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African Centre for Gender and Development

Meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on
Women and Development

24-25 January 2006
Addis Ababa

REPORT

Introduction

1. The Bureau meeting of the Committee on Women and Development (CWD) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), from 24-25 January 2006.

2. This meeting, organized under the auspices of ECA, was attended by the CWD Bureau members as follows:

- **Senegal:** Chairperson, H.E. Hon. Aïda Mbodj, Minister for the Family, Social Development and National Solidarity;
- **Uganda:** First Vice-President, H.E. Hon. Zoe Bakoko Bakoru, Minister for Gender, Labour and Social Development;
- **Cameroon:** Second Vice-President, H.E. Hon. Suzanne Mbomback, Minister for Women's Affairs;
- **Tunisia:** First Rapporteur, represented by Ms. Neziha Zouabi, Director of Women's Advancement;
- **Botswana:** Second Rapporteur, H.E. Hon. Maj. Gen. Moeng R. Pheto, Minister of Labour and Home Affairs;
- **Nigeria:** Ex-officio members, as Chair of the African Union Commission, represented by H.E. Hon. Maryam Inna Ciroma, Minister for Women's Affairs;
- **Namibia:** Ex-officio member, as Chair of the seventh African Regional Conference on Women, represented by H.E. Hon. Marlene Mungunda, Minister responsible for Gender Equality.

Opening of the Bureau meeting (agenda item 1)

3. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson of the CWD Bureau, Hon. Aida Mbodj. Hon. Mbodj welcomed the CWD Bureau members and other participants to the meeting and recalled that the current Bureau, following its election, had held its first meeting during the last CWD session in Dakar, Senegal, in October 2005. She further expressed her satisfaction for the hosting and facilitation of the meeting by ECA and in particular, the African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD). This demonstrated their commitment to the advancement of women. She also hailed the supportive engagement of African Heads of State and Governments as reflected in a number of resolutions and conventions that promote gender equality and the advancement of women. Furthermore, the Chairperson referred to the following items that would be discussed during the meeting:

- Operational guidelines for the Implementation of the Follow-up Strategy on Beijing +10;
- The ACGD work programme for the coming two years;
- Progress report on the use of the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI);

- Possible participation of the CWD Bureau in the meeting of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

4. In her welcoming remarks, Ms. Josephine Ouedraogo, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary (DES) of ECA, welcomed all the participants to the meeting on behalf of Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of ECA and on her own behalf. The Acting DES highlighted the importance of CWD as a forum providing guidance to ECA in the implementation of its mandates in the advancement of women and gender issues. She reiterated the importance of collaboration between regional institutions such as the African Union, the African Development Bank (ADB) and ECA. Finally, she thanked the CWD Bureau members and ACGD staff.

5. In her opening remarks, Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Officer-in-Charge of ACGD, welcomed the Bureau members to Addis Ababa. She thanked the Acting DES for her presence at the opening session. Ms. Ruzvidzo highlighted the agenda items awaiting the Bureau's consideration and reiterated her wish for an 'action-packed' meeting.

Adoption of Agenda and Work Programme (agenda item 2)

6. The Agenda and the Work Programme were adopted without amendments.

Presentation of the ACGD 2006-2007 Work Programme (agenda item 3)

7. In presenting the work programme, Ms. Ruzvidzo spelt out the objectives of ACGD, namely, to mainstream a gender perspective in national development policies and programmes, including budgetary processes, in order to achieve the goals of gender equality; more efficient use of resources; and poverty reduction. ACGD's programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007 is expected to result in enhanced capacity of member States to formulate and implement gender-sensitive policies and programmes for accelerated progress towards gender equality and poverty reduction. Another objective was to enhance the capacity of policy makers and other stakeholders in the use of tools and methodologies for ensuring gender-responsive policies and programmes.

8. These objectives would be measured against a number of indicators, namely, an increased number of member States adopting and utilizing policy options for mainstreaming gender into national policies and programmes and an increased number of countries adopting tools and methodologies for the development of gender-responsive policies and programmes. Achieving such objectives will depend on the existence of political commitment to the advancement of women and support from partners at the national level.

9. The outputs to be delivered during the biennium include: (i) the servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies such as the CWD meeting and the ad hoc expert group meeting on the review and validation of the African Women's Report as well as the production of parliamentary documentation; (ii) recurrent and non-recurrent publications on the AGDI and the implementation of NEPAD, as well as technical material on national satellite accounts of household production and on assessing national gender policy frameworks; (iii) technical cooperation through the provision of advisory services to member States and capacity-building activities on gender mainstreaming and national satellite accounts of household production, targeting policy makers.

10. Ms. Ruzvidzo also briefed the CWD Bureau on the work of the two regional advisers engaged in providing advisory services to member States upon request in the area of women's human rights, including the mainstreaming of these rights into national policies and programmes, and in strengthening the capacity of member States to mainstream gender.

11. During the discussion following the presentation, the members of the CWD Bureau congratulated ACGD for implementing this ambitious programme and made a strong commitment to support the Division.

Presentation of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Follow-up Strategy on Beijing + 10 (agenda item 4)

12. This agenda item was introduced by Ms. Thokozile and Ms. Hannah Tiagha. Ms. Ruzvidzo's presentation concentrated on processes leading up to the seventh Regional Conference on Women and the development of the *Follow-Up Strategy on Beijing + 10*. She highlighted various historical events and stages, recalling the levels at which the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) was implemented. The presentation referred to the critical areas of concern as articulated in the BPFA. While noting progress made at various levels, the presentation also singled out some enduring challenges, as well as key actions to accelerate implementation of the BPFA.

13. In her presentation, Ms. Hannah Tiagha showcased the '*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Follow-up Strategy on Beijing + 10.*' She stressed the importance of national action plans drawn up by member States. Operationalization as proposed by ECA would involve a series of subregional training workshops aimed at assisting member States to develop national plans of action. In conclusion, participants were accorded a platform to ponder the following questions:

- How can the national gender machineries effectively play their role in promoting, supporting and coordinating the implementation of the *Follow-up Strategy on Beijing + 10*;
- How can CWD foster accelerated implementation of the *Follow-up Strategy on Beijing + 10* at the regional level, thus ensuring timely submission of monitoring and evaluation reports.

14. Ensuing discussion centred around non-participation of Gender/Women's Affairs ministries in major meetings of the regional institutions such as the ECA Conference of Ministers of Economic Planning and Finance. It was felt that this jeopardized budgetary allocation for gender mainstreaming owing to the non-presentation of gender issues at such fora, where attendance comprised mostly Finance and Planning Ministers. The Bureau recommended that mechanisms should be sought to encourage governments to demonstrate ownership of their gender programmes. The need to show political support for gender focal points was stressed since they seem to be ineffective due to lack of support and lack of political clout to make decisions. Effective empowerment of women and creation of the required platform to enable them to address issues relating to poverty reduction was also pointed out. The creation of linkages with other sector ministries in support of the Ministry of Gender Affairs was noted as being of paramount importance to the success of the work of the advancement of women.

15. The Bureau commended ECA on the work done in developing the *Strategy* and committed itself to ensuring that member States would operationalize the *Strategy*. The Bureau underscored the importance of developing legal instruments designed to ensure the implementation of national gender plans and policies.

16. The Bureau urged ECA to conduct the subregional training workshops in 2006 to allow countries to commence with implementation of the action plans, so that countries are able to report by 2009. The Bureau also underscored the importance of dialogue, between sectoral ministries and national gender machineries as a way of providing critical linkages.

Group Discussions

17. The discussion groups were divided along language lines to ponder questions pertaining to support and operational modalities for the implementation of the *Follow-Up Strategy on Beijing + 10*. The following is a summary of what was discussed and the recommendations made thereon:

- Focal point mechanisms should be empowered to make decisions on issues affecting their sectors;
- Observatories should be put in place to follow up on the evolution of the status of women.

18. Other recommendations fell into the following categories:

National gender machineries

- Existing national gender machineries should be strengthened, and used to sell and implement the *Strategy*. The focal points, parliamentarians and various gender networks are all important in the implementation of the *Strategy*;
- The capacities of these structures should be built to enable them to:
 - (a) Understand the *Strategy* and advocate for it; and
 - (b) Lobby within their respective sectors for the implementation of the *Strategy*, including its financing.
- Gender Ministries should lobby other stakeholders – including the donor community. These additional stakeholders can become a pressure group for mobilizing resources for gender programmes for the Government;
- The National Machinery should be made visible and relevant e.g. by producing a Social Development Investment Plan that can be used for both sensitization and resource mobilization;
- Information on key gender issues, especially the *Strategy* document should be shared with all stakeholders;

- The national gender machinery can also raise awareness about the *Strategy* through the following:
 - (a) Parliamentary Commissions/Committees;
 - (b) Women members of parliament, youth, workers, and people disability forum;
 - (c) Women's movements made up of the professions, civil society organizations, NGOs, women in politics, academia and the business community;
 - (d) The national budget process that also gives priority to funding for the implementation of the *Strategy*.

2. Needed resources for data collection (staff and finances)

- National gender machinery should lobby the Ministry of Finance and other line ministries to provide funding for gender related programmes and to sensitize them on the work of gender ministries;
- Donor funding should be harmonized and coordinated for effective implementation of the *Strategy*;
- Ministries responsible for gender Ministry issues should share and discuss information relating to funding of gender programmes with all stakeholders;
- Gender-sensitive budgeting should be encouraged and used as a strategy to achieve gender equality;
- Technical assistance from ECA should be made available to member States, including training on gender-sensitive budgeting;
- Political will and commitment at the highest level should be marshalled in support of gender programmes;
- Guidelines on gender equality and budgeting should be developed to build institutional capacity. This is important because there is a high turnover of Ministers and focal points;
- Focal Points should be permanent employees of the gender and line ministries. Their terms of reference should be defined clearly and more Focal Points should be trained;
- The education curricula should be gender mainstreamed in order to raise awareness of the *Strategy*.

3. Measures to acquire the necessary authority to promote and coordinate the implementation of the *Follow-up Strategy on Beijing +10*

- Memoranda should be prepared by each gender ministry to sensitize the cabinet on the gender agenda, especially the *Strategy* for the way forward;
- Parliamentarians should be trained on gender equality issues;
- The gender Ministry should also sensitize the Parliament on the *Strategy* and to solicit for funding for gender programmes;
- Workshops to sell and explain the *Strategy* should be held for all stakeholders, especially those in decision-making positions and the beneficiaries at the grassroots level;
- The role of the media in lobbying and advocacy for the *Strategy* is important and should be promoted, and so the media should be part and parcel of the implementation process of the *Strategy on Beijing + 10*.

Presentation of progress report on the use of African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) (agenda item 5)

19. Under this agenda item, a representative of ACGD, Ms. Tacko Ndiaye presented the **Progress Report on the use of the African Gender and Development Index**. The presentation covered the following areas:

- The definition, concept, characteristics and the objectives of AGDI;
- The rationale for developing AGDI, and its role as Africa-specific tool for Member countries;
- The AGDI objective of strengthening the capacity of member States to effectively monitor the progress made in implementing Conventions related to gender equality;
- The process for developing AGDI that has comprised several steps including collecting and processing the data, and creating a Steering Committee for the AGDI implementation process;
- The two main components of AGDI, i.e. the Gender Status Index and the African Women's Progress Scoreboard;
- Lessons learnt which emphasized the participatory development of this tool and the need to set up a forum for negotiating the scoring on a continuous basis;
- As a way forward, in 2006-2007, 26 African countries will be covered in all the 5 subregions of Africa. The rest of the African countries will be covered in the biennium

2008-2009. The tool will be enriched with additional variables, raising the present 3-point scoring to 5 points;

- The African Women Report that will be published in 2006 will highlight the reports from the following 12 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda.

20. In the discussion thereon, it was suggested that taking gender issues into consideration within the political and economic variables should be treated as a basic human right that cuts across all sectors. AGDI should also measure the use of ICTs. It was also suggested that ACGD should assess the use of the AGDI in pilot countries. In conclusion, AGDI was commended as a valuable tool for measuring impact of policies and programmes in terms of reducing gender inequalities and as such, governments should promote its use.

Discussion of possible participation of the CWD Bureau in the meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Planning and Finance (agenda item 6)

21. Ms. Thokozile Ruvidzo introduced this item by informing the meeting that ECA, ADB, and the African Union are jointly organizing the Conference of Ministers of Finance and Planning in May 2006 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The theme of the meeting is “challenges of employment in Africa.” Ms. Ruzvidzo stressed that this would be an opportunity to lobby for inclusion in the Conference deliberations of discussion of women’s empowerment in the labour market and raised the issue of CWD participation. She pointed out that ECA/ACGD would look at the issue paper to ascertain that women in labour, employment and non-market work are included. On the part of CWD members, it was suggested that they could lobby their Ministers of Finance to raise gender issues during the Conference.

22. The discussion, thereon raised a number of suggestions from the participants, including:

- Horizontal collaboration among the statutory bodies of ECA to achieve a more comprehensive and gender-inclusive development agenda;
- The CWD Bureau should send a delegation to the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance and Planning with a view to influencing the Conference on gender issues in the same way as women influenced the AU Heads of State Summit in Maputo, Mozambique, into adopting the principle of gender parity in AU structures;
- CWD should encourage those who prepare the agenda of the Conference of Ministers of Finance and Planning to include gender issues relating to employment and labour markets in the next Conference, and gender issues in general, in future Conferences;
- The Bureau should prepare a resolution during this meeting to be transmitted to the Bureau of the Ministers of Finance & Economic development addressing the issue of collaboration between the two organs with a view to enhancing the development of gender agenda;
- Lobbying of Ministers of Finance and Economic Development should be carried out primarily at the national level;

- The Bureau should send a delegation to lobby the Nigerian Minister of Finance who is the current Chair of the Conference of Ministers to ensure key gender issues will be addressed in Ouagadougou.

Presentation and Adoption of the Report (agenda item 7)

23. The report was presented by the Rapporteur, Ms. Neziha Labidi Zouabi for discussion and adoption. After exhaustive deliberations, the report was adopted with amendments.

Any Other Business (agenda item 8)

24. The delegate from Tunisia conveyed the greetings from Madame Saloua Ayachi Lebbene, Minister for the Family, Women's Affairs, Children and Older Persons, who was unable to attend the CWD Bureau meeting. She informed the meeting that the Minister had been unable to participate because she had to attend the meeting of the newly formed Arab Women Organization.

25. The Bureau suggested that Heads of State should be recognized for their achievements in advancing the cause of gender equality. The Bureau debated this issue and deferred it to the next meeting.

26. The Bureau noted that the International Women's Day coincides with meetings of the Commission on the Status Women (CSW) in New York. The Bureau noted that Ministers are vital for the organization of the International Women's Day at the national level. They therefore requested Ms. Ruzvidzo to raise the issue with Ms. Rachel Mayanja of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and report back to them.

27. The Bureau also expressed the wish to have informal consultations among Ministers during future CWD and Bureau meetings. They requested ECA to facilitate such meetings, particularly during report writing sessions when they are generally free.

28. The issue of the slow pace of ratifying the Additional Protocol on the Rights of Women was discussed by the Bureau. In conclusion, it recommended that ECA undertakes a study to find out the cause of the slow pace and report back to the Bureau.

Closing of the meeting (agenda item 9)

29. Hon. Zoe Bakoko Bakoru, First Vice-chair of the CWD, presided over the closing session. She observed that the meeting had ended with greater clarity on what needed to be done at all levels, and the support expected from ECA to implement the *Follow-Up Strategy on Beijing + 10*. She expressed satisfaction that the objectives of the meeting had been achieved. On behalf of the Bureau, she thanked the ECA/ACGD for the support extended to member States in general, and to the Bureau in particular, in the pursuit of the goals of gender equality and the advancement of women. She also acknowledged the contribution of all the technical staff, appreciated the effective organization of the meeting and the timely production of the report. Finally, she thanked the Bureau for their active participation and wished them a safe return to their respective countries.

30. On her part, Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo thanked the Bureau and acknowledged their importance as ECA ambassadors in fulfilling the goals articulated in the BPFA and the gender equality targets set by NEPAD, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the declarations of the African Union.

31. The Chairperson then declared the meeting officially closed.