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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
African Centre for Gender and Development**

Seventh African Regional Conference on Women
*Decade Review of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing
Platform for Action (Beijing+10)*

**6 – 14 October 2004
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

SUMMARY OF THE SYNTHESIS REPORT

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Part One Introduction

In 1995, the UN member States gathered in Beijing, China to add to the momentum started in Mexico City 20 years earlier, to drive women's agenda forward and underline the inseparable link between women's equality, empowerment and sustainable development. Ten years after that historic Conference, during which Beijing Platform For Action (BPFA) was adopted, Africa will join the rest of the world to review the Decade. Within this framework, and following the mandate assigned to ECA by the UN General Assembly and under the auspices of Committee on Women and Development (CWD), the Commission is expected to facilitate and coordinate the evaluation of the implementation of the BPFA. This process takes place at 3 levels: (1) at the national level 45 countries using the questionnaire prepared by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) prepared their national reports, (2) ECA/ACGD organized five sub-regional meetings as follows: East Africa, 2-4 June 2004, Kigali, Rwanda, Central Africa, 19-21 April 2004, Brazzaville, Congo, North Africa, 14-16 April 2004, Tangiers Morocco, Southern Africa, 26-29 April 2004, Lusaka, Zambia and West Africa, 13-15 April 2004, Abuja, Nigeria and (3), at the regional level this Conference - the Seventh African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 10) - will conclude Africa's assessment of the achievements and obstacles for the Region. Finally, the outcome of this Conference will be presented to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) through DAW. With regard to African's implementation of the BPFA 44 African member States submitted their national reports to ECA/ACGD to prepare a synthesis of achievements and constraints encountered in the process. The synthesis report, on which this summary is based, examines member States' implementation of the 12 critical areas that informs the (BPFA). A major conclusion of the report is that despite achievements, African women face daunting challenges in that high incidents of poverty among them have not significantly reduced since 1995. African women are still struggling to gain access to such productive and critical resources as education, health, employment, decision-making structures and access to ICTs, among others.

Part Two: Summary of major findings

Women and Poverty

According to the World Bank the number of people living on less than \$1 per day in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has grown between 1990 and 1998 from 47.7% to 48.1% of total population respectively. Generally, female-headed households suffer more acutely from incidences of poverty than those headed by males. Surveys on poverty conducted in most countries during the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) process confirm the feminisation dimension of poverty. For instance, women constitute 62.1% of the poor in Rwanda, 52% in Burkina Faso, 73% in Niger, and 64% in Mali. However most countries have adopted Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs) in which gender equality and women's empowerment are incorporated. Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Eritrea, Malawi and Tanzania have PRSPs designed to enhance women's participation in political, economic and social spheres through affirmative action. In incorporating gender concerns into national PRSPs, governments have worked with NGOs and other stakeholders. Some countries are developing gender disaggregated data, as called in the BPFA, in their attempts to close gender gaps in all sectors.

Education and Training

Many national reports point out that the State has the responsibility to provide universal primary education (UPE) for all and to reduce gender differentials in education. Only a few countries report providing UPE (Malawi, Algeria, Djibouti, Morocco, Tunisia, Tanzania, Botswana and Uganda). Few countries report increased gross enrolment ratios (GER) and net enrolment ratios (NER) for both boys and girls. In Ethiopia, the total enrolments increased by 107% in the past five years, doubled in Eritrea between 1991-2001 from 24.8% to 46%, Tanzania NER increased from 79.3 to 86.7 between 2002 and 2003, in Mali 42.3% to 64% between 1996 and 2002, in Senegal 59.7% to 71.6% between 1996 and 2002, in Burundi 39% in 1996 to 67.3% in 2002, and in Mauritania, 45.5% in 1990 to 91.7% in 2003. Algeria and Tunisia have almost reached 100% enrolment for boys and girls. On the other hand, NER and GER have declined in a number of countries. e.g. NER dropped by 12% between 1990 and 2002 in Zambia and in Liberia, the decline was from 18.7% to 14.5 between 2000 and 2002. Few countries have achieved parity between boys and girls or have reduced gender gaps (e.g. Malawi, South Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia.) Algeria and Tunisia have almost reached 100% enrolment for boys and girls.

Health and Development

Most countries report increases in health provision but available statistics indicate that in Africa, the overall health profile is poor and declining precipitously. For example, life expectancy among African women is low and still falling. The probability of women in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) surviving to 65 years is only 31.1%. Maternal mortality rates are unacceptably high. For instance, the chance of dying during childbirth or pregnancy is 1:13. High levels of pregnancy related mortality, compounded by the HIV/AIDS and other STIs are reported as a major challenge by a number of countries (e.g., Eritrea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zambia). Considerable progress has been reported in lowering fertility rates attributable to increased prevalence in contraceptive use and increased average age at marriage. Infant and child mortality rates have decreased in some countries. However, food insecurity, compounded by malaria, and HIV/AIDS have profound effects on the health of African children. National reports indicate various strategies to reduce incidences of infant and child mortalities including integrated maternal and child health services, backed by immunisation programmes (Botswana, Eritrea, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo). HIV/AIDS is affecting women disproportionately in that the percentage of adult prevalence that is female is steadily rising in most countries. However, even in countries where overall adult prevalence is low or has been reduced, the proportion that is female is still on the rise. The burden of HIV/AIDS among women is a major issue due to its impact on women's health, their ability to care for children and the elderly and on women's productive work. Strategies to contain the pandemic include integrating gender issues into HIV/AIDS programmes and establishing AIDS Councils (Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia). Seychelles, Djibouti and Angola provide antiretroviral therapy for prevention of mother-to-child.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women and the girl-child or gender based violence (GBV) include, among others abduction for marriage, executions for adultery, rape, wife beating, widow inheritance, long periods of seclusion after husbands' death, and early marriage. Due to increased poverty, rapid social change and the proliferation of conflicts, GBV is becoming progressively more rampant. Rape and

other forms of violence are systematically employed as weapons of war against women and girl-children in warring countries. Some countries (Kenya, Zambia, Swaziland and South Africa) report high incidences of domestic violence. Others have undertaken measures including rigorous enforcement of existing laws and involvement of traditional institutions in the fight against all forms of GBV (Ethiopia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and South Africa). National actions plans have been developed in some countries, bills passed in others, support units and shelters for battered women, have been created (e.g., Botswana, Nigeria, Egypt and Zambia). In Central African Republic 45% of women are victims of physical violence, particularly in the household. In certain rural areas of Mali, the rate of forced marriages among girls is estimated to be as high as 80%, while in Comoros and in several other countries, it is considered as one of the main cause of school drop out among young girls.

Women and Armed Conflict

Women and children in Africa have paid a disproportionate price for the various protracted civil wars that have ravaged the continent for decades, evidenced by the fact that according to UNHCR a vast majority of African refugees 70-80% are women and children. In countries that have been marred by civil wars (Angola, DRC, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Sudan etc.), women are victims of rape and other forms of GBV. Women's contribution to the establishment of the "Mano River Union Basin Initiative" the "Women of the Great Lakes Peace Initiative" the "Inter-Congolese Dialogue" and the African Women Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD), are important examples of women's contribution to the peace process. The Mano River initiative received an award from the UN Secretary General in 2003 for the protection of Human Rights. In Rwanda, Burundi, Central African and the republic of Congo women have been active in peace-building. In Rwanda, after the genocide, the government set up a fund to give assistance to the survivors, among whom the women and the orphans are the majority.

Women and the Economy

Women's contribution to the economy has been mostly in agriculture and the informal sectors where they form the majority of workers (e.g. 70% in Mali, 70% in Nigeria 60% in Angola and 58.1% in Burkina Faso). In these sectors, women are generally found at the lower ends of the informal sector with small farms and micro-enterprises. Overcrowding of the informal sector with very low incomes means that women's jobs do not necessarily lead to empowerment. Currently, women's share of employment in the formal sector is very small (e.g. 25% in Tunisia, 20% in Republic of Guinea, 23% in Burkina Faso, 29% in Kenya, 20% in Algeria, and 21% in Mali) relative to men and their pay is normally lower than men's pay for the same work. Women's participation in the small-scale sector is hampered by lack of access to credit. A few countries have increased women's access to micro-credit but these are not sufficiently extensive to make a difference. Women's productivity and incomes in the agriculture sector in general and food security in particular is profoundly affected by lack of direct access to land. Nevertheless, countries are beginning to recognise the critical link between increased agricultural productivity and food security and women's ownership of land without intermediaries.

Women in Power and Decision-Making

Women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making structures in Africa. In many countries very little progress has been made since 1995. Few countries have enacted laws and institute policies and plans to enhance women's participation in decision-making process (Egypt, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia, Uganda). For instance, in Eritrea, 50% of the members of the

Constitution Commission participated in the constitution-making process were women, while in Swaziland women provided inputs into the Constitution. Lesotho and South Africa, as part of their efforts to transform their electoral processes, have appointed women to head their electoral commissions. Some countries have instituted affirmative action measures to redress imbalances (Eritrea, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda) in decision-making, while others have gone further to extend these affirmative action initiatives beyond Parliament, to provincial and local councils (Uganda and Rwanda). Notable increase in women parliamentarians has been recorded in Burkina Faso, Rwanda, South Africa and Tunisia. Several countries have women Speakers and deputy Speakers (Egypt, South Africa, Swaziland, Cameroon). The average representation of women in African Parliaments is estimated at 14%, however this masks significant disparities between African countries. For instance, while Rwanda has the highest representation at 49% and more than 30% is recorded for Mozambique and South Africa, Niger has 1.2% women parliamentarians.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

Gender machineries range from Committees and Departments within ministries, to fully-fledged Ministries. Most countries report the existence of gender focal points in various ministries, while others have established women's affairs departments in line ministries and have gender focal points at district level (Ethiopia, Lesotho, Cameroon, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe). In some countries (South Africa, Gabon, Zambia, Ethiopia and Egypt) gender offices/ councils etc., are in Presidents' offices. Most countries have formulated gender policies (e.g., Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Republic of Guinea, Namibia, Senegal, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe), or have programmes in place for specific gender issues (Botswana, Central African Republic, Gabon, South Africa and Tunisia, etc.), while others have national councils on women (Botswana, Egypt, Mauritius, Mauritania, Burundi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tunisia). Women's NGO Coalitions in many countries play a critical role in supplementing governments' human and financial resources to gender machineries.

Human Rights of Women

Human rights of women have benefited from the adoption of Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to the extent that discriminatory cultural practices or beliefs that go against equality can no longer go without question. But, the implementation of the Convention has been slow and activists are frustrated by the strategies of governments to circumvent the goals of CEDAW. A major concern is the extent to which governments continue to profess commitment to the principle of equal rights for women, but behave differently when it comes to implementation. Countries have instituted various measures in an effort to harmonise their national legislation with CEDAW and have reformed national legal and administrative instruments accordingly (Egypt, Gambia, Mauritius and Tunisia), others have instituted national CEDAW committees for implementation and follow-up (Gabon, Guinea, Rwanda). While most countries have amended laws affecting rights of women (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Togo and Tunisia), some are currently amending their nationality laws to guarantee total gender equality (Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi). Eritrea and Guinea have translated CEDAW into local languages and disseminated it widely among women.

Women and the Media

Women's access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Africa is limited. Burkina Faso, Mali, Uganda and Tanzania, e.g., have national policies on ICT dedicated to the promotion of women and gender issues. Poverty, lack of electricity and limited infrastructure in rural areas, is a hindrance to the spread of ICTs. In Niger women use community radios to promote women's issues. "Le Conseil Supérieur de la Communication" in that country is headed by a woman. In Republic of Guinea the number of women involved in ICTs and the media in general has doubled to 39% of journalists, while Tunisia has 7 feminine newspaper titles and 34.38% of people working in the media are women, in Togo, 51% of women have access to at least one type of media instrument. In Mauritania 78% of illiterate women have no access to any media, in Mali, 34% of women have no access to any form of media. A number of note the gender insensitive language, sexist advertisements and folklores that depict women as subordinates and inferior including increasing use of pornographic materials about women in the media.

Women and the Environment

Agenda 21 and BPFPA underline women's role in sustaining a viable and stable environment including the imperative of reducing extreme poverty. In Africa women form a majority in food production and spend an inordinate amount of time gathering fuelwood and hauling water from dams, rivers and stagnant pools for domestic use that leads to water-borne diseases. The negative impact of environmental degradation on women is also being addressed by NGOs that demand greater participation of women in decision-making process. Numerous countries (e.g., Malawi, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Tunisia, Togo, Tanzania, and Ethiopia) target women in their action plans on environmental stability and sustainable development policies.

The Girl Child

The girl-child in Africa faces unacceptable and daunting challenges. She is underrepresented in the education sector, has a disproportionate share of household tasks and is disadvantaged in terms of access to leisure and health services, and is being infected with HIV at a faster rate than the boy-child. Deprived of her childhood, she now has to take a new role as head of household as the numbers of HIV/AIDS orphans increase unabatedly. Almost all countries have ratified the Convention for the protection of the children and several have mechanism for the follow up of the convention. Some countries (Djibouti, Egypt, Liberia and Namibia) have specific plans of actions or other strategies to address the status of the girl-child including increasing trafficking in girl-children that are subsequently forced into slavery and prostitution.

Part Three *Summary and Conclusion*

Summary of Achievements

These are mostly in relation to

- Increased enrolments in education for many countries at all levels
- Almost all countries have gender policy framework and either fully-fledged ministries of women and gender issues or structures in ministries to address gender issues
- Gender budget initiatives are increasingly being addressed, albeit not by sufficient number of countries, addressed as an important aspect of women's empowerment
- Accounting for women's contribution to economic production in the system of national accounts is being addressed at least in national debate
- Gains in health, especially in relation to increases in life expectancy and reduction in fertility levels are reported by many countries,
- Populations policies that address maternal and adolescent health are important issues for many countries
- Structures and policies to deal with HIV/AIDS and the spread of STIs, malaria and Tuberculosis
- Increases in women's participation in the decision-making process especially in parliaments of some countries as well as instituting quota and affirmative action to increase participation
- CEDAW has been ratified by 51 countries

Obstacles to Empowerment

The most notable obstacles can be summarised as follows

- HIV/AIDS is affecting women and girls more disproportionately than men and boys
- Women and girls participation in the education and health sectors need drastic improvement
- Maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world
- Women's work in the agricultural and the informal sectors is hampered by limited access to credit, women's multiple roles and lack of equipment, non-accounting of women's work in the system of national accounts and gender-blind budgeting
- Lack of financial and human capacity to address gender issues

The Way Forward

In reporting major achievements in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, member States were supposed to take into consideration the UN Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) - the Outcome Document, among others. In this connection, 14 countries report on specific activities relating to the MDGs, ICPD and the Outcome Document, ranging from preparing reports on MDGs to the fact that Millennium Declaration constitutes development framework and priority areas for their countries

On the other hand all the 44 countries report having undertaken their review within the framework of the MDGs, ICPD and the Outcome Document. For example, almost all the countries reports on efforts to reduce extreme poverty (MDG1) through PRSPs where efforts are made to integrate a gender perspective into poverty reduction policies, several countries have introduced universal primary education (MDG2) and most countries report basic education as a priority area promoting gender equality (MDG 3) is addressed by all countries to varying degrees of commitment, child mortality, maternal health and HIV/AIDS and malaria (MDGs 4, 5 & 6) are receiving attention from all the countries within the framework of ICPD and the Outcome Document. For example HIV/AIDS, as a cross-cutting issue to the MDGs, ICPD and the Outcome document, is receiving serious attention from most countries especially those with high prevalence rates, while environmental sustainability (MDG 7), one of the 12 critical areas, is addressed by all the countries. However, most countries have not developed benchmarks to track achievements and obstacles to implementation of the MDGs in particular and the other commitments. The most persistent obstacles to implementation pertain to financial and human resources capacity.

Countries also reported on their achievements on new targets contained in the Outcome Document e.g. many countries have reduced gender inequalities in secondary school education, reduction in levels of illiteracy among women creating a gender sensitive legal environment, and greater emphasis on primary health care and attention to reproductive health.

With respect to the MDGs, it is extremely important that member States develop benchmarks to track the implementation. All the MDGs are specific measurable targets that call on all stakeholders to orient their development 'efforts towards ensuring the success of the goals, in a system of shared responsibilities'. Currently only a few African countries have prepared reports that specifically deal with their countries' achievements and obstacles in meeting the various targets/goals.

The most pressing question in the way forward, therefore has to do with the issue of action-oriented strategies and officials to implement policies and commitments undertaken at the various levels including the MDGs, ICPD and the Outcome Document. Officials must be empowered financially and otherwise and most importantly, they must be held accountable when policies and programmes are not implemented. Implementation therefore must define the process and be at all levels of society and not just in urban areas.