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Commission on the Status of Women**Sixtieth session**

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Discussion guide for the ministerial round tables to be held under the priority theme “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2015/6, on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council decided that the session of the Commission would include a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, and that the segment would include ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues.

2. Further to that decision, it is proposed that, at its sixtieth session, the Commission hold ministerial round tables to provide ministers with opportunities for high-level engagement on key issues arising under the priority theme of the session, namely, “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”.

* E/CN.6/2016/1.



II. Organizational matters

A. Theme and topics

3. Under the priority theme “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”, the Commission will hold four ministerial round tables, on the following topics:

(a) Enhancing national institutional arrangements for gender equality and women’s empowerment;

(b) Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks for gender equality and women’s empowerment;

(c) Financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(d) Fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis.

4. The ministerial round tables should focus on an exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the proposed topics. Ministers will be encouraged to look ahead at realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights at a time when Member States are developing ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Ministers will be encouraged to highlight the steps and measures that are necessary and planned to ensure that national responses effectively contribute to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, and to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

B. Participants

5. The ministerial round tables provide ministers attending the sixtieth session of the Commission with the opportunity to engage in dialogue and discussion. They will be open to all Member States and observers.

6. Ministers are invited to communicate, in advance and preferably by no later than 29 February 2016, the ministerial round table in which they would prefer to participate, with one back-up option. Approximately 15 to 20 ministers are expected to participate in each round table. The Chairs will have a list of ministers who have signed up for each round table, but no list of speakers will be prepared in advance.

C. Times and locations

7. The ministerial round tables will be held at Headquarters in New York on Monday, 14 March 2016, from 3 to 6 p.m., at the times and locations set out below:

<i>Round table</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>
Enhancing national institutional arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment	3-4.30 p.m.	Conference Room 4
Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment	4.30-6 p.m.	Conference Room 4
Financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda	3-4.30 p.m.	Conference Room 1
Fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis	4.30-6 p.m.	Conference Room 1

8. The Chairs of the ministerial round tables, supported by a moderator, will guide the discussion with a view to promoting interactivity. Interventions shall not exceed three minutes, and an emphasis shall be placed on dialogue. Ministers will be encouraged to ask questions and comment on interventions made during the dialogue. Time permitting, Ministers may be given the opportunity to make more than one intervention. Written statements are strongly discouraged.

D. Outcome

9. The outcomes of the ministerial round tables will be in the form of Chairs' summaries.

III. Items for discussion in the ministerial round tables

A. Background

10. The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2016 has as its priority theme "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". The context for the session is shaped by the twentieth anniversary and global review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (see [E/CN.6/2015/3](#)); the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development ([A/RES/69/313](#), annex); and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([A/RES/70/1](#)).

11. Gender equality considerations are reflected in an integrated manner throughout the 2030 Agenda, including in the declaration, goals and targets, means of implementation, global partnership and follow-up and review. They are critical for its achievement: realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets (*ibid.*, para. 20). Goal 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, includes six substantive targets and three means of implementation targets that go well beyond the single target of Millennium Development Goal 3, to eliminate gender disparities in all levels of education by 2015. In addition to the Goal 5

targets, those under other Goals cover a comprehensive set of issues. Among them are the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, cities, climate change, peaceful and inclusive societies, and data. They usefully expand on the more limited focus of the Millennium Development Goals and their uneven results in gender equality terms (see [E/CN.6/2014/3](#)). The Sustainable Development Goals are well positioned to produce results for women and girls.

12. The gender dimensions of sustainable development are well reflected in Goal 5 and in the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Target 5.1 requires the end of all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Target 5.2 requires the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, in both the private and public spheres, and target 5.3 the elimination of harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Target 5.4 refers to the recognition and valuing of unpaid care and domestic work. Going beyond the parliamentary representation indicator of Millennium Development Goal 3, target 5.5 demands women's full and effective participation, including equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Target 5.6 concerns universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Structural inequalities in access to resources and asset ownership are addressed in target 5.a through reforms to ensure equal rights for women to economic resources, including land. Targets 5.b and 5.c link women's empowerment to the use of technology and the strengthening of policies and laws for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

13. Gender equality considerations are mainstreamed throughout the framework. This is reflected, for example, under Goal 1, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. Targets 1.2, 1.4 and 1.b cover, respectively, reducing by half the proportion of men, women and children living in poverty; ensuring that poor men and women have access to economic and natural resources, including land, and basic and financial services; and enabling pro-poor and gender-sensitive policies and investment. Under Goal 8, on economic growth, employment and decent work, target 8.5 concerns full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value. Under Goal 11, on safe, sustainable cities, target 11.7 requires universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities. These gender-sensitive targets are necessary but not sufficient. The entire 2030 Agenda must deliver for women and girls through gender-responsive implementation.

14. The 2030 Agenda provides a key opportunity to make critical investments in gender-responsive sustainable development in transparent, accountable and measurable ways. As the international community begins implementing the new universal agenda for sustainable development, the enabling conditions for realizing gender equality and women's empowerment and human rights must be enhanced. The scale and ambition of the new Agenda call for transformative financing and strengthened partnerships, policies and institutions, to ensure implementation.

15. In the Political Declaration of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States were urged to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The year 2030

was set as the date for realizing gender equality and women's empowerment (see [E/2015/27](#)). In its first session following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Commission on the Status of Women has a unique opportunity to generate further momentum for the implementation of a gender-responsive 2030 Agenda.

16. During the round tables, ministers will be invited to discuss the questions below and to focus on what needs to be done to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to realize gender equality and women's empowerment. Ministers are encouraged to identify what will work, what needs to be done and who will take the required steps and measures. Ministers are also encouraged to make use of the present discussion guide and to consult the report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly ([E/CN.6/2015/3](#)).

B. Discussion guide

Enhancing national institutional arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment

17. Given the breadth and scope of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all parts of government will be involved in the implementation thereof. Gender-responsive institutional arrangements should be facilitated across all branches and sectors of government to ensure that decision-making, policy action and budgeting reflect gender considerations and benefit all women and girls. Consistent and coherent gender mainstreaming should build on existing institutional structures and mechanisms. In some contexts, however, new institutional instruments such as a cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder consultative body or a national steering committee will need to be established.

18. Gender equality mechanisms should be revitalized and strengthened to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda horizontally across sectors and in a decentralized fashion to reach the subnational and local levels. Gender focal points or working groups in line ministries should be supported and coordinated. Decentralized gender equality mechanisms in provincial, municipal and local governments will be indispensable to ensure coordinated implementation on the ground. Mechanisms for consultation with women's civil society organizations and gender equality experts should also be strengthened. Increased funding and support for gender equality mechanisms are necessary to improve policy coordination and gender mainstreaming across sectors and ministries, facilitation of policy and legal reform, cooperation with non-governmental actors, and reporting and accountability.

19. Ministers are urged to discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) What examples of national institutional arrangements across all branches and sectors of government exist to ensure that decision-making, policy action and budgeting reflect gender concerns and benefit all women and girls?

(b) How can the technical and strategic capacity, decision-making power and visibility of national gender equality mechanisms be strengthened and expanded?

(c) How can gender mainstreaming be enhanced to ensure that all levels and sectors of government are involved in implementing the 2030 Agenda with equal attention across goals and targets?

Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment

20. Normative, legal and policy frameworks that are conducive to the implementation of the gender dimensions of the 2030 Agenda should be based on existing commitments to gender equality and women's human rights in national laws and policies. These include international norms and standards, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Thus States, as duty-bearers, should ensure that gender-responsive and non-discriminatory laws, policies and planning and budgetary processes are in place.

21. While the constitutions and laws of most countries contain gender equality provisions, discriminatory legal barriers to realizing women's empowerment and human rights persist across sectors and should be eliminated. For example, a recent World Bank report¹ highlights the persistence of gender-based discrimination in law. Of the 173 countries reviewed, 155 have at least one law impeding women's economic opportunities, which are also related to disparities in economic outcomes. Discriminatory legal provisions are associated with fewer girls attending secondary school relative to boys, fewer women working or running businesses and a wider gender wage gap. Similarly, inadequate legal and policy frameworks, coupled with discriminatory cultural norms and practices, impede women's access to, and control over, land and other productive resources. Such provisions necessitate immediate action in order to eliminate gender-based discrimination, as required by the 2030 Agenda.

22. Countries are engaged in exercises to align their national development plans and strategies with the 2030 Agenda, and gender perspectives must be integrated into this process. In addition, existing gender equality and mainstreaming policies, strategies and action plans at all levels should be reviewed and integrated with national sustainable development planning and programming. Full attention to the gender dimensions of the 2030 Agenda must be reflected in national sustainable development plans and strategies.

23. Ministers are urged to discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) What are the key lessons learned and good practices identified as a result of the implementation of existing national development strategies, plans and policies? How can we build on this progress to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through the 2030 Agenda?

(b) How can normative, legal and policy frameworks be enhanced to create an enabling environment for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment?

(c) What steps need to be taken to ensure that gender perspectives are fully integrated into national sustainable development plans and strategies?

¹ World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal* (Washington, D.C., 2015).

Financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

24. The importance of domestic resource mobilization for financing sustainable development is stressed in both the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. National and international tax policies shape the domestic resource base for achieving substantive equality for women in all countries. Both the distributional impact of taxation (direct, such as personal income and corporate taxes, and indirect, such as value-added, luxury and fuel taxes) and the overall level of tax revenues are relevant. They can work to redress gender gaps and advance substantive equality for women by supporting implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The level of taxes supports the ability of governments to generate financial resources for gender-responsive public investments.

25. Regarding domestic resource allocation, a number of policy options are available for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Public investment in physical and social infrastructure can promote gender equality, reduce women's unpaid care work, stimulate employment and lead to productivity growth. Public investment has the potential to stimulate income growth and expand the taxable income base. Targeted budget allocations can help redress gender inequalities and discrimination in the household, in women's asset ownership and in labour-market participation.

26. Official development assistance is a necessary counterpart to domestic resource mobilization for all developing countries, as recognized in the 2030 Agenda. Official development assistance is particularly important for addressing the persistent and chronic underinvestment in gender equality and women's empowerment. However, current levels of official development assistance are insufficient to realize gender equality and women's empowerment, and should be substantially increased.

27. All sources of funding for the 2030 Agenda, including South-South cooperation, funding from the private sector and philanthropy, should contribute to the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

28. Ministers should discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) What actions are necessary to enable Governments to generate sufficient financial resources for gender-responsive public investment?

(b) How can macroeconomic policies facilitate investment in public services, social protection and infrastructure for gender equality?

(c) How can official development assistance and other sources of funding be tracked and monitored for their contribution to gender equality?

Fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis

29. The scope and ambition of the 2030 Agenda pose huge data challenges. Existing sources of data are insufficient, and many countries, including developed countries with advanced statistical systems, currently lack the requisite statistical capacity to monitor all the Sustainable Development Goal targets. The data requirements for monitoring effectively the gender dimensions of the 2030 Agenda will be substantial and require significant investment and capacity-building to fill data gaps.

30. There are currently no widely comparable baseline data available in many areas, including women's access to energy, water and sanitation, and data on women's experience of poverty, hunger and land tenure security are limited. With regard to data on violence against women, the sources in most developing countries are the Demographic and Health Surveys, which collect data only for women and girls between 15 and 49 years of age. Other sources, including stand-alone surveys on violence against women, need to be developed in order to understand the true impact of violence against all women and girls, irrespective of age, particularly in the light of changing population structures. The data used to measure unpaid care work are similarly limited: only 75 countries have relevant data based on time-use surveys and very few countries have more than one survey to enable trend analysis. Significant technical and financial investments are needed to support national statistical systems in tackling these challenges and ensuring adequate monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. In order to ensure gender-responsive implementation and effective monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level, greater funding, support and capacity development are needed for national statistical offices and line ministries to (a) strengthen the policy, legal and financial environment to facilitate the production of gender statistics at the national level; (b) improve the regular production of gender statistics by providing countries with technical and financial support, including in relation to non-traditional areas such as violence against women and unpaid care work; and (c) ensure greater availability and use of data by strengthening data-sharing and dissemination tools and instituting regular dialogue between data producers and users.

32. Ministers are urged to discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) How can national statistical offices and line ministries be supported to strengthen their capacity to produce gender statistics?

(b) How can the design, collection and analysis of data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location, among other criteria, be achieved to ensure that no one is left behind?

(c) What information and communications technologies or tools could be employed to facilitate coordinated and comprehensive monitoring of progress on indicators and targets?
