





national human rights institutions to participate in the work of the Commission in their own right.

7. While national mechanisms continue to support the use of the gender mainstreaming strategy, the strategy itself remains inadequately understood and its transformative quality thus not fully realized. Greater efforts are therefore necessary for its institutionalization in all policies and programmes, and at all levels. National mechanisms should play a much stronger role as policy analysts and source of knowledge and expertise for different parts of Government, rather than as service providers. They should assess the gender equality implications of national policies and strategies, including poverty reduction strategies and new aid modalities, and provide policy guidance and advice to different ministries and governmental bodies. The location of the national machinery within Government, and of gender focal points in line ministries, should be such that they can participate in decision-making and help to shape all policies. Advisory committees to Government on gender mainstreaming can play an important role. Academic research can effectively support policy development and the availability of practical tools, benchmarks and gender-sensitive indicators to measure progress in gender mainstreaming.

8. National mechanisms are also increasingly advocating for, and supporting the use of gender-responsive budgeting as an important gender mainstreaming tool. Experience indicates that national mechanisms for gender equality should be involved in planning and budgeting processes, but that the ministry of finance needs to take the lead role to ensure the effective use of gender-responsive budgeting across Government, for example through the issuance of relevant budget decrees. Priority should therefore be given to building capacity and technical expertise of ministry staff. Pilot projects in a number of countries, where gender-responsive budgeting is initially being applied by some ministries only, are providing important insights and contribute to improved use of the tool. There is also some experience in allocating a certain percentage of the national budget for the promotion of gender equality, although such efforts have not been evaluated for impact and effectiveness. Non-governmental organizations sometimes play an important role in advocating for the use and effective application of gender-responsive budgeting. Gender-responsive budgeting is also an important accountability tool for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, disbursement of funds could be delayed or reduced in the absence of gender impact statements.

9. Cooperation and coordination between national mechanisms and multiple stakeholders, including civil society actors, non-governmental organizations and women's and human rights groups, as well as the private sector, is important for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, in particular in the light of the growing diversity of relevant mechanisms. While some formal institutional arrangements are in place, many of these efforts occur in an informal or ad hoc manner. Greater efforts are needed to strengthen capacity for coordination at the national level, to engage more systematically with new actors, such as the private

