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-second session. The Friends of the Chair group of the Statistical Commission has prepared an interim report which will be submitted for action at the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission, in 2009. It is anticipated that the Statistical Commission, on the basis of the report, will advise the Commission on the Status of Women on further actions.

24. Discussions with the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and within the Bureau of the

⁴ Report of the Expert Group Meeting on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, 4-7 September 2007 (EGM/FFGE/2007/REPORT).

⁵ Report of the Expert Group Meeting on equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS, 6-9 October 2008 (to be issued).

⁶ Fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women and thirty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission, Joint dialogue on indicators to measure violence against women, 28 February 2008, moderators’ summary (see website at: un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw).

⁷ Report of the Expert Group Meeting on indicators to measure violence against women, 8 to 10 October 2007 (idem).

Commission on the Status of Women, have indicated that the development of indicators is complex, time-consuming and resource-demanding. It should involve consultation processes between “users” and “producers” of statistics at all levels, starting at the global level with strengthened collaboration between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission.

25. It has been suggested that the logical sequence for development of indicators would be to: (a) carry out analyses of the current situation, including gaps and challenges, through the reports of the Secretary-General on the priority theme; (b) share experiences, lessons learned and good practices in the interactive dialogues organized on the theme during the annual sessions; (c) adopt agreed conclusions containing new policy recommendations in areas where further progress is needed; and (d) on the basis of these agreed conclusions, identify one or more priority areas where further indicators would be useful to support the Commission in monitoring progress in implementation at the national level.

26. The subsequent process of developing the indicators would require participation of experts and a consultation process between both users and producers of statistics, preferably through an Expert Group Meeting. Following technical endorsement by the Statistical Commission, the proposal for new indicators could be presented and discussed at the Commission on the Status of Women when the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the priority themes is reviewed three years after their adoption. The new indicators could then support further systematic monitoring and reporting on progress by the Commission on the Status of Women.

III. Review of the working methods of the Commission in the context of the reform of the Economic and Social Council

27. Since 2000, the Commission has had a standing agenda item: “Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions”. In response to Council resolution 2001/27, the Commission has provided, since 2002, a substantive input to the high-level segment of the Council. The inputs provided overviews of the policy recommendations adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women and other relevant intergovernmental bodies on the themes being considered at the high-level segment. In addition, in an effort to enhance its catalytic role in gender mainstreaming, since 2002, the Commission has transmitted its outcomes, through the Economic and Social Council, to relevant intergovernmental bodies. For example, in 2007, the agreed conclusions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child was transmitted to the commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (Economic and Social Council decision 2007/238) and the 2008 agreed conclusions on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women were transmitted as input into the preparations for and outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development in Doha (Economic and Social Council decision 2008/235).

28. In 2006, the General Assembly decided on specific actions to strengthen the functioning of the Economic and Social Council. In its resolution 61/16, the Assembly decided to maintain the current segment structure of the substantive session of the Council, and to hold a biennial Development Cooperation Forum in alternate years and an Annual Ministerial Review as part of its high-level segment.

29. The purpose of the Annual Ministerial Review is to assess progress made towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the other goals and targets agreed at major United Nations conferences and summits. It seeks to contribute to scaling up and accelerating action to realize the development agenda by serving as a global high-level forum with broad-based participation, where lessons learned are exchanged and successful practices and approaches are identified. The Annual Ministerial Review consists of three main elements: a global review of the United Nations development agenda, a thematic review, and a series of national voluntary presentations by both developing and developed countries on their progress in implementing internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

30. The biennial Development Cooperation Forum aims to review trends in international development cooperation, including strategies, policies and financing; promote greater coherence in the activities of different development partners; and strengthen the normative and operational link in the work of the United Nations. The first Development Cooperation Forum was held in 2008, the next will take place in 2010.

31. As requested by the General Assembly, in 2007, the Economic and Social Council invited its functional commissions, in accordance with their respective mandates, to provide input to the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. Under its standing agenda item on "Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions", the Commission provided input to the Annual Ministerial Review of the 2007 High-level Segment in the form of a conference room paper on "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development". In 2008, the Commission contributed to the Annual Ministerial Review on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development". The Commission's inputs provided overviews of the existing policy recommendations on the promotion of gender equality in relation to the themes addressed by the Annual Ministerial Reviews. In this manner, the Commission continues to strengthen its catalytic role in promoting the incorporation of gender perspectives in the formulation and implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

32. The Council has again invited functional commissions to contribute to the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review and has suggested holding expert panels related to the theme of global public health during the annual sessions of the functional commissions. The outcomes of these panels would be transmitted to the Council's 2009 Annual Ministerial Review.⁸ The Commission on the Status of Women has decided to hold an expert panel on the gender perspectives on global health during its fifty-third session and to submit the outcome to the Council as input to the Annual Ministerial Review.

33. The adoption of the multi-year programme of work of the Economic and Social Council (decision 2008/258), which identified the themes for the 2010 and 2011 Annual Ministerial Reviews, provides an opportunity for the Commission to strengthen the alignment of its work programme with that of the Council. In 2010, the Annual Ministerial Review will focus on "Implementing the internationally

⁸ Letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council, 12 November 2008.

agreed development goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women”. The theme for the Annual Ministerial Review in 2011 is “Implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to education”.

34. **The Commission may wish to continue to provide substantive inputs and to organize an interactive expert panel on the theme of the Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Reviews at each of its annual sessions. As the Commission decides on its own priority themes for future sessions, it may also wish to consider how it can contribute to the Annual Ministerial Reviews. The Commission may decide, for example, as the global intergovernmental body responsible for gender equality and the empowerment of women, to make a significant contribution to the Council’s work in 2010 on the theme: “Implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women”. It may further decide to link its priority theme for 2011 to the Annual Ministerial Review theme of “Implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to education”.**

IV. Possibility of a review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2010

35. In its resolution 48/5, the Commission on the Status of Women decided that the ten-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, in 2005, would be carried out through the expanded use of interactive dialogue, with broad-based participation of governmental delegations at the highest level of responsibility and expertise and of civil society and organizations within the United Nations system. The review emphasized sharing of experiences and good practices on efforts to overcome the remaining challenges of implementation.

36. The Economic and Social Council also decided that the Commission should convene a high-level plenary meeting at its forty-ninth session, open to the participation of all States Members and Observers of the United Nations, on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and requested the Commission (Economic and Social Council decision 2004/309) to transmit its outcome, through the Council to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, including to the high-level event of the General Assembly on the review of the Millennium Declaration. At its forty-ninth session, the Commission adopted as the outcome of the ten-year review and appraisal a Declaration which called for accelerated implementation.⁹

37. Review and appraisal processes for the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are being organized in all regions by the regional commissions. A common questionnaire has been developed to solicit information from Member States, which will be compiled into regional reports for presentation at review meetings in the regional intergovernmental bodies in all

⁹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7 (E/2005/27-E/CN.6/2005/11)*, chap. I.A.

regions in 2009 and early 2010, and subsequently to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fourth session, in 2010.

38. The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to consider organizing a review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at its fifty-fourth session, in 2010, similar to the ten-year review and commemoration process at its forty-ninth session, in 2005. The Commission may wish to further consider a strong regional focus in the fifteen-year review and commemoration to ensure that the regional reviews and outcomes of the regional-level intergovernmental processes are given adequate attention, in line with mandates encouraging increased regional focus in the work of the Commission.¹⁰ The Commission may wish to decide that it will hold a high-level plenary meeting and transmit the outcome to the Annual Ministerial Review in Economic and Social Council, and through the Council, to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session and the proposed Millennium Development Goals Review Summit to be convened in 2010.

V. Preparation of the multi-year programme of work for 2010-2014

39. To identify possible priority themes for the Commission for 2010-2014, the Division for the Advancement of Women reviewed information from a number of sources. These include reports of the Secretary-General on the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” and the ten-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the Assembly (E/CN.6/2005/2 and Corr.1). Other sources include agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission since 1996, the Millennium Declaration and the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, and outcomes of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly and other relevant intergovernmental bodies, as well as the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Statements by Member States in the Commission on the Status of Women and the Third Committee of the General Assembly were also used.

40. Informal consultations were held with the United Nations Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women. Forthcoming United Nations meetings, conferences and summits were reviewed to identify where the Commission could provide input and where the Commission could strengthen its catalytic role and enhance collaboration with other bodies.

¹⁰ Economic and Social Council resolutions 2006/9, paragraph 15; 1998/45, annex II, paragraph 41; and 1998/46, annex III, paragraph 16.

Proposal for substantive themes for the multi-year programme of work for the period 2010-2014

41. The following multi-year programme of priority themes for the period 2010-2014 is proposed.¹¹

2010: Fifty-fourth session of the Commission

Review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

To provide inputs to the Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Review on “Implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women” in 2010 and to the proposed Millennium Development Goals Review Summit to be convened in 2010

2011: Fifty-fifth session of the Commission

“Women and girls in science and technology: Increasing opportunities in education, research and employment”

(to be reviewed at the fifty-fifth session, in 2014)

2012: Fifty-sixth session of the Commission

“The empowerment of rural women, in relation to climate change and food security”

(to be reviewed at the fifty-seventh session, in 2016)

2013: Fifty-seventh session of the Commission

“Addressing stereotypes which constrain the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, including in decision-making”

(to be reviewed at the fifty-eighth session, in 2017)

2014: Fifty-eighth session of the Commission “Prevention of violence against women and girls”

(to be reviewed at the fifty-ninth session, in 2018).

42. The following review themes are proposed:

2010: Review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

2011: “The elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against the girl child” (from the fifty-first session, in 2007)

¹¹ See the annex to the present document for more detailed rationales for the proposed priority themes for 2010-2014.

2012: “Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women” (from the fifty-second session, in 2008)

2013: “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS” (from the fifty-third session, in 2009)

2014: “Women and girls in science and technology: Increasing opportunities in education, research and employment” (from the fifty-fifth session, in 2011).

43. In accordance with Council resolution 2006/9, prior to each session the Bureau of the Commission, in consultation with all States through their regional groups, will identify an emerging issue for consideration by the Commission, taking into account developments at the global and regional levels, as well as planned activities within the United Nations, where increased attention to gender perspectives and the situation of women and girls is required.

Annex

Justification for proposals for substantive priority themes in the multi-year programme for 2010-2014

2010: Review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

2011: Women and girls in science and technology: Increasing opportunities in education, research and employment

There is increasing recognition that science, technology and innovation are the basis for economic growth, development and poverty eradication. It is also acknowledged that there are significant gender inequalities in relation to access to and benefits from science and technology. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, women make up less than 30 per cent of researchers in 34 out of 89 countries surveyed, and only 17-18 per cent of countries have gender parity in employment in science and technology research. This is attributed to the gender gap in scientific fields in education, particularly at the higher levels.^a When women do take up careers in science and technology, their professional progress is slower and they rarely hold high-level decision-making positions.^b

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that science curricula are gender-biased and that girls are often deprived of basic education in mathematics and science and technical training that would enhance their employment opportunities.^c Governments were called upon to provide information to women and girls on the availability and benefits of vocational training, training programmes in science and technology and programmes of continuing education (para. 82 (c)). The Platform called for positive measures to increase the proportion of women gaining access to educational policy- and decision-making, particularly women teachers at all levels of education and in academic disciplines that are traditionally male-dominated, such as the scientific and technological fields (para. 83 (d)).

In paragraph 6 of its agreed conclusions 1997/4 on education and training of women, the Commission on the Status of Women noted that in order to enhance the employability of women, basic education and vocational qualifications in science and technology were of great importance. In paragraph 13 of the agreed conclusions, the Commission called for the promotion of girls' and women's participation in fields where they are underrepresented, such as science, engineering and technology.

In paragraph 40 of the annex to its resolution S-23/3, the outcome document of its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly called for women's equal access to adequate training in all fields; support of girls' education in science, mathematics and new technologies; and encouragement of women, including through career

^a UNESCO, *Institute of Statistics Bulletin on Science and Technology Statistics*, Issue No. 3, November 2006.

^b UNESCO website: Women and science, http://portal.unesco.org/science/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3597&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

^c Beijing Platform, paragraph 75.

advising, to seek employment in high growth and high-wage sectors and jobs. The Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in 2003 encouraged Governments, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to formulate information and communication technology policies fostering women's participation. It also emphasized that gender barriers to information and communication technologies education and training should be removed and equal training opportunities in ICT-related fields promoted for women and girls.^d

The Commission has never addressed women and girls in science and technology as a priority theme. It considered this theme in a limited manner within the context of women and the environment (1997), women and the economy (1997), and education and training of women (1997). A focus on women and girls in science and technology would allow the Commission to consider in particular the Critical Areas of Concern on education and training, women and the economy, women and poverty, women and the media (ICT), and the girl child. Issues to be addressed include access to and benefits from education and training, employment, and research opportunities, including in relation to ICT, and women's role in decision-making in science and technology.

In considering this priority theme, the Commission would have the opportunity to provide substantive input to the 2011 Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Review on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education". Consideration of this theme would also allow for follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and the agreed conclusions of the Commission on "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women", adopted at its forty-seventh session, in 2004. It would further provide an important opportunity for the Commission to strengthen its collaboration with the Commission for Science and Technology.

To ensure a strong substantive discussion on the priority theme, Member States would be encouraged to include in their delegations representatives of relevant line ministries, including in the areas of education and research and the labour market, with knowledge and experience on the educational, research and employment aspects of science and technology, including ICT.

2012: The empowerment of rural women, in relation to climate change and food security

Explicit attention to contributions of rural women as well as to their needs and priorities is critical in the context of ongoing discussions on climate change and the food and energy crises. The first observance of the International Day of Rural Women on 15 October 2008 reinforced the need to address the empowerment of rural women in a comprehensive manner.

In many parts of the world, women in rural areas play critical roles in food crop production and livestock care, as well as in off-farm activities which are essential to ensure sustainable livelihoods and household food security. Despite this, many rural

^d Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society 2003.

women face persistent inequalities in access to land and property rights, credit for land and water improvements, and essential agricultural inputs.

Women make up a large number of the poor in rural communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood and are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate change, and the resulting drought, uncertain rainfall and deforestation. Women's limited access to resources and decision-making processes increases their vulnerability to climate change. Women are effective agents of change and have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies.

In paragraph 58 (n) of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in paragraph 94 (e) of its resolution S-23/3, called for measures to improve women's access to and control over land, appropriate infrastructure and technology to increase income and promote household food security, enhance access to and control over resources and credit schemes, services and benefits, and promote their empowerment. In 2007, the General Assembly, in paragraph 2 (e) of its resolution 63/136, called for the integration of a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development policies and programmes, including budget policies, paying increased attention to the needs of rural women, to ensure that they benefit from policies and programmes adopted in all spheres and that the disproportionate number of rural women living in poverty is reduced. In paragraph 2 (b), the General Assembly called for the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, including through pursuing the political and socio-economic empowerment of rural women and supporting their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development noted that "enhancing the role of women at all levels and in all aspects of rural development, agriculture, nutrition and food security is imperative".^e At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders reaffirmed that "food security and rural and agricultural development must be adequately and urgently addressed in the context of national development and response strategies... [and that] rural and agricultural development should be an integral part of national and international development policies." They highlighted issues that particularly affect women living in rural areas, such as guaranteeing the right of women to own and inherit property, ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women, and ensuring equal access for women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology.

In paragraph 7 (e) of the agreed conclusions on "Environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters" of its forty-sixth session, in 2002, the Commission on the Status of Women called for mainstreaming a gender perspective into ongoing research on the impact of climate change, natural hazards, disasters and related environmental vulnerability, including their root causes, and encouraged the application of the results of this research to policies and programmes.

The Commission on the Status of Women considered rural women as a priority theme at its thirty-second session, in 1988. Since then, it has briefly raised the

^e *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

situation of rural women within the context of poverty eradication (1996, 2002), violence against women (1998, 2003), education and training (1999, 2006), the economy (1997, 2006) and decision-making (1997, 2006, 2008). The Commission considered the gender perspectives of climate change as the emerging issue at its fifty-second session, in 2008.

By focusing on the empowerment of rural women, the Commission would address many of the Critical Areas of Concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, including women and poverty, women and the environment, women and the economy, human rights, violence against women, and women in power and decision-making. Issues covered would include climate change, food security, the energy crisis, agricultural and rural development, poverty eradication, and sustainable development.

By focusing on this topic, the Commission would contribute to ongoing discussions on the Second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020), and the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" (2005-2015). In addition, the outcome could contribute to the preparation for the review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. The outcome of the Commission would directly contribute to the International Day of Rural Women in 2012 and to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its twentieth session, in 2012, focused on forests, biodiversity and biotechnology. In addition, in considering this theme, the Commission could follow up on the outcome of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in 2009.

To ensure a strong substantive discussion on the priority theme, Member States would be encouraged to include in their delegations representatives of relevant line ministries, including in the areas of rural development and agriculture, as well as experts with knowledge and experience on food security, energy and climate change.

2013: Addressing stereotypes which constrain the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, including in decision-making

Stereotypes are increasingly raised as a significant constraint to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all policy areas. In discussions in the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly, Member States have raised the question of the impact of stereotypical attitudes and practices and the need to explicitly address them. Concerns about stereotypes have also been raised by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Stereotypical gender roles perpetuate unequal power relations between women and men, resulting in unequal access to rights and privileges and discrimination against women and girls, including unequal sharing of responsibilities and inequalities in access to resources and decision-making. Gender stereotypes are entrenched in social and cultural norms and institutionalized in the law, political structures and social and economic policies.

The Beijing Platform for Action (para. 72) called for the creation of a social environment where educational resources promote non-stereotyped images of women and men, effective in the elimination of the causes of discrimination against women and inequalities between women and men. Governments were urged to raise awareness of the responsibility of the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men (paras. 124 (k) and 125 (j)). The outcome document of the twenty-

third special session of the General Assembly (para. 27) identified prevailing gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes as a continuous threat to women's enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and called for the removal of stereotypes in education curricula and the development of policies and programmes, particularly for men and boys (paras. 95 (a) and 82).

Since 1995, the Commission on the Status of Women has raised the issue of the persistence of gender stereotypes in its agreed conclusions on priority themes, such as the girl child (2007), participation in development (2006), the role of men and boys (2004), HIV/AIDS and health (2001), education and training, economy, decision-making, and environment (1997) and media (1996). In its agreed conclusions on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels (2006), the Commission called for the political will to recognize women's role in development in all spheres of life, to promote gender equality and favour the participation of women in decision-making positions.

The General Assembly has also addressed the issue of stereotypes in relation to violence against women, education, the media and employment. For example, in paragraph 16 (d) of its resolution 63/154 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly urged States to adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women. In its follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Assembly in its resolution 63/155 recommended the removal of gender stereotypes in education, the media and employment.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in article 5 (a), requires States parties to modify social and cultural patterns of men and women to eliminate practices based on the idea of sex role stereotyping or the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes. In its concluding comments, the Committee also regularly calls on States parties to take action to eliminate stereotypes.

The Commission has never discussed stereotypes as a priority theme and has only briefly raised this issue in the context of other priority themes. By focusing on this topic, the Commission would consider the role of stereotypes in hindering implementation of all the Critical Areas of Concern. Issues covered would include the socialization of children, the education system, the labour market, the role of men and boys and the importance of the media.

The Commission's outcome on this topic would provide input into preparations for the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2015 and the review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. The outcome could also contribute to the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to end violence against women" (2008-2015).

To ensure a strong substantive discussion on the priority theme, Member States would be encouraged to include in their delegations representatives of relevant line ministries, including in the areas of education, information and communication, as well as experts with a strong focus on advocacy, awareness-raising and the media.

2014: Prevention of violence against women and girls

Since the launch of the Secretary-General's "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women", there has been a significant acceleration of efforts to address all forms of violence against women. Most notably, the General Assembly adopted two comprehensive and action-oriented resolutions, 61/143 and 63/154, and the Security Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security as a complement to resolution 1325 (2000). The Economic and Social Council and several functional commissions, including the Commission on the Status of Women, are actively contributing to this work. In February 2008, the Secretary-General launched his campaign "UNiTE to end violence against women, 2008-2015", and Member States, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations are making contributions towards achieving the Campaign's five key outcomes.

While the question of prevention of violence against women has been a part of all these efforts, to date this issue has not been addressed in a systematic or focused manner. While different strategies seek to reduce and prevent violence against women, the impact of such efforts is rarely evaluated, and the linkages between prevention measures and the actual reduction of violence against women remain poorly understood. Consideration of the question of prevention of violence against women will provide an opportunity for enhancing a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing all forms of violence against women that encompasses prevention, prosecution, protection and services for victims. It will contribute to the expanding knowledge base of good and promising practices in prevention.

Strategies to address violence against women increasingly place emphasis on the need for prevention, such as primary prevention, i.e., stopping violence before it occurs; secondary prevention, i.e., an immediate response after violence has occurred to limit its extent and consequences; and tertiary prevention, i.e., long-term care and support for those who have suffered violence (Study of the Secretary-General, page 121). The Beijing Platform for Action (para. 124) called on Governments to take a series of integrated measures to prevent violence against women. While in the outcome document of its twenty-third special session the General Assembly (resolution S-23/3, para. 13) acknowledged achievements in preventing violence against women, it also noted significant remaining obstacles (ibid., para. 14). The General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women have regularly called for preventive measures, as part of a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women.

The Commission on the Status of Women considered the question of violence against women as a priority theme in 1998. It addressed the question again in 2003, without adopting an outcome. The Commission also considered "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" as the priority theme and violence against women as an emerging issue at its fifty-first session, in 2007.

Consideration of this theme would constitute follow-up to several Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, and in particular the areas of violence against women, human rights of women and women and armed conflict. It would also contribute to follow-up in other areas, including on poverty (addressing women's poverty and lack of empowerment as part of prevention efforts); the economy (prevention of violence against women and harassment in the workplace); education and training (prevention of violence against women and girls in educational settings, addressing stereotypes); health (the role of the health-care

system in preventing violence against women); power and decision-making (violence against women as an obstacle to women's participation in public life and decision-making); the media (the role of the media in awareness-raising; portrayal of women and stereotypes); and the girl child (including follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the fifty-first session).

Consideration of the question of prevention of violence against women should include assessing the current approach of States to prevention of violence against women, including through legislation, policies, awareness-raising and social mobilization, education and training, as well as the impact of mechanisms in place for those purposes. Good and promising practices should be highlighted. Attention should be given to opportunities and different approaches for violence prevention in a range of sectors, including the education, health and security sectors.

The outcome of the consideration of this theme would constitute a significant substantive contribution to the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to end violence against women" (which will conclude in 2015), and in particular to outcome 4, "Increased public awareness and social mobilization to prevent and end violence against women and girls". Consideration of the question of prevention of violence against women would also constitute a contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (target date 2015), as it is now generally recognized that such violence impedes the social and economic development of communities and States, as well as the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (see General Assembly resolution 61/143). In considering this theme, the Commission would also follow up on its agreed conclusions on "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child".

To ensure a strong substantive discussion on the priority theme, Member States would be encouraged to include in their delegations representatives of relevant line ministries, including in the areas of education and health, as well as experts with a strong focus on prevention of violence against women and girls through, for example, advocacy, awareness-raising, media relations and training.
