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Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations

Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals

Report of the Expert Group Meeting

Baku, Azerbaijan 7 - 10 February 2005

Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs Two UN Plaza – DC2 - 12th

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I. Introduction

1. To contribute to the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) from 28 February – 11 March 2005, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) organized an expert group meeting on "Achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals". The meeting, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 7-10 February 2005, was hosted by the State Committee for Women's Issues of the Government of Azerbaijan.

2. In discussing achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Expert Group Meeting focused on the respective policy mandates and processes, as well as the changing national and global contexts, with special emphasis on resources, rights and accountability. The meeting looked in particular at the needs for ensuring the application of a human rights framework to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and the In addition, there was a strong focus on the importance of engendering the MDGs. macro-economic framework and poverty reduction strategies, making resources work for women, and ensuring the participation of women's. Based on the inputs of experts and observers, the Expert Group Meeting adopted recommendations for ensuring enhanced linkages between the respective review processes of the Beijing Platform for Action and Millennium Declaration and MDGs. This report is the outcome of the meeting.

II. Organization of work

5. This report and all documentation relating to the meeting are available on-line on the DAW website: <u>http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/bpfamd2005/index.html</u>

C. Programme of work

6. At its opening session on 7 February 2005, the meeting adopted the following programme of work (see Annex III):

- Opening session
- Election of officers and adoption of the programme of work
- Introduction to the meeting
- Presentation and discussion of the DAW consultant's paper
- Presentation and discussion of the Millennium Project Task Force 3 report
- Presentation and discussion of papers prepared by experts
- Working groups on:
 - Human rights framework
 - Involvement of civil society and women's organizations
 Resources and macroeconomic framework
- Introduction of draft report and recommendations in plenary
- Adoption of final report and recommendations
- Closing session
- D. Election of officers
- 7. The experts elected the following officers:

Co-Chairs: Ms. Mary Shanthi Dairiam and Ms. Helen de Pinho Rapporteur: Ms. Naila Kabeer Co-Rapporteur for the plenary: Ms. Mary Amuyunzu-Nyamongo

E. Opening statements

8. The opening speakers were introduced by Ms. Mominat Omarova, Deputy Chair of the State Committee for Women's Issues of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

9. The meeting was opened by Ms. Zahra Guliyeva, Chair of the State Committee for Women's Issues of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In her statement, Ms. Guliyeva welcomed the partnership with the Division for the Advancement of Women in the organization of the Expert Group Meeting in Baku. She noted the significance of the event as outputs and recommendations of the meeting would influence the discussions at the CSW and it panel discussion on the same topic. She highlighted the main principles of the gender policy of Azerbaijan, based on its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, the Millennium Declaration and MDGs, and other international documents. Special attention had been paid to the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Economic Development, which was the main instrument for the achievement of the MDGs at the national level. Integration of gender perspectives into the country's overall development strategy ensured increased efficiency in the implementation of this programme and equal access to the benefits envisaged in the programmes directed at economic growth and social welfare of the poor. Socialeconomic reforms as well as the reforms in the field of education and health care had created the conditions for sustainable growth of the national economy and an improvement in the situation of the population, including women. Ms. Guliyeva also focused on the role of women in peace building in the region, and expressed her conviction that the empowerment of women and gender equality could be achieved only through joint efforts and a focus on women's rights as human rights.

10. Ms. Sylvie I. Cohen, Deputy Director, Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, delivered a message from the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, Ms. Mng in th w decade, despite the prevailing climate of conflict. However, certain groups in society, especially women, had not benefited to the same extent. Unlike women in other countries, women in Azerbaijan were however not suffering from a lack of education or from labour market exclusion. Mr. Borsotti indicated that it was very important that national targets and indicators had been developed and adapted to take into account local realities.

III. Background

'The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition of social justice [...]. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all people." Beijing Platform for Action (III.41)

'There is no time to lose if we are to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. Only by investing in the world's women can we expect to get there" Message of the United Nations Secretary-General, International Women's Day 2003

13. The year 2005 offers major opportunities to build on the mandates and strengthen synergies between landmark governmental agreements: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action¹, the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the Millennium Declaration².

14. Progress in the implementation of these agreements will be assessed, respectively, by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action from 28 February to11 March 2005; by the Economic and

A. Mandates of the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs

16. The Expert Group Meeting first reviewed the key policy mandates for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

17. The core mandate for the expert discussions was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by consensus by 189 Member States of the United Nations in 1995. The Platform for Action is a global agenda for women's human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women, developed through a process of dialogue and exchange within and among governments, international organizations, including the United Nations, and civil society. The Platform for Action builds on commitments made at the United Nations world conferences on women held in Mexico in 1975,³ Copenhagen in 1980,⁴ and Nairobi in 1985,⁵ as well as other commitments made at the United Nations global summits and conferences in the 1990s.⁶ The Expert Group Meeting underscored the fact that the Beijing Platform for Action provides the most important comprehensive mandate for governments to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are actively addressed as core development concerns.

18. The commitments made by Member States in the Beijing Platform for Action were reaffirmed and further strengthened by the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century", which took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 5 to 9 June 2000.

19. Another key mandate is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which is one of the most important international human rights instruments and which complements the Beijing Platform for Action. It is a legally-binding international agreement adopted

religion⁷, and underlined that gender equality is one of the fundamental values essential to international relations⁸. They resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable⁹

- 2. Country reporting and monitoring, coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which measures and evaluates countries' progress towards the MDGs;
- 3. The Millennium Project, an independent advisory body that provides analysis for an overall operational framework and issued its report on 17 January 2005¹⁶; and
- 4. The Millennium Campaign, which mobilizes governments, parliaments and civil society at the national and global levels.

28. All of these activities were considered by the experts as key entry points to ensure linkages between the Beijing Platform for Action and to engage in the MDG monitoring and implementation processes.

29. The experts further noted the fact that after the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, there may be room for negotiations for new indicators, through the MDG Inter-agency and Expert Group on Monitoring the MDGs, to build on and complement proposals made by the various Millennium Project Task Forces. This exercise will constitute an important opportunity to expand the set of indicators on gender issues within Goal 3 and other goals even if new targets or goals are not to be considered. Within the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Monitoring the MDGs, a Gender Subgroup composed of staff of several UN entities has met several times since 2003, and recommended language on gender analysis of existing trends as well as proposals for new or revised indicators.

30. Given the ample opportunity for discussion in the months ahead as provided by the various processes, the Expert Group Meeting welcomed the timely opportunity provided by DAW and their hosts, the Government of Azerbaijan, to meet as a group of independent experts in Baku in order to review and deliberate on the

the Expert Group Meeting on the role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women¹⁷, held in Rome in November 2004, that unclear mandates, contradictory demands and lack of political will had frequently constrained their capacity to facilitate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action across all sectors of government.

33. The Expert Group Meeting was encouraged by the reaffirmation of the international community's commitment to equality of rights between men and women, the key principle of the Beijing Platform for Action, through their endorsement of the Millennium Declaration. However, concerns were expressed about the restrictive interpretation of the Goal on gender equality and women's empowerment and the uneven integration of gender perspectives into the other goals. It noted the disjuncture between the challenges identified by the reviews of the Beijing Platform, which emphasized economic and cultural barriers, and those raised in the MDG national reports, some of which had failed to include the goal on gender equality or to analyze gender issues in discussions of other goals. Concerns were also expressed at the top-down process by which the MDGs had been formulated and adopted and the minimal participation by civil society organizations and women's organizations, particularly those that represented the poorest and most marginalized sectors of society.

34. While the establishment of an independent goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women was an important development in itself, gender equality was clearly a cross- cutting theme across all other goals. It

37. From this perspective, the experts strongly endorsed the seven strategic priorities recommended by the Millennium Project Task Force 3¹⁸. They commended the Task Force for addressing critical gaps in the MDGs, in particular, sexual and reproductive

children. While the Millennium Declaration does make a strong commitment to rights, this is not evident in the MDGs or in the analysis presented by the development community.

45. Countries that have committed themselves to the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs have also ratified key human rights conventions, including CEDAW. Their governments consequently have the obligation to work towards the progressive realization of these rights. A rights-based approach to the M

rights framework; b) the macro-economic framework and poverty reduction strategies, including c) making resources work for women; and d) civil society participation. The following sections set out the main concerns raised by each of the working groups and includes the agreed seven recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting under each of the four topics addressed.

VI. The Millennium Declaration, the MDGs, gender equality and human rights

56. The Expert Group Meeting underlined that the MDGs are derived from an international consensus on development goals and are not, as they stand, contrary to human rights principles. They will, however, be better achieved if the methodology for implementation addresses power relations and incorporates a human rights and gender equality framework. At present there is no evidence that the implementation of the MDGs is bringing a human rights framework to bear. As gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the achievement of all the MDGs, the extent to which the MDGs can be achieved depends on how gender discrimination and women's rights are addressed.

57. The Expert Group Meeting stressed that implementation of the MDGs is not neutral. The manner in which the implementation of the MDGs is undertaken could lead to the improvement of gender equality or, on the contrary, it could exacerbate women's subordination. For example, when addressing child mortality, considering women's role only as mothers or caregivers could be at the expense of women's own health and well-being.

58. CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action set out the human rights and gender equality framework. CEDAW provides the legal framework and the normative standards of equality and non-discrimination, and the Beijing Platform for Action provides the appropriate programmatic measures for the implementation of the MDGs.

59. The MDG initiative is therefore best seen as a communication and political strategy to create momentum for the full implementation of the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and the outcomes of the United Nations conferences of the 1990s. Hence the MDGs should be seen as leverage to mobilize political will and resources more effectively for the implementation of these existing commitments. The Expert Group Meeting underscored that the MDGs are not an alternative or substitute to the outcomes of the major summits and conferences of the nineties or the conventions and do not constitute an option for a minimum agenda. They should be seen as a strategy to move the world from commitments to implementation. This is the most compelling and challenging imperative of the new millennium.

A. Why a human rights framework

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indicators chosen to monitor the progress of the MDGs support a model of development that is incompatible with the human rights origins of the goals.¹⁹

67. To address all of these concerns, governments must undertake to fulfil the commitments of the world conferences of the nineties and to the human rights instruments, in particular CEDAW.

C. Re-affirming the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW as roadmaps for achieving the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs

68. As the United Nations Secretary-General has clearly stated, the targets set by the Millennium Declaration are not new. They are derived from the global conferences of the nineties and from the body of international norms and laws that have been codified over the past half century. It is important to stress, as the Secretary-General has reminded all, that the plans of action needed for reaching these targets have, for the most part, already

the conventional income/consumption dimensions to the multi-dimensional conception of poverty, including the intangible dimensions of human rights.

74. This progress in understanding the relationship between macro-economic policy and women's poverty should be translated into progressive change in development institutions and development practice. There is a need to analyze the intersecting effects of gender inequality with other factors that determine the achievement of MDGs, including the interconnectedness between the MDGs.

75. The Expert Group Meeting underlined that policy positions that build on the linkages between the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs, must seek to address the root causes of poverty and gender inequality that are embedded

4. Make the MDG-based poverty reduction strategies gender-sensitive. This should be done by drawing on the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, safeguarding women's and girl's rights and promoting their health, including reproductive and sexual health and rights; education; access to and control over economic and political opportunities and resources; and freedom from violence.

5. Apply a human rights-based framework for assessing the gender impact of trade and macro-economic policies and agreements before and after their implementation, and the impact of global public/private partnerships. Assessments should focus on (i) the differential distribution among women and men of the benefits and adjustment costs resulting from trade agreements and macro-economic policies in terms of livelihood systems, income, employment opportunities and quality of employment; and (ii) the capacity of governments to fulfil their obligations for women's economic and social rights, and to implement the required legal, regulatory and support measures (such as taxation and subsidies).

VIII. Making resources work for women

79. Achieving gender equality results depends on supportive policy environments and funding mechanisms at both the national and international levels. For low-income countries, the national policy environment and external financial support are closely intertwined, either directly, through policy conditions on the receipt of external loans and grants, or indirectly, from the type of policy advice, technical assistance or project and programme support that particular donors offer.

80. Government responses to the questionnaire on the Beijing review and appraisal process, and shadow reports that have commented on the success of the national coordination processes suggest that the main strategies of national machineries for the advancement of women, gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive budgeting and policy making have to be coordinated with key decision makers (such as ministers of finance and parliaments) at the highest levels to ensure adequate integration of gender perspectives into implementation and monitoring processes, as well as sufficient resource allocation and impact.

81. Yet the Expert Group Meeting pointed out that national machineries are too often poorly resourced, insufficiently integrated into overall government structures, or carry insufficient political weight, which can hamper efforts at mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of all national institutions. It is therefore important that opportunities are created for national machineries, gender experts in governments, women's organizations and gender equality advocates to use the opportunity created by the MDG process to ensure a stronger public commitment to gender equality and the existing governmental commitments contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as CEDAW, in ctxisgovu.3bgproc81. ortxiox:6u@xi:6.3uMBRBxs:girr3plateRBx :6u@x.35/BMMxI:6.3ul income countries will need even greater and sustained financial support and more coherent and visionary technical support from external sources to achieve specific targeted interventions for women and girls.

Recommendations

6. Systematically scale up investments in women and girl's development (starting with those whose needs are most urgent), prioritizing areas that have been overlooked, such as sexual and reproductive health and where there has been persistent gender bias, by:

- a) Developing new financing mechanisms to increase the resources available for the reduction of poverty and the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment;
- b) Including explicit gender equality objectives in all key strategic areas of the poverty reduction strategies, including poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), particularly the economy and governance, infrastructure and labour policies, and allocate the necessary financial and human resources to the associated budgetary expenditure and monitoring;
- c) Supporting gender-sensitive budgeting initiatives, at local, national and international levels (including the UN system), and developing and applying gender-sensitive methodology to accurately measure, assess, and track the impact and effectiveness of investments in women and girls and the effectiveness of those investments for reducing gender inequality;
- d) Ensuring the achievement of gender equality in the MDGs through targeted funding by governments and donors for gender equality as an Cj:tTdD[IwUkVj:CLzClomU7CjzzV:IeUCj:IVwwInUkCj:IVwwI'UCjzzV:7IsUkzj:Cq:

Cq:IIIocUCj:IVwwliUkLj7wt batV7.LCIIUkLqzIrUCj:j:IVqusk achnt

investments. Consequently, civil society has gained great knowledge, credibility, experience in policy dialogue and building partnerships with international and national actors, particularly States, for the implementation of the commitments of Beijing Platform for Action.

84. The Millennium Declaration recognizes both the importance of women's empowerment and partnering with CSOs in pursuit of development, gender equality and poverty eradication, indicating the need to work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens. However, the recognition of this role has not been fully translated into formal and meaningful engagement in the advancement of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Therefore, women's organizations have not yet fully acknowledged the MDGs as a tool for advancing women's empowerment and gender equality.

85. The process of achieving the MDGs is an excellent opportunity to bring the Beijing Platform for Action, including women's rights, to the core of the global commitments, which have been accepted by the international community as standards for measuring human development achievements at national, regional and global levels. In addition, the MDG process reinforces the partnership between women's organizations, governments, the United Nations and other stakeholders, thereby availing channels to form strong global and national alliances in the advancement of their development agendas. Not exploiting these strategic alliances will erode the potential of achieving the MDGs.

86. The Millennium Project report²¹

ANNEX I

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ANNEX II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

D. WORKING PAPER

EGM/BPFA-MD-MDG/2005/WP.1 (draft)

Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the

	Ms. Helen de Pinho (South Africa): Transforming health systems to strengthen implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (EP.10)
	Ms. Zonibel Woods (Canada): Sexual and reproductive health: A foundation for achieving the MDGs (EP.9)
11:15– 11:30 a.m.	Break
11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Presentations by experts
	Ms. Bernice Aquino See (Philippines): Indigenous women, the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action (EP.3)
	Presentation of written contribution from Ms. Anastasia Posadskaya-Vanderbeck (Russian Federation) by Ms. Heike Alefsen
	Discussion
1 – 2:30 p.m.	Lunch
2:30 – 4:00 p.m.	Presentations by experts
	Ms. Mary Kigasia Amuyunzu-Nyamongo (Kenya): Challenges in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals in urban poor areas (EP.5)
	Ms. Olga Savastianova (Russian Federation): Practices of promoting gender equality using the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs processes and building partnership between government, private sector and civil society in the Komi Republic of the Russian Federation (EP.6)
	Discussion
4:00 – 4:15 p.m.	Break
4:15 – 7:00 p.m.	Establishment of working groups and start of working groups

Wednesday, 9 February 2005