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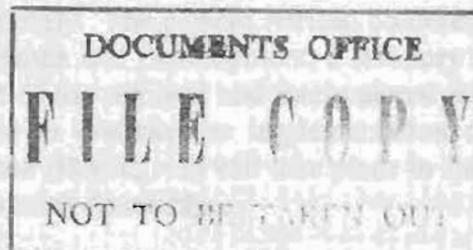
ECA - CEA

**Economic Commission for Africa
Commission économique pour l'Afrique**



**Sixth African Regional Conference On Women
Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of
the Dakar and Beijing Platforms For Action**

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**Synthesis of the national progress reports on the
implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action**

Executive Summary

**22 - 26 November, 1999
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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Executive Summary

In June 1995, during their thirty-first ordinary session, the OAU Heads of State and Government made a joint Declaration committing themselves to achieving a future built on equality, development and peace, and adopted the Dakar African Platform for Action.

Following the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the African Heads of State and Governments undertook to translate their commitment into concrete action by seeing to it that gender equality concerns are integrated into all their policies and programmes. Thus, in addition to preparing national plans of action, all African States were also to set up adequate structures for the implementation of these plans of action. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was mandated, through its African Center for Women (ACW), to follow-up on and support the implementation of these commitments and to report to the Secretariat of the United Nations accordingly. The present African conference, organized under the auspices of the Committee on Women and Development, a statutory subsidiary organ of ECA, therefore forms an integral part of the regional and international mechanisms set-up by the Secretariat of the United Nations to evaluate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action whose first global phase (Beijing +5) will take place in June 2000 during a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In this respect, all member States of the United Nations were to prepare their national evaluation reports and send them to the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) by 30 APRIL 1999. African States were to send copies of their reports to ECA no later than 31 July 1999 for the preparation of the present session.

ACW was responsible for synthesizing these national evaluation reports and to give an overview of the efforts deployed by governments with the support of their internal and external partners, the positive changes taking place in the situation of African women as a result of these efforts, the various types of constraints hindering the impact of these efforts, the new concerns and the new intentions for the next phase.

1. Summary of the synthesis of the national reports of the evaluation of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action

1.1 On implementation of the National Plans of Action

ACW has received a total of 43 national reports, 34 of which are based on the implementation of national plans of action. It means that about 64.15 per cent of the countries have subscribed to the Beijing Guidelines. Out of the said 34 countries, 20 entrusted responsibility for the implementation of relevant policies and the plan of action to a Ministry responsible for the advancement of women, five to the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Family and Health etc. or to a "Technical Division"; three others entrusted it to a Bureau responsible for the advancement of women and four countries to a structure designated as a "Committee", "Commission" or "Council". The remaining country reports are based on national programmes deriving from the document on national policy guidelines for the advancement of women.

1.2 Resource allocation for implementing the National Plans of Action

States have mobilized resources from three different sources: the national budget, international cooperation and specific funds.

(a) Contributions from the national budget

The percentage of the national budget of many countries allocated to the financing of the advancement of women, is hardly known. However, Ghana is known to have allocated, for the period 1999 – 2001, the sum of 299 million cedis (\$US 106, 785.71) to the national machinery responsible for the advancement of women. Botswana allocates 1 per cent of its national budget to it. Tunisia increased its allocation to the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs by 60 per cent in 1999. Swaziland increased its budgetary allocation to its gender and development programme by 200%. Côte d'Ivoire increased its allocation by 70.25% and Cameroun by 233%. Yet compared to the national budgets, the amounts allocated are still very small.

Tunisia's debt to Holland and Sweden has been converted to facilitate projects for the advancement of women.

(b) Resources from bilateral and multilateral cooperation

Funds have been received from various external sources for the promotion of gender equality:

- At the bilateral level from the following countries mentioned in national reports : Holland, Denmark, France, Japan, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway and Great Britain;
- At the multilateral level from the following agencies: UNICEF, IPPF, IFAD, ADB, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, FAO with ECOFAC, ACCT, UNIFEM, UNIDO WHO, EDF, ILO Office, UNEF, the World Bank ESCWA etc.
- National and international NGOs, including religious organization which supported the member States include: SOCODEVI (CANADA), CARE INTERNATIONAL, COLOMBE, CHAMPAGNE ARDENNE, FUCEC among others.

The support was provided in form of *inter-alia* projects to promote income-generating activities, literacy programmes, girls education programmes, training programmes for women on sexual and reproductive health.

The largest proportion of resources allocated to the advancement of women in various countries comes from external sources.

(c) Specific funds

These play an important role in funding concrete projects for women; examples are the National Solidarity Fund in Tunisia and the Africa Women Bank in Ghana.

1.3 Targeted priority areas in the National Plans of Action

Poverty reduction and healthcare feature among the priority areas of 40 out of the 43 countries which sent their national reports to ECA. Education features among the priorities of 32 countries; promotion of the human rights of women is priority of 27 countries and women's involvement in decision-making is priority of 24 countries. Eradication of violence against women is among the priorities of 22 countries, the Girl-Child among the priorities of 19 countries, and environment among the priorities of 18 countries. Other priorities selected are promoting institutional mechanisms by 18 countries; Women and the media, by 17 countries; economic empowerment by 16 countries; and women and armed conflicts by 13 countries.

The four priority areas featuring in most of the national plans of action are, therefore, poverty reduction, improvement of healthcare, education and the human rights of women.

(a) With regard to poverty, policies, programmes and specific anti-poverty programmes have been adopted by Morocco, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Guinea.

Numerous initiatives have been taken to combat women's poverty. These are mainly capacity building activities for women in many areas, the revision of laws and administrative practices to provide women with equal rights and access to economic resources, establishment of social services to provide jobs in support of women (for example, the 150 day nurseries in Senegal). Most significant is the promotion of women's access to credit, for example, Morocco's credit mechanism, village saving schemes in the Niger, the "Women and development" fund in Côte d'Ivoire, the Eritrean Community Development Fund, the revolving funds in Uganda and the Fund for women's access to remunerative activities (FAARF) in Burkina-Faso; States have allocated substantial funds to anti-poverty programmes, as in Algeria with 14 million dinar or \$ US 212,186, Nigeria with 32 million Naira (about \$US 331,842) in grants.

(b) With regard to health, actions taken are aimed at reducing mother and child mortality rates; fight against female genital mutilation and other practices harmful to the health of mothers and the girl-child; combating AIDS; access to primary healthcare, sexual and reproductive health services, family planning and training of hospital personnel.

(c) With regard to education States have deployed laudable efforts, including linking girls' and women's education by simultaneously promoting girls schooling and women's literacy programmes. In Ghana, Uganda and Seychelles, compulsory basic education has been instituted to secure equal access to education by girls and boys. In Ethiopia a programme aimed at increasing the number of girls in primary schools was launched in 1997. Kenya has set-up mobile schools for nomads. Scholarships are awarded to poor girls in such countries as Mali and Zambia. To combat women's illiteracy, informal literacy and education centers have been set up in countries with specific programmes, such as Angola and Mali.

(d) As regards promotion of the fundamental rights of women, States have revised their legal texts, undertaken constitutional and legislative reforms and established such institutions as the coalition for the protection of women's rights and children's Parliament in

Burkina Faso and Chad, and human rights commission in Burundi. Senegal has rebuilt the Central prison and Guinea has prioritized the creation of legal centers for women. Associations of women lawyers have been established in many countries.

1.4 Progress achieved

Five years is a relatively short period for lasting and irreversible progress to be achieved in the life of any given society. The most significant progress made in any human society has been made, over generations on structural changes accompanied by a change of mentality. This is the reason why it has been difficult to assess correctly and in a fully satisfactory manner the progress that has been made since the Beijing World Conference. However, the achievements stated in the national reports must be appreciated and must constitute the basis for an era of hope which will be marked by radical transformation in favor of gender equality.

We should commend the visibly increased participation of women in decision-making positions: in Seychelles for example 45% of the members of Parliament are women. In Mali, six women hold Ministerial appointments and in Gambia and Uganda, the Vice-Presidents are women. Besides, women are increasingly holding Ministerial portfolios hitherto reserved for men, namely, the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Industry and Trade, Scientific Research, Foreign Affairs, and the Environment etc.

In the context of the anti-poverty struggle, many countries have successfully undertaken promotion of women's access to credit.

In Uganda, the number of girls enrolled in primary schools doubled within a period of three years (1995-1998).

In addition, female genital mutilation was outlawed in Ghana, Kenya, the Central African Republic and Burkina Faso. On the other hand, countries have adopted family Codes, which confer inheritance rights on women, the right of women to keep children in case of divorce and joint responsibility in the management of family affairs.

1.5 Constraints

The constraints to the implementation of national plans of action are varied; they include: insufficient human, technical and financial resources allocated to national bodies responsible for the advancement of women; negative practices and beliefs with regard to women; society's resistance to the concept of equality between men and women; absence of personnel trained in gender analysis; lack of commitment on the part of some national actors; social conflicts and disturbances; low status of the national machineries responsible for the advancement of women and high mobility of those responsible for them; difficulty of coordinating the actions of various actors; existence of a large number of sectoral action plans and non-harmonization of these plans with the national plan of action for the advancement of women; insufficiency of gender disaggregated data; structural adjustment policies with a devastating impact on the low-income social group, particularly women; non-application of the relevant legal texts and regulations; lack or weakness of structures responsible for monitoring and evaluation; over-dependence of the national plans of action on foreign funding.

1.6 Recommendations by States

States acknowledge that much remains to be done, but feel encouraged to continue the efforts already begun. Governments also acknowledge that for the national plans of action to be well implemented, the framework for action and the mandate of the machineries responsible for the advancement of women must be explicitly defined. The machineries require allocation of adequate allocation of human and financial resources as well as a system for funding sustainably their programmes and projects.

The gender approach must be integrated into national planning, at the level of policies, projects and programmes as well as budgetary allocations.

The States also recommend the application of policy instruments, monitoring and evaluation of the projects and programmes contained in the National Action Plans and the training of personnel in gender-based analysis.

Governments acknowledge that improved management of resources requires improving communication among the various partners and harmonizing various activities undertaken. They recognize the need to involve NGOs in the planning and implementation of National Plans of Action as exemplified by those States which have successfully done so.

It is vital that all States ratify all the international legal instruments on women and integrate them in their national legislation.

States further stress the urgent need to strengthen the skills of women leaders and those in charge of machineries for advancement of women and to work for the adoption of the quota system recommended by the United Nations with regard to women's representation in decision-making positions.

1.7 New concerns

The reports show that certain concerns need to be integrated intensively into government actions, particularly, the fight against AIDS pandemic, strengthening regional and subregional solidarity, reconstruction and rehabilitation of countries which have experienced armed conflicts and, finally, reduction of military expenditure in favor of alleviating the social effects of structural adjustment programmes.

The document, Synthesis of National Reports, has been distributed to all participants. Reading it will enable each one to assess the efforts made by governments and the results achieved in each of the 12 priority areas of the Dakar Platform for Action combined with the Beijing Platform for Action.

Detailed analysis of the Synthesis document will enable each delegation to prepare its participation in the thematic evaluation Workshops scheduled for the next two days.