



III.



## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution 53/120, the General Assembly requested

8. The Commission recommended mainstreaming a gender perspective into the curricula, as well as the training, of all health care and service providers in order to ensure high-quality health services for women that could help eliminate discriminatory attitudes and practices. A gender perspective should be developed and applied to treatment and prevention practice in the health sector. Opportunities that might arise through health sector reform and development should be used to integrate systematically the process of gender analysis in the health sector and to undertake gender impact assessments and monitoring of all health sector reforms and developments in order to ensure that women benefitted equally from them.

## **B. Agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**

9. In its agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms,<sup>3</sup> the Commission reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>4</sup> notably chapter IV, section H, on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>5</sup> and Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.<sup>6</sup>

10. It was stated that for national machineries to be effective, clear mandates, location at the highest possible level, accountability mechanisms, partnership with civil society, a transparent political process, adequate financial and human resources, and continued strong political commitment were crucial. The importance of international cooperation in order to assist the work on national machineries in all countries, especially developing countries, was emphasized.

11. Specific recommendations were directed at Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the international community in relation to creating and strengthening the work of national machineries; to ensuring that national machineries, as well as gender focal points within institutions, were not marginalized; and to supporting and promoting balanced participation of women and men in all areas of decision-making. National machineries were requested to strengthen their relationship with civil society through regular consultations with women's organizations, academic institutions and the private sector.

12. Governments were urged to ensure that senior management in each ministry/agency took responsibility for fulfilling gender equality commitments and integrating a gender perspective in all activities, ensuring that mainstreaming a gender perspective was fully understood, institutionalized and implemented. Governments were also urged to promote transparency through effective monitoring mechanisms using gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data, as well as other performance indicators and regular reporting, including under international agreements.

13. Governments were requested to give visibility to the relationship between remunerated and unremunerated work, and the importance of gender-analysis in this context; to develop methods for assessing the value of unremunerated work in quantitative terms; to acknowledge that unremunerated work by women was a considerable contribution to society; and to assess the real value of such work in order for it to be accurately reflected in satellite or other official accounts that were separate from, but consistent with, core national accounts.

14. The international community, including the United Nations, was called upon to ensure that the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme, was fully aware of the importance of gender equality and mainstreaming a gender perspective in all activities, ensuring that mainstreaming a gender perspective was fully understood, institutionalized and implemented. Governments were also urged to promote transparency through effective monitoring mechanisms using gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data, as well as other performance indicators and regular reporting, including under international agreements.

East peace process and the need for increased efforts to ensure that the peace process was directed towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. In a draft resolution on a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002–2005, the Council would invite the Secretary-General to prepare an assessment 16. In its resolution 43/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts,<sup>8</sup> the Commission condemned violent acts against women and children in areas of armed conflict, strongly urged all parties to armed conflicts to respect fully the norms of international humanitarian law in armed conflict, and called for the immediate release of those taken hostage. The Commission urged all parties to armed conflicts to protect women and children and to provide them with unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

17. In its resolution 43/2 on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS, the Commission recognized an alarming increase in the number of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, as well as the link between this and prevailing gender inequalities. The Commission emphasized that the advancement and empowerment of women was critical to increasing the ability of women and young girls to protect themselves from HIV infection. The Commission urged Governments to establish a social and legal framework to support and protect the rights of those living with HIV/AIDS and to address the particular needs of women and girls in this context.

18. In its resolution 43/3 on women and mental health, with emphasis on special groups, the Commission called for the integration of mental health as a priority issue when implementing the health objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant international agreements. It requested Governments to include in their national policies specific measures addressing the mental health needs of women and girls. The Commission urged the Secretary-General to organize, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, regional expert group meetings with a view to developing gender- and age-disaggregated and gender-sensitive psychosocial and mental health situation analyses and indicators as a basis for determining progress in women's and girls' emotional well-being and mental health.

#### **D. Decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly, “Women 2000: gender**

of the current plan (1996–2001) for consideration by the Council through the Commission in 2000 and to submit the plan for 2002–2005 to the Council through the Commission in 2001.

#### **equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

19. The Commission, acting as the Preparatory Committee, adopted a draft resolution for submission to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, by which the Assembly would invite Member States to prepare responses to the questionnaire of the Secretary-General on review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Assembly would encourage the Regional Commissions to carry out regional preparatory activities. It would also encourage all entities of the United Nations system, as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to take part in preparatory activities and to participate at the highest level in the special session.

20. The General Assembly would reaffirm that the special session would take place on the basis of, and with full respect for, the Platform for Action and that there would be no renegotiation of the existing agreements contained therein. Further, the Assembly would encourage the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors of civil society in the preparatory process at national, regional and international levels. The Assembly would provide for the participation in the special session of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, as well as those that were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women, without creating a precedent for future sessions of the General Assembly.

#### **E. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

21. The Commission adopted by consensus a draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women,<sup>9</sup> to be recommended to the Council for adoption by the General Assembly and opening for signature, accession and ratification by States Parties to the Convention. The Protocol contains two procedures: a communications procedure allowing individual women, or groups of women, to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention. The Protocol also would create an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights.

22. The Commission for Social Development held its thirty-seventh session from 9 to 19 February 1999 with "Social services for all" as a priority theme. The Commission articulated that social services were an integral part of, and positively contribute to, social and economic development. In its agreed conclusions,<sup>10</sup> it stressed the primary responsibility of Governments in providing or ensuring that basic social services are available to every member of society. The elimination of discrimination against women, the empowerment and full participation of women in all areas of life and at all stages in the provision of social services were recognized as priority objectives. Gender-sensitive social services were strongly recommended, and the importance of addressing the different needs of different population groups was stressed.

### **B. Commission on Population and Development**

23. At its thirty-second session, held on 22, 23 and 26 March 1999, the Commission on Population and Development reaffirmed in its decision 1999/1 that "Gender, population and development" should be the special theme for the Commission at its thirty-third session, in the year 2000, in order to provide inputs into the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.<sup>11</sup>

24. Acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Commission drafted proposals for the further implementation

## **III. Results of other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council**

### **A. Commission for Social Development**

of the Programme of Action (E/CN.9/1999/PC/4). These included a chapter on "Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women" addressing issues of promotion and protection of women's human rights, empowerment of women, gender perspective in programmes and policies and advocacy against negative attitudes and practices.

### **C. Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

25. At its twentieth special session devoted to countering the world drug problem together, held from 8 to 10 June 1998, the General Assembly adopted a Political Declaration,<sup>12</sup> as well as a Declaration on the Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction<sup>13</sup> and measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem.<sup>14</sup> The Political Declaration sets out a global strategy to reduce both supply and demand of illicit drugs. Member States undertook to ensure that women and men benefit equally from drug control strategies. The Declaration on the Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction explicitly states that demand reduction policies should be sensitive to both culture and gender and that programmes should be effective, relevant and accessible to those groups most at risk, taking into account differences in gender, culture and education.

26. As follow-up to the special session, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-second session, held at Vienna from 16 to 25 March 1999, recommended to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council a draft action plan for the implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction. The action plan would offer guidance to Member States in implementing the commitments of the Declaration and would focus on the

need to design demand reduction campaigns and programmes



on the need to fully implement obligations under the Convention with regard to violence against women.

## **2. Gender issues in the work of human rights treaty bodies, thematic rapporteurs and other mechanisms**

31. In several resolutions, the Commission called upon Special Rapporteurs, including those on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (1999/35), on religious intolerance (1999/39), and the working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances (1999/38), to apply a gender perspective in their work, including in information collection and the formulation of recommendations, and through the identification of gender-specific abuses. Several were invited to exchange views and cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

32. In resolution 1999/36 on freedom of opinion and expression, the Commission drew attention to the existing gap for women in the effective enjoyment of that right. It urged Governments to implement effective measures to eliminate the atmosphere of fear that prevented women victims of violence from communicating freely on their own behalf, or through intermediaries, and to ensure that women exercising those rights were not discriminated against in such areas as employment, housing and social services. The Commission invited the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right of freedom of opinion and expression to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on violence against

women in considering obstacles that impeded women's ability to make informed choices in areas of particular importance to them, as well as in areas related to the general decision-making processes in the societies in which they live. The Commission urged States to combat generalised fear gaps among the general

### 3. Attention to gender in issue-specific resolutions

35. The Commission highlighted the situation of women, or particular forms of human rights violations suffered by women, in conjunction with several issues and stressed the importance of systematically taking into account a gender perspective when dealing with such issues or topics. For example, in resolution 1999/24 on the right to food, the Commission noted that more than 800 million people, especially women and children, did not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs. Attention was drawn to the needs of women and children as the most vulnerable groups concerning the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and United Nations agencies were invited to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, particularly with regard to girls' right to education (resolution 1999/25). Treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, were invited to take into account the question of extreme poverty and human rights (resolution 1999/26), and the report of the Special Rapporteur on this question was to be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women. In a decision addressed to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities concerning the establishment of a Social Forum, the Commission identified as one of the objectives of the Forum the examination of the relationship between income distribution, the feminization of poverty and human rights at both the international and national levels (resolution 1999/53). The need to apply a gender perspective in the implementation of the right to development was affirmed, *inter alia*, by ensuring that women played an active role in the development process through full participation on a basis of equality in all spheres of society (resolution 1999/79).

36. In its resolution 1999/27 on human rights and terrorism, the Commission deplored the suffering of innocent victims, including women and children. The arbitrary deprivation of nationality on grounds including gender was also identified as a violation of human rights (resolution 1999/28). The need to combat impunity for violations of international human rights and the protection of women and children (E/1999/27) child were comprehensively addressed, and the further mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes relating to children was called for (resolution 1999/80). In the context of armed conflict, States were urged to protect women and children from all acts of gender-based violence, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and forced pregnancy. The need for humanitarian responses to address the special reproductive health needs of girls and women, including those arising from

and humanitarian law, including those perpetrated against women, was called for (resolution 1999/34). In addressing contemporary forms of slavery (resolution 1999/46), the Commission highlighted trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. The importance of systematically adopting a gender-based approach throughout the preparations for and in the outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was stressed (resolution 1999/78).

37. The need for measures to eliminate stigmatization of and discrimination against women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS was addressed in resolution 1999/49, and human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, were called upon to integrate the protection of HIV-related human rights in their work.

38. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was encouraged to establish a guideline on gender inclusivity in all official languages of the United Nations, for use in the preparation of all its communications, reports and publications (resolution 1999/60). Member States also were urged to develop comprehensive and sustainable national plans of action for human rights education and public information complementary to those relating to women. The establishment, within such plans, of public access to human rights resource and training centres capable of engaging in gender-sensitive training of trainers was encouraged.

39. In resolution 1999/62 States were invited to promote a culture of peace based, *inter alia*, on the wider participation of women and equal opportunities for all and, in resolution 1999/64 the Commission identified human rights education as an important vehicle for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and for ensuring equal opportunities through the promotion and protection of the human rights of women. Relevant organs, bodies and agencies of the United Nations system were called upon to provide training in the human rights of women for all United Nations personnel and officials.

the United Nations system were called upon to develop and implement gender-sensitive strategies to address the particular needs of the girl child in education.

#### 4. Country-specific resolutions

41. The Commission requested several country rapporteurs, including those on Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Sudan, Myanmar, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to apply a gender perspective systematically in the reporting process, including in information collection and recommendations. A number of country-specific resolutions referred to gender as a factor in the enjoyment of human rights:

(a) Afghanistan (resolution 1999/9): recalling resolutions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, expressing its deep concern about the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, and taking into account the report of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on her visit to Afghanistan in November 1997, the Commission condemned the continuing grave violations of the human rights of women and girls. It urged all the Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, to bring to an end all violations of the human rights of women and girls in areas such as their participation in public life, in work and employment, education, security of person, freedom of movement and access to social services. The repeal of all legislative and other measures that discriminated against women was called for. Specific follow-up action was addressed to the Secretary-General, the Special Rapporteur, the Member States and the international community concerning the human rights of women and girls and the application of a gender perspective, including the implementation of the recommendations of the inter-agency gender mission to Afghanistan of November 1997;

(b) Islamic Republic of Iran (resolution 1999/13): the positive statements by the Government about the need to review laws and attitudes that discriminated against women, and the gradual increase of the presence of women in public life in the Islamic Republic of Iran were noted. The Commission expressed its concern at the continued lack of full and equal enjoyment by women of their human rights, and called upon the Government to take further measures to eliminate the continued discrimination in law and in practice against women;

(c) Sudan (resolution 1999/15): the Commission expressed its deep concern at the adverse effect of the current conflict on the civilian population, in particular women and children, such as the abduction of women and children to be subjected to forced labour or similar conditions. It called upon the Government to investigate reports of such abductions in southern Sudan and to accept a multilateral investigation into the causes of those abductions, as well as ways and means for eradicating the practice;

(d) Myanmar (resolution 1999/17): the Commission welcomed Myanmar's accession to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It deplored the continuing abuse of women and children by Government agents, the violations of the rights of women, especially women who were refugees, internally displaced women and women belonging to ethnic minorities of the political opposition, in particular forced labour, sexual violence and exploitation, including rape. It urged the Government to put an end to such violations, and to fulfil its obligations under the Convention;

(e) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (resolution 1999/18): in referring to Kosovo, the Commission condemned ongoing war crimes and abuses of human rights resulting in rape and harsh living conditions for the civilian population. It insisted that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) improve the situation of ethnic Albanian women and children. Referring to the Republic of Croatia, the Commission endorsed the Special Rapporteur's recommendation for affirmative measures to improve the representation of women in decision-making positions;

(f) Equatorial Guinea (resolution 1999/19): the Government was encouraged to continue its efforts to integrate women effectively into the process of socio-economic, cultural and political development of the country;

(g) Rwanda (resolution 1999/20): the Government was urged, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda invited, to give utmost priority to the prosecution and punishment of crimes of sexual violence committed against women, and the decision of the Tribunal to give a broad definition to acts of sexual violence was welcomed. The Government's proposal to ensure greater legal access of women to their husbands' and parents' property through the proposed law on matrimonial property and succession was welcomed;

(h) Democratic Republic of the Congo (resolution 1999/56): the Commission expressed its concern at reports of sexual violence against women and children and the forcible

(i) Somalia (resolution 1999/75): the Commission expressed its deep concern at reports of violence against women and children, and condemned widespread violations

recruitment and use of children as soldiers and combatants, and called upon all parties to respect the rights of women;

of the draft convention against transnational organized crime and the protocols thereto, the draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in women and children would be made applicable to all persons so as to promote gender equality (E/CN.15/1999/L.9).

46. Although the Statistical Commission, at its thirtieth session, held from 1 to 5 March 1999 did not consider gender as a specific topic, gender issues and sex-disaggregated data were among the main topics discussed, including two papers on “Harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system” (E/CN.3/1999/14), and “Progress report on demographic, social and migration statistics” (E/CN.3/1999/9). The latter reviewed recent work of the Statistics Division in the field of gender statistics.

## **IV. Activities of the regional commissions**

### **A. Economic Commission for Africa**

47. In 1997, the African Centre for Women at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) began organizing subregional level follow-up meetings on the implementation of the African Platform for Action and the Beijing Platform for Action. Meetings were held in June 1998 for the Central Africa region, in October 1998 for the North Africa region and in February 1999, for the Eastern and Southern Africa region. The first two meetings emphasized the formulation and assessment of national action plans, and the third the mid-term evaluation process and the need for follow-up on the recommendations of the ECA conference held in April 1998 on the theme “African women and economic development: investing in our future”.

### **B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

## **G. Statistical Commission**

48. At its second session, held in April 1999, the Committee on Social Development, a subsidiary committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), adopted recommendations concerning implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the integrated follow-up to global conferences.

49. During the period under review, ESCWA provided advisory services, upon request, to Yemen, Palestine, Qatar, Oman, Jordan and Lebanon in institution- and capacity-building for national machineries for women and non-governmental organizations concerned with women’s issues and gender equality. Technical assistance in the preparation of national reports on progress achieved in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for submission to the General Assembly at its special session in June 2000 was also provided.

50. ESCWA is building a gender-sensitive database on information and social policies and measures of impact on women, gender and family issues, and is developing region-specific indicators for monitoring progress achieved in the advancement of women and gender equality. ESCWA has focused on advocating innovative approaches to poverty alleviation of poor women in rural and urban areas, including through the establishment of micro-credit facilities.

51. ESCWA carried out surveys on the role of non-governmental organizations in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action and is also coordinating its efforts with other United Nations agencies concerned with women and gender equality. It has implemented joint activities with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other agencies. In collaboration with the League of Arab States and UNIFEM, ESCWA convened a regional meeting in Beirut from 15 to 18 December 1998 to follow up on the Beijing Conference and to prepare for the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000.

52. In 1998, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA established an ad hoc working group to formulate a plan of action for mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies, plans and programmes of ESCWA. In pursuance of the Plan of Action,

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58. A plan of action for promoting women in small businesses was adopted at a subregional workshop held in Viet Nam, which called for concrete action on such issues as credit, marketing, technology, networking and reform of the legal and regulatory framework. A regional meeting on the





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- <sup>1</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1.
- <sup>2</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7 (E/1999/27)*, chap. I, sect. B, resolution IV, sect. I.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. II.
- <sup>4</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.
- <sup>5</sup> General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.
- <sup>6</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3)*, chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7 (E/1999/27)*, chap. I, sect. B.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. D.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. A.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, *Supplement No. 6 (E/1999/26)*, chap. I, sect. D, resolution 37/1.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, *Supplement No. 5 (E/1999/25)*, chap. I.
- <sup>12</sup> General Assembly resolution S-20/2, annex.
- <sup>13</sup> General Assembly resolution S-20/3, annex.
- <sup>14</sup> General Assembly resolution S-20/4.
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