

REPORT OF THE NGO WORKING SESSION
12-13 December 2004, Geneva

(organized in preparation for the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the
2005 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action)

**NGOs AS PARTNERS ON THE WAY TO ACCELERATE THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

More than 300 participants from 42 countries took part in the Working Session on 12-13 December 2004, held in the Centre de Conférences de Varembe and in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, preceding the two days Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 10-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Working Session was organised by the Working Group on Women in the ECE Region, in cooperation with subregional networks and the ECE Secretariat. Due to the generous contributions of UNIFEM, UNDP, OSCE and the Open Society Institute, an important number of participants came from CEE and CIS countries.

It was a Working Session, structured into Plenary Meetings and Workshop Sessions to participate as equals in what essentially is an Intergovernmental Conference. This process was chosen, as in the preparatory meetings in Vienna in 1994 and in Geneva in 2000, to facilitate a meaningful dialogue on critical issues related to the four themes identified for this preparatory conference.

The meeting was opened by Marise Paschoud, convenor of the NGO Working Group on Women for the ECE Region. Guest speakers included Carolyn Hannan, Director of the UN Division of the Advancement of Women, Concita Poncini, Vina Nadjibulla (for Bani Dugal), Susi Shaked, Presidents of the NGO Committees on the Status of Women in Geneva, New York and Vienna, Brigitte Schmögnerova, UNECE Executive Secretary. They insisted on the importance of partnership between NGOs and the United Nations and gave information on the preparations for the Review of Beijing + 10 that is going to be held at the 49th Commission on the Status of Women in New York from February 28 to March 11 2005.

To arrive at specific recommendations the Working Session proceeded as follows:

- I) On the first day, the Working Session was informed of subregional reports of NGO Coalitions from the EU, the CEE and CIS countries, Canada and the US.
- II) During the first and the second day, five workshops worked on issues related to the four themes of the ECE Meeting and on "After Beijing +10" and they prepared recommendations to complement the ECE's conclusions.

The Closing Session, chaired by Charlotte Thibault (FAFIA), received the workshops reports. Closing remarks were made by Renate Bloem, President of CONGO, and Concita Poncini, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva.

WORKSHOPS

I. WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

A. Employability.

The discussion on women and the economy must begin with the universally accepted UN human rights framework which challenges the current neoliberal economic model promoting deregulation, privatization and unbridled trade liberalization, which disregard their negative gender and social consequences. This approach seriously undermines implementation of the BPfA and the achievement of the MDGs. This must be replaced with a paradigm based on sustainable development models that link economic growth to social development, environmental protection and gender equality.

Macroeconomic policies while seemingly gender neutral have deepened inequalities between countries, between urban and rural areas and between women and men in all countries in the ECE region. Women are not a homogenous category: They engage in diverse and complex ways, as economic actors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. But as women represent the world's poor in the region and worldwide, the negative impacts of WTO and IFIs affect them disproportionately. Policies of attracting FDI's expose women to low paid work in exploitative conditions. Global economic governance system is led by countries from the ECE region, not working for women and the poor. The challenge is to generate enough resources and how these are allocated. The UN should lead in promoting a rights-based and social justice approach to economic policy-making with gender lens.

Privatization of public services has not only reduced women's opportunities to decent employment, but has also increased inequities in provision of services, leaving the poor either without services or with low quality services. It has also increased women's caring responsibility. Discrimination in access to employment, promotion and training for women and other equality seeking groups is still systemic throughout the ECE region. Women remain clustered in low skill, poor quality jobs with poor regulation and low levels of union representation. Majority of workers in part-time, temporary, casual work in the informal economy are women.

Recommendations to Governments: 1) Allocate adequate resources to ensure enforcement of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws and policies adopted by ECE countries; 2) Analyze systematically the persistent wage gaps based on gender and other grounds, such as "race" and ethnicity; 3) Develop employment equity plans, gender workplace audits and gender responsive budgets 4) Undertake job evaluation schemes free of gender bias and value women's jobs, particularly caring skills. 5) Introduce policies and programmes to implement the ILO Core Standards on Equal Rights at Work. 6) Ensure that part-time work is an option, not an obligation, for women workers and must be regulated so as to have equivalent conditions to full-time workers on a pro-rata basis;. This form of work should not be used as a strategy to return women to domestic caring roles which replace state funded community based care facilities. 7) Extend social regulation and protection to precarious forms of work in the informal economy where women make up the majority and should take account of the conclusions of the ILO Conference on decent work and the informal economy, adopted in 2002; 8) guarantee national minimum living wages as a measure to bring women out of poverty, reduce the gender wage gap and end discrimination in wage setting in low skill jobs where women predominate; 9) give a monetary value to unpaid work of caring for children, elderly, the sick and disabled and provide adequate financial support for these activities such as tax and pension systems that recognize time spent out of the labour market by women doing

this work as a measure to eliminate feminization of poverty; **10)** Ratify ILO Convention 156 and adopt policies and incentives to encourage more men to do this caring work; **11)** develop gender sensitive policies and action plans for institutional and cultural changes in the workplace and at home aimed at changing male behaviour and mental attitudes, using examples of best practices in the region, particularly in Iceland and Sweden; **12)** Adopt the principle of employability stipulated in ILO Recommendation on Human Resources Development which takes into account the life course approach and lifelong learning of women; **13)** Enable girls equal opportunity in education at all levels and introduce curricula that are non-traditional “female” courses; **14)** Redress the present occupational segregation resulting from male-biased job classification, evaluation and gender stereotyping by encouraging women to enroll in science and technology in general and in information and communication technology in particular; **15)** set up centers, such as those that exist in France, that provide technical, financial and social supports for the integration of women in the labour market, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS. They should include appropriate supports so that women from minority and ethnic groups and indigenous peoples, as well as the disabled and older women, can acquire adequate and quality skills to access decent employment of their choice. In respect of the ageing population, States should implement the Madrid Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 2002; **16)** Provide highly educated women whose education are not marketable in the present economic context with opportunities to upscale their knowledge and skills that will raise their accessibility to jobs that break the glass ceiling; **17)** ICT skills are becoming a necessity for survival, therefore training should be provided to all women in remote and rural areas through distance learning and cyber cafes, and should take account of cultural and linguistic diversity; **18)** promote e-entrepreneurship and e-management development as well as inclusion of women entrepreneurs in trade fairs and trade missions. **19)** Allocate increased resources from developed to developing countries, particularly ODAs reaffirmed by the ECE countries in Goal 8 of the MDGs. It is essential that governments at this meeting unequivocally reaffirm the entire Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing+5 Outcomes.

B. Social Security and Pension:

Ignoring the social implications from a gender perspective of economic readjustments, have as a consequence eroded existing social security provisions for women. The Working Group therefore recommends to States the following set of measures: **1)** social security, social services and pension provisions take into account the definition of family in its new forms (increasing women single-headed households; reconstructed families of divorced couples; couples of same sex; grandparents as head of households of orphaned children; orphaned headed households whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, widows/widowers etc); **2)** Adopt a holistic approach to ensure policy coherence among different government ministries and departments in reshifting priorities, inter alia redistribution of military spending, using gender auditing and budgeting; **3)** Guarantee protection of acquired pension rights and making such pensions portable; **4)** Review public and private pensions systems to ensure that acquired provisions are guaranteed for decent standards of living; **5)** strengthen provisions for parental leave and ensure the responsibilities of fathers in the equal sharing of work and family responsibilities as called for in ILO C156, taking account that the compensations systems vary from country to country; **6)** Provide for maternity and/or parental leave to protect and to guarantee that women do not risk losing their jobs and that men take on more family responsibilities.

II. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS (CHAPTER H OF THE BPFA)

The Workshop's recommendations were first adopted unanimously by more than 60 participants representing women's non-governmental organisations and networks under the chair of IAW – AIF, SIW, and then edited in the steering group together with CNIDFF, CLEF, EWL and NAWO, FAFIA and MEHR Association.

Reaffirming the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the UNGASS in 2000, and demanding that gender equality and women's human rights be mainstreamed throughout the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). Considering that although gender mainstreaming is one of the means used for the advancement of women, it can not replace the need to establish specific institutional mechanisms and programming. Recognising the needs and concerns of the great range of women, all recommendations below and all policies, programmes and other actions taken to create equality for women must use an integrated approach in order that equality be achieved for all women of all ages including the girl child. Special attention must be given to particularly disadvantaged groups of women and those facing multiple oppressions. Considering the increasing feminisation of poverty in a context of a global economy which does not take into account the differential impact on women and men;

- We recommend the following:**
- 1.- National mechanisms must have a statutory basis and should not be subject strong to political change in government.
 - 2.- Machineries, including independent bodies, must be established at the highest possible executive level at national, regional and local levels to apply gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment in all policies and their implementation.
 - 3.- There must be mandatory training of civil servants and all government officers in gender mainstreaming.
 - 4.- Gender mainstreaming must be strengthened and designed to promote gender equality; its impact must be measured, made transparent and available to all stakeholders using sex-disaggregated statistics.
 - 5.- The Commission on the Status of Women should create a Special Rapporteur on national laws and practices that discriminate against Women.
 - 6.- National Governments must create governmental coordinating structures with a legal mandate including NGO representatives.
 - 7.- Governments need to ensure that compulsory national education systems include non-sexist programmes in their curricula.
 - 8.- International and national actors in regions of economic, political crisis or armed conflict must establish a gender task force to ensure the participation of local women in the solution.
 - 9.- All member states should be required to enact legislation, ensuring the establishment of mechanisms that result in gender parity (50%) in all decision-making processes and institutions, including peace-negotiations.
 - 10.- Governments must create mechanisms to assess the impact of growing religious and trade fundamentalism, whatever their origin, and to combat them when they threaten women's rights.
 - 11.- National mechanisms for the advancement of women must be allocated adequate human and financial resources to be effective.
 - 12.- National plans of action exist formally without proper funding, implementation and monitoring. We demand that member states fully commit to:
 - recognising the resource implications of the effective implementation of action plan;
 - providing resources in finance and personnel to ensure the participation of women at all levels of decision making in all different areas.

- 13.- Gender budgeting must be institutionalised across all departments and ministries, and the member states should be required to monitor, analyse and audit expenditure and regularly report on the implementation and outcome.
- 14.- Funding for women's NGO must be provided so that they will broaden civil dialogue on the human rights of women and the girl child. New budget planning should include specific actions and programmes with funding for Equal Opportunity initiatives.
- 15.- The application of gender mainstreaming must include targets and gender impact assessment in all policies and their implementation as well as specific programmes for the advancement of women.
- 16.- Member States must effectively implement their international commitments, national constitution and laws without subverting them by issuing executive orders or taking other measures that contradict them.
- 17.- Governmental reports to CEDAW and CEDAW's resulting recommendations must be the object of discussion in parliament.
- 18.- NGOs should be recognised and entitled to actively participate in the government reporting processes on all human rights mechanisms, including CEDAW. The report to CEDAW should be made public, as should be the alternative NGO report.
- 19.- Governments should recognize and support actively and effectively young women's organizations in their effort to promote their empowerment and participation in decision making.
- 20.- Measurement of outcomes which requires gender disaggregated and reliable statistics are needed for monitoring all actions of government.
- 21.- Member States must establish, where none exist, cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary and cross-border strategies to combat violence against women and trafficking and where they do exist, enforce them.
- 22.- Governments must introduce capacity building and leadership training for women in NGOs to become more effective in working with and monitoring institutional mechanisms
- 23.- All levels of governments must implement gender mainstreaming using concrete and transparent action plans with established indicators and outcomes and timelines developed in partnership with civil society organisations.

III. TRAFFICKING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS

Trafficking in women and children is a consequence of structured gender inequality and is a form of violence. It is also a symptom of relative and absolute poverty. The participants of this workshop expressed great concern about the failure of governments, despite successive international agreements, to stem the tide of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. Counter-trafficking strategies must be anchored in a human rights framework.

The participants fully endorsed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocol thereto, specifically relating to all paragraphs of article 3 in relation to the definition of the trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Recommendations :1.- Governments must recognize that the trafficking in human beings and particularly in women and children, is a major violation of human rights. They must therefore implement and monitor the Palermo Protocol and all other relevant human right instruments and allocate sufficient resources to prevent and

- combat this gross human rights violation.
- 2.- Safeguarding the human rights of women and of all victims of trafficking must be central to all considerations and measures in relation to prevention, protection of victims and prosecution of perpetrators.
 - 3.- The safety and protection of women and children who are victims of trafficking must be the overriding consideration at all times, so that:
 - Protection of victims must not be conditional on any agreements to give evidence to or to cooperate with the criminal justice system and other authorities.
 - There shall be no penalties for victims of trafficking in countries of origin, transit or destination. Victims of trafficking must never be treated as illegal immigrants or any other way criminalized.
 - Protection and support must be provided to all women and children who are victims of trafficking regardless of their legal status, or the presence or absence of documents showing their status.
 - Destination countries must establish mechanisms for legal migration. Counter- trafficking strategies should not be used as a means to stem legal migration.
 - A person must be granted protection as soon as she is recognized as a victim of trafficking and must be granted rights as stated in article 6 of the Palermo Protocol, including all forms of social, employment, legal and housing support, as well as comprehensive health services and specifically access to sexual and reproductive health rights.
 - National legislation should ensure the right to compensation to victims of trafficking for physical, psychological and material damages.
 - 4.- Prevention strategies of countries of origin must reflect and be reflected in poverty reduction and social development strategies with specific reference to economic opportunities for women.
 - 5.- Long term prevention strategies must address the root causes of trafficking and these include poverty, discrimination, racism, patriarchal structures, violence against women, fundamentalisms, gender inequality, lack of social safety nets, money laundering, corruption, political instability, conflicts and uncontrolled zones, barriers and disparities between countries.
 - 6.- All governments must introduce measures that recognize the unequal power relations between women and men and must introduce positive measures to promote the empowerment of women in all areas of life.
 - 7.- Forced marriage can be seen as a form of trafficking and is a gross violation of women's and girls' human rights and a form of violence against women, particularly sexual violence. Governments must take all necessary measures, including legal and policy measures, to eliminate this practice.
 - 8.- Governments must develop a comprehensive witness protection mechanism including the legal representation and protection of the privacy of victims, anonymous certified statements in courts, and special protection throughout the duration of the criminal proceedings.
 - 9.- Governments must strengthen legislation and the enforcement of the legislation in relation to sanctions against all perpetrators of trafficking including transnational criminals. The states must establish special funds supplied by confiscated asset or by fines paid by traffickers who are convicted in criminal proceedings.
 - 10.- Research must be conducted in the countries and regions of origin, transit and destination in order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of

the dynamics of human trafficking and to develop effective strategies to combat trafficking in women and children.

- 11.- Trade agreements and agreements related to development cooperation must be monitored from a gender perspective with specific reference to countries and situations where trafficking in women and children is known to be a reality.
- 12.- In relation to the demand that fosters trafficking, governments shall adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures, such as educational, social or cultural measures, including through bilateral or multilateral cooperation to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking.

IV. EMERGING ISSUES

The Emerging Issues workshop, coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, highlighted critical areas that either were not adequately covered in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Outcomes Document from the Beijing + 5 Review, and/or have intensified in the past decade. An overarching concern of the group was the way in which global forces that have intensified over the decade since Beijing have often eroded support for and attention to women's human rights. In particular, the growth of militarism and fundamentalisms of many kinds and the growing inequities produced by globalization were seen as detrimental to the achievement of the Platform. We reject all excuses for violations of women's human rights whether justified in the name of "national security" or "cultural heritage" or religion. The global "war on terrorism" should not be used as an excuse to undermine any group's human rights or to neglect the critical issues of women's daily human insecurity. We see multilateralism as the way to address global security concerns. Politics of greed, exclusion, domination and military power have failed women in the ECE region. We call upon governments to develop better alternatives for our collective future human security based in respect for all human rights.

SECTION I

MILITARISM: The current geopolitical context is one of war, heightened military spending, promotion of a culture of violence in daily life, and increased transnational crime and corruption. The primary victims are civilians, particularly women and children. Governments should counter this climate related to "the war on terror" by promoting peace, disarmament, and intercultural dialogue. Military budgets must be reduced, with spending shifted to poverty reduction, development and the protection of human rights; UN: implement Resolution 1325 through actions, an audit, and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur; UN peacekeeping forces: include more women in decision making; develop gender monitoring mechanisms and trainings on local contexts; end impunity for violence perpetrated by peacekeepers; International organizations working on organized crime must review their activities, increase transparency, disclose full budgets, and increase discussion of their work.

FUNDAMENTALISMS: Women oppose all forms of fundamentalisms because they create and demonize "the Other" and use religion, cultural heritage, nationalism and ethnicity to obtain political power and to control women's lives. Governments must ensure that civic rights laws are enforced. The principle of secularity should be fully respected by each state. We reject the use of tradition and ethnicity to prevent women from enjoying their full reproductive and sexual rights.

SEXUAL RIGHTS: Sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws and in international and regional human rights and consensus documents. All women, including young women, have the right to make informed choices about all aspects of their sexual lives, including their sexual pleasure, sexual autonomy and sexual orientation; must have access to comprehensive sexuality education, and confidential sexual and reproductive health services, including those

related to safe and legal abortion. All women must be free to establish all forms of families and to exercise their sexual rights free from gender-based violence and coercion, including FGM, forced and early marriage, so-called honour killings and domestic violence. Governments must create enabling conditions to ensure that all women and girls enjoy the full range of sexual rights. The Secretary General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women should include how gender-based violence violates women's sexual rights and recommendations to end it.

HIV/AIDS: Women's experience and gender equality must be central to decisions about access to treatment, the links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS, or any other aspects of the HIV pandemic. Prevention and treatment programmes must be anchored in a human rights framework, and governments have the responsibility to protect and fulfill human rights of people affected by HIV/AIDS. Strategies must encompass sexual and reproductive health and rights with special attention to young women, through the promotion of comprehensive sexuality education. Female controlled prevention methods such as microbicides and female condoms must be accessible and women must be involved in the design and delivery of antiretroviral programmes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY: To ensure full participation of women of all ages and cultural backgrounds in information societies, governments must ensure all ICT programs, investments and policies, including WSIS, consistently incorporate gender indicators and benchmarking, and are accountable for evaluation. They must provide affordable access to and education on effective use of ICTs, and empower women to generate, own, develop, use and shape ICTs in content and policies. Regulatory frameworks addressing violent and stereotypical images that exploit women must be developed with all stakeholders, particularly women, and must not enforce censorship or surveillance that limits access to information or invades privacy.

PUBLIC SERVICES: Trends toward deregulation, privatisation and cuts in public services previously provided largely by the state and that adversely affect women are of concern. The state has a duty to provide water, sanitation, primary health care, education and care services for children and other dependent people. We oppose the shift of costs from the state to household, which often creates particular hardship for women. The state is accountable for the quality and equal access of public services; any changes should be subject to a gender impact assessment.

The group also expressed concern about two topics not developed in depth:
BIOTECHNOLOGY / NEW TECHNOLOGIES: Gender equality and women's human rights as well as women's participation must be guaranteed in the research, design and implementation of new technologies. **WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT:** The escalating degradation of the earth requires governments to address the consequences of war and conflict, unrestrained economic growth, depletion of natural resources and pollution of air and water. It is urgent to involve women at all levels of decision-making, including specialists, economists and scientists.

SECTION II:

The Beijing Platform and the Beijing + 5 Outcomes Document acknowledge the differential impact of issues on different groups of women. We affirm the need to look at such diversity in implementing the Platform and call upon governments to affirm the human rights of all women, regardless of whether they are named there. The group affirms the need for attention to all oppressed groups of women, and looks at seven constituencies in the ECE region. While these women are often victimized in ways requiring particular attention, they are not only victims but also can be agents whose knowledge and perspectives prove vital to creating new approaches to issues.

Romany Women: In most of the CEE/CIS countries, Romany women and girls often live in extreme poverty and face social exclusion and multiple forms of discrimination. We demand state parties mainstream Romany women and girls' issues throughout national strategies, including on Romany communities, and allocate financial resources for effective implementation. **Indigenous Women:** As reflected in the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they are "equal in dignity and rights to

all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such". Indigenous women's issues must be included in all recommendations put forward in implementing the BPFA and in other areas. **Women with disabilities:** Recognizing that women with disabilities are subject to multiple forms of discrimination, efforts should be undertaken to include relevant text in the "international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities". **Lesbians and Bisexual women:** All lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people who identify as women or girls are entitled to the full enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. **Youth:** Young women have the right to participate in the design, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes in all sectors, not just those identified as being specifically related to youth, and to be compensated appropriately by NGOs and governments for their work. **Older women:** Population aging is a gender issue. Well-being in later life is directly related to experiences across the life course; the greater disadvantages women face throughout their lives can lead to poverty, isolation and poor health. **Widows:** The number of widows of all ages has risen. Poverty and marginalization of widows can expose them and their children to violence in all forms. Governments and the international community must provide benefits and services where needed and devise appropriate public policies.

V. BEIJING+10, MDGs, PROPOSAL FOR THE FUTURE

The working group expresses their concern about the lack of linkage between the Beijing PFA and MDGs at the UN and national level. "Without progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women, none of the MDGs will be achieved". In fact, six of the MDGs stem directly from the BPFA : poverty, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, health of mothers and sustainable environment. To speed up implementation of BPFA and strengthen the implementation of the MDGs, they should be linked "horizontally". The Group wishes to remind the ECE Governments that UN conferences on women are not theme conferences, but an opportunity for women to come together and make up their minds on all issues on the UN agenda. Such conferences are an ideal opportunity for interaction with governments and civil society representatives. They are needed as long as other UN major conferences have an overwhelming male majority.

Recommendations :

- 1) Women are participants and not "target" groups when it comes to UN Conferences.
- 2) All MDGs should be gender mainstreamed and a gender sensitive budget and effect evaluation should be made for each goal.
- 3) Urges ECE Governments to provide adequate resources to implement the Beijing BPFA and the MDGs and indicate the proportion of funds earmarked for the empowerment and capacity building of women.
- 4) Calls on the NGO Committee on CSW in New York to convene an NGO strategy meeting during the 49th CSW Session on prerequisites and feasibility of a 5th UN World Conference of Women before or in 2010 and/or alternatives.

Lausanne, December 20, 2004