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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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review theme

The data challenge – and opportunity: good practices

Chair’s summary

1. On 18 March 2019, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive expert panel on the theme “The data challenge – and opportunity: good practices”. The meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Commission, Mr. Mohammed Sahib Marzooq (Iraq). The panellists were: Ms. Claudia Wells, Director of Data Use, Development Initiatives; Mr. Davis Adieno, Regional Director for Africa, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data; Ms. Manal Sweidan, Head of the Gender Statistics Division, Department of Statistics of Jordan; Ms. Orsolya Bartha, Senior Adviser, International Disability Alliance; and Ms. Taiaopo Faumuina, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Samoa Bureau of Statistics. Ms. Ginette Azcona, Research and Data Specialist, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), was the discussant. Representatives of nine Member States and of nine non-governmental organizations contributed to the discussion.

2. Participants in the interactive expert panel assessed progress and challenges in the collection, reporting, analysis and dissemination of gender statistics in the context of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; examined priorities for closing data gaps; and identified good practices and lessons learned for meeting the gender data requirements to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals for women and girls and to leave no one behind.

Investing in gender statistics

3. Speakers highlighted the importance of investing in national statistical capacity to monitor gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the



achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Given the chronic underinvestment in gender statistics, solutions needed to be sought within the context of broader statistical capacity-building and integrated into support programmes. The speakers called for technical and financial support to increase coverage, quality and frequency of data collection.

4. Participants called for commitments at the highest political level for implementation processes that are evidence-based, open, inclusive, transparent and gender-sensitive. Statistical systems need to be independent and empowered with enough agility to adapt quickly to changes in the data landscape.

5. Participants affirmed the crucial role of data disaggregation to enable the targeting of the specific needs of the most vulnerable populations. In the context of increasing inequalities, disaggregation by sex and age alone is insufficient for monitoring outcomes for women and girls. Other factors can compound gender-based inequalities, such as income, birth order, family size, location, humanitarian settings and sexual orientation and gender identity. Disaggregation by multiple dimensions can highlight inequalities among groups of women and groups of men, and is essential for monitoring progress on the commitment to leave no one behind. Data collection exercises should not create or reinforce discrimination, bias or stereotypes against any population groups.

6. Participants voiced concern about the lack of data on the situation of persons with disabilities globally, and in particular for women and girls with disabilities, since lack of such data can contribute to their continued marginalization and discrimination. The collection of comparable data across countries is essential for evidence-based policymaking and budgeting and can directly contribute to the reduction of the barriers that women and girls with disabilities face in achieving full participation in all aspects of life in society.

A human rights-based and gender-responsive approach to data production and use

7. Participants suggested that statistical processes should be guided by a rights-based approach to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the effective monitoring of their targets. They should also be gender-responsive. Speakers drew attention to the establishment of gender statistics units within national statistical offices to promote coordination of the production, analysis and use of gender statistics in national statistical systems. In some cases, these units work directly with line ministries in the production of tools that help record the experiences of women and girls, such as on gender-based violence. Data collection should also include the free and active participation of relevant stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, community groups and development partners, with the equal representation of women and men.

Integrating official data with existing data from other sources

8. Participants highlighted the value of maximizing information by integrating data from multiple sources for well-informed gender-responsive policymaking. Given the limitations in household surveys, the value of a comprehensive civil registration system for the sustainable generation of gender statistics was emphasized. Participants called for initiatives to complement the collection of administrative data on health, education and other critical sectors with other data sources to help plan, deliver and monitor the provision of social services and social protections.

9. Support was needed for the design of statistical strategies and targeted data collection instruments that adequately capture the realities of disadvantaged groups, including hidden or hard-to-reach groups, while adhering to ethical standards. The

support provided by entities of the United Nations system, including UN-Women, as well as collaboration with civil society, in producing data with greater disaggregation and their integration into censuses and other sources of official data was welcomed, as were initiatives to generate new data on women in decision-making in the private sector.

10. Efforts should be made to increase statistical literacy and improve understanding of data collection processes. Speakers called for collaboration and consultation at all stages of a statistical activity, from planning to data dissemination and use. Women, including young women, should be enabled to fully participate in the production of statistics, as data users and data producers, and also as advocates for more and better gender data.

11. Examples were provided of the inclusion of gender equality advocates, women's rights organizations and other civil society groups in decision-making processes about what kinds of data are collected, when and how, and which indicators are prioritized. These steps were seen as essential for ensuring that the data collected meet the needs of diverse stakeholders. Resulting data should be used in the development of policies and programmes that respond to the realities of all population groups.

12. Participants were concerned about the continued limited availability of evidence and data on violence against women, including domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Concern was also expressed about violence against girls and young women and the importance of listening and capturing their views, opinions and experiences, and recognizing their agency in informing policymaking.

13. Speakers called for education in statistical technology along with science, technology, engineering and mathematics for women and girls. Girls should have the opportunity to receive education using technology and be equipped with the tools in statistics to be able to fully participate in the production of data and statistics.

Linking data to policies and ensuring that they are translated to action

14. Speakers emphasized the need for strengthened partnerships between data users and producers. Data producers do not often actively engage in policy discussions to see where the evidence for policymaking is missing, and policymakers often fail to specify what data is needed for monitoring. Fostering user-producer dialogues has shown that it is possible to create linkages between data for better-informed policymaking. Speakers called for increased capacity for data dissemination and use.
