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*Seventeenth Meeting of the African  
Regional Coordinating Committee for the  
Integration of Women in Development (ARCC)*

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

*24 - 26 April 1996*

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT AND BUREAU MEETINGS  
ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN  
1 - 5 MARCH 1996  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

1. Two meetings, one of experts on follow-up to the fourth World Conference on Women and the other of the Bureau took place at the ECA Headquarters from 1 - 3 March 1996 and 3 - 5 March 1996 respectively. The two meetings were organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration and with the financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Focal Field Level Institution (RFFI) for East Africa.

**A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

2. Present at the meeting were the following members of the Bureau: Cameroon, Ethiopia, Senegal, Tunisia and Namibia (invited in its capacity as general Rapporteur of the fourth World Conference on Women) and Mrs Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the World Conference on Women. Also in attendance were high-level officials and experts drawn from various sectors.

3. Amendments and Terms of Reference adopted by the Bureau appear as annexes I and II, while a detailed list of participants is attached as annex III.

**PART I**

**MEETING OF THE BUREAU ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN**

**B. AGENDA**

4. The agenda adopted for the meeting comprised the following items:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Consideration of the report of the experts.
4. Discussion on follow-up meetings to the Beijing Conference.
5. Any other business.
6. Adoption of the report.
7. Closure of the meeting.

**C. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Opening Addresses**

5. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson of the Bureau of the fifth African Regional Conference on Women.

6. Mr Aliou M. Sallah, the UNDP Resident Representative in Addis Ababa presented a statement to the Bureau meeting on behalf of Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP. In her message, Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf offered her heartfelt regrets for not being able to participate in what she considered an important step that would ensure that the momentum of Beijing was not lost and which would provide a strong force to translate the commitments made at Beijing into practical actions that would help transform our societies into ones based on equality, peace and sustainable development.
7. She commended the ECA for carrying forward the coordination role assigned to it at the fourth World Conference on Women. She also took note of the presence of Mrs Mongella and assured her of UNDP's support to ensure that the African spirit which permeated in Beijing was strengthened and utilized for achieving the objectives of the Global and African Platforms for Action. She informed the meeting that UNDP provided financial and substantive inputs into the Bureau meeting because they believed it would provide important guidance and clarity on a number of issues. She further informed the meeting that in a recent meeting convened by UNDP in Burkina Faso for all African Ministers of Planning and UNDP Resident Representative for the Africa region, a major lesson learnt was that poverty lies at the heart of both economic and political marginalization, because people within its grip cannot participate in, and contribute meaningfully to the direction of the society and to its economic growth and well-being. A related lesson is that poverty has a woman's face and the increasing poverty among women is linked to their status and power in their communities and countries as well as the undervaluation of their work, absence of recognition of the contributions they make and to their legal equity and equality.
8. Women must be regarded as agents as well as beneficiaries of change. Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choice is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development. In this regard, UNDP has committed itself to a human development paradigm, a strong partnership with civil society, in particular women's organizations and groups which have a gender agenda. In that partnership, UNDP will focus on capacity-building for women and men who support a women's empowerment agenda, beginning at the grass-roots level, to the level of national decision-making. She concluded by underscoring her personal commitment as an African and a woman to the speedy implementation of the principles of the Platforms for Action.
9. In his official statement, Mr K. Y. Amoako, the Executive Secretary of ECA welcomed the members of the Bureau to the meeting. He recalled their first encounter in July last year where strategies towards effective participation in the fourth World Conference on Women were worked out, which had made it possible to derive major successes from that Conference.
10. He commended the experts who had worked hard to identify and develop modalities that would help governments rationally and realistically to implement the Global and African Platforms for Action and he hoped the recommendations of the experts would benefit from the bureau's inputs.

11. The Executive Secretary called upon the Bureau to identify the most appropriate implementation strategy which member States can support and sustain. He observed that both Platforms had already identified the critical areas of concern and the basis upon which priority areas could be identified in a more focused manner. He further observed that the two Platforms for Action also advocate the need to adopt an integrated approach implementation and follow-up at the national, regional and international levels. In this regard, the Executive Secretary stressed the importance for countries to recognize that the main responsibility for the actions rests with the countries themselves. Member States must take the lead in translating commitments into concrete actions and ensuring their sustainability. Such an approach calls not only for major policy shifts and a redirection of resources at national, subregional and regional levels, but also for complementary actions by development partners, including international development agencies, bilateral donors, NGOs and the civil society.

12. Drawing the attention of the Bureau to the paper before them, the Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that the paper provided a framework to assist in the effective implementation, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the Platforms for Action by identifying the major components of the implementation process. He urged the bureau to review the process critically by noting those diverse circumstances and realities that had been identified in the paper as characterizing the African region.

13. The Executive Secretary also strongly cautioned that in order for both Platforms to be successfully implemented it would be necessary for governments and regional organizations to give their political backing and commitment, to strengthen existing focal points for women across the nation, to commit adequate resources for the implementation of their mandate, and to improve the effectiveness of communication, information and data.

14. He informed the Bureau of the high priority gender had in all future ECA programmes, and about the renewal process where strategic policy innovations had been worked out in order for the ECA to be able to serve member States better. The renewal process had three guiding principles namely strategic focus, cost-effectiveness and effective partnerships. Not only has ECA proposed to narrow its focus to five (5) programme directions over the next six years, but gender had been identified as a priority concern, and was to be promoted as a cross-cutting issue in all ECA's sectoral programmes, strategies and activities. He hoped that such an orientation would generate the necessary momentum to strengthen and revitalize ECA's gender programme with the intention of promoting greater impact for the integration of women's concerns in the activities of member States.

15. He informed the meeting that to ensure implementation, the African Centre for Women (ACW) was to be strengthened organizationally in its staffing and mandate. It had been placed in the office of the Executive Secretary to raise its profile internally to effectively promote the mainstreaming of gender issues in all programmes.

16. Above all, ECA would position and empower itself in the gender field through networking and research to inform and strengthen the gender dimensions of the policies of member States. The Executive Secretary emphasized the importance of ECA's advocacy role where a strong position on gender equity would be taken. Gender equity means economic and social

empowerment of women and of the African society as whole. This message, the Executive Secretary assured the Bureau would continuously be sent to Governments. He also elaborated on the advocacy of a strong policy on gender on part of Governments, and one way to do it, was in public spending policies and priorities. To shift more public spending where the social returns were high: towards basic services, investing in education, health care and water supply, where the benefits to women and girls were tangible, and the benefit to the socio-economy from their empowerment was in turn appreciable.

17. In her opening statement, the Chairperson of the Bureau first recalled that the African Platform and the Beijing Plan of Action having become reference document on women's issues, the Bureau should think out strategies that will enable national authorities and the people to take ownership of the document. Beyond such appropriation, it was urgent to define approaches and methodologies for implementation at the regional, subregional and national levels. She added that the thinking should be pursued until each African country was able to build a society designed by men and women of all social categories coming together to shape an African perception of the changes taking place in the world and which affect our common future.

18. She then mentioned five priority areas that Africa had mapped out during the consultative meeting held with donors in Beijing. She went on to invite the Bureau to define the roles and responsibilities of member States, civil society, parliaments, local communities, non-governmental organizations, development partners and women themselves in formulating rational strategies for the mobilization, allocation and management of resources at the local and international levels.

19. She mentioned the issues of the debt overhang and the effects of structural adjustment on national economies as well as the dwindling of international resources which ought to temper the hopes of participants.

20. Without the political commitment of African governments and credible mechanisms, any initiative taken would not go very far.

21. She described the activities conducted to date in her country since the Beijing Conference and concluded with the hope that the outcome of the meeting would match the aspirations of all urban and rural African women.

#### Consideration of the Report of the Experts (agenda item 3)

22. The Bureau considered the report of the meeting of Experts which dealt with seven issues and made the following comments:

##### (a) Sensitization strategies

23. It was agreed that sensitization should not be the sole focus of the campaign but also social mobilization should be used as part of the activities to implement the Platform. This should be the subject of fresh recommendations to be inserted under the chapter on

sensitization strategies. The Bureau accordingly ammended the heading to read "sensitization and social mobilization".

24. Considering the experience of OAU and ECA conferences, the Bureau felt the need for advocacy that would go as far as to address the obstacles encountered and progress made in the implementation of the African Platform for Action.

25. The Bureau further decided that the role of advocacy should be left to eminent persons from Africa.

26. With regard to teh role of national machinery in the sensitization effort, the Bureau recommended that in addition to being sensitized, sectoral ministries should be committed to the implementation of the Platform in their specific areas of competence.

(b) Resource mobilization priorities and strategies

27. While supporting the idea of the identification and judicious use of new sources of funding, the Bureau drew attention to the waste of resources occasioned, among other things, by the multiplicity of meetings and the duplication of studies.

28. The Bureau agreed that a group of multidisciplinary experts should be set up to draft a clear and comprehensive report which would serve as a working and reference document on debt, structural adjustment programmes and their effects on women.

(c) Establishment of coordinating mechanisms

29. The Bureau agreed to associate parliamentarians, members of civil society and other groups in the work of the follow-up mechanisms.

(d) Follow-up mechanisms and ARCC activities

30. The Bureau proposed that the activities of ARCC should be evaluated before any attempt to modify its terms of reference and membership.

31. After considering the report of the experts, the Bureau adopted it with the amendments shown in the annex.

32. The Chairperson thanked and commended the experts for the quality of their work and also extended her appreciation to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia for having been so kind as to chair the meeting of the experts.

Discussion on Follow-up Meetings to the Beijing Conference (agenda item 4)

33. The Bureau met in camera to adopt the report of the Experts and to consider the calendar of meetings and other activities being organized after the Beijing Conference. The decisions of the Bureau are incorporated in the list of amendments annexed.

Any other Business (agenda item 5)

34. Any other business was considered during the closed session of the Bureau.

Adoption of the Report (agenda item 6)

35. After the report had been read out by the representative of Cameroon (Rapporteur), the bureau adopted it with the specifications regarding the participation of Namibia.

Closure of the Meeting (agenda item 7)

36. Before the meeting drew to a close, Mrs Netumbo Ndatiwah, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, expressed disappointment concerning the position adopted by the bureau on the post-Beijing regional meetings which, in her view, should have taken into account the idea of regional balance and cost-effectiveness.

37. In this regard, it was clarified that statutory meetings fell within the framework of a calendar of conferences agreed with ECA, it being understood that member States had the right to organize post-Beijing meetings of their own on themes of their choice.

38. The Executive Secretary thanked the experts for travelling from distant lands to participate in the deliberations. He also thanked Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia who stayed on to take part in the Bureau meeting, adding that it was a clear manifestation of his interest in the follow-up activities to the Beijing Conference. He particularly thanked the Bureau and also the ministers who participated in the deliberations, for the confidence they had shown in ECA, adding that despite the ongoing restructuring process, gender issues would remain a priority for the Commission.

39. In her closing statement, the Chairperson of the Bureau thanked the Executive Secretary and the staff of ECA, as well as the OAU, UNDP, and the experts for their effective contribution to the meeting. She stressed the need to further refine the pertinent approaches, modalities and mechanisms for the effective implementation of the African Platform for Action. In that connection, and in view of the scarcity of resources as well as the imperative nature of the tasks the Bureau has to undertake, the Chairperson reported on her discussions with the Executive Secretary of ECA on the issue to which she attached great importance, namely, the creation of the high-level group of experts to strengthen the capacities of the team charged with the follow-up process on the African Platform for Action.

40. On behalf of the Bureau, she presented to ECA proposed terms of reference for the expert meeting. She indicated that a regional conference on plans of action might be organized depending on the availability of resources. She added that the UNDP has given its approval, in principle, for supporting the holding of the meeting of experts.

41. On a note of satisfaction, the Chairperson declared the deliberations of the meeting of the Bureau on the follow-up process to the fourth World Conference on Women, officially closed.

**List of Amendments**

<b>Agenda item 4 (i)</b>	Replace the title by: <b>"Sensitization and social mobilization strategies for the implementation of the global and African Platform for Action".</b>
<b>Para 18 (a)</b>	At the regional level Insert <b>"Obstacles encountered"</b> after <b>"progress made"</b>  Replace <b>"ECA should prepare"</b> by the <b>"joint ECA/OAU secretariat should prepare"</b>  After <b>"presentation"</b> insert <b>"after consideration"</b>
<b>Para 20 (d)</b>	Replace <b>"sensitized on"</b> by <b>"committed to"</b>
<b>Para 20 (i)</b>	Replace <b>"and"</b> by a comma and add after <b>"technically"</b> <b>"politically and humanly"</b> . Countries should also speed up the preparation of national plans of action using the expertise of ECA when needed:
<b>Para 25</b>	<b><u>At the national level</u></b> (c) third line after <b>"multiplicity of meetings"</b> add <b>"duplication of studies"</b> Add a new subparagraph (e) <b>"UNDP should coordinate the activities to be conducted by United Nations development agencies in the implementation and follow-up of both Platforms of Action."</b>  <b><u>At the regional level:</u></b>  (a) first line not applicable to English text 4th line after <b>"conversion"</b> insert <b>"and debt recycling"</b> . Cancel last sentence of the paragraph  (b) Cancel the paragraph



Para 26	<p>A. <u>At the national level</u> Add a new paragraph (iv): "a similar mechanism should be set up within parliaments".</p> <p>B. <u>Subregional mechanisms</u> (c) replace the paragraph by "such subregional organizations as SADCC, COMESA, UDEAC and ECOWAS should be encouraged to set up, where they do, coordinating mechanisms that will enable them to play a significant role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Platform of Action".</p> <p>C. <u>Regional level</u> (a) Not applicable to English text but cancel last sentence of the paragraph and add a new paragraph</p>
Para 27	Indicate that ECA should carry out an evaluation of ARCC with a view to determine its effectiveness and impact of its functions and report to its legislative organ.
Para 28(a)	Not applicable to English text
Para 29	Insert "ADB" after "OAU" and add after "Bureau" "of the 5th African Regional Conference on Women"
Para 30	After "calendar form" insert "which ECA will disseminate to member States" and cancel rest of the phrase ending with "member States"
Para 31	Replace the first line with "The Bureau took note of the following meetings and activities:"
Para 31 (a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not applicable</li> <li>- Not applicable</li> <li>- Not applicable</li> <li>- Not applicable</li> <li>- Not applicable</li> </ul>
Para 31 (b)	Cancel the third and fourth sentences
Para 32	1st line: replace "experts" by "Bureau" 4th line: after "advanced" replace the rest of the paragraph by "the Bureau encouraged the holding of both sectoral meetings"

Para 33	<i>Should read "the Bureau highly recommended the convening of a meeting of experts in project formulation, design and the production of participatory tools that would enable women to take effective part in political and economic decision-making".</i>
Para 34 (a)	<i>After "non-Zimbabwean spouses" insert "the Bureau took note of this situation and recommended that people affected by the constitutional amendment should refer the matter to the African Commission on Human and People's right".</i>  <i>Cancel the rest of the paragraph up to "African countries".</i>
Para 36	<i>Should read " The Bureau thanked the experts for the quality of their report and extended its appreciation to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia for having accepted to preside over the work of the experts. It also thanked the Executive Secretary of ECA for his constant support and UNDP for its assistance and preparedness to listen".</i>

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MEETING OF AFRICAN EXPERTS ON  
STRATEGIES AND MODALITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF  
PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

*In the implementation of the Regional Platform for Action, African countries will need to make use of capacities, methods and mechanisms which are conducive to women's participation in the assessment of conditions affecting them and in efforts to devise a viable social order based on equality and mutual respect.*

*Actions based on that principle should benefit all actors (i.e. Governments, NGOs, pertinent associations, etc.) and contribute significantly to the effectiveness and impact of the national programmes adopted in the context of the Beijing conference.*

*Efforts to strengthen the necessary capacities for women's advancement in Africa are reducible to two approaches:*

- *Actualizing and consolidating the existing expertise in the area of development, particularly as regards women's advancement; and*
- *Building critical capacities among various actors in the area of development, with a focus on women's advancement and the pertinent strategies.*

*Consequently, the above-mentioned meeting of experts has two main objectives:*

- *Consolidating the various approaches, methods and mechanisms which favor the utmost association of women, and particularly those in the lower socio-economic echelons, with the objectives of the African Platform; and*
- *Devising a regional and country-level strategy for a coordinated approach by African States in the area of women's advancement.*

*To that end, the following tasks require the attention of the experts:*

- *Examining the priority objectives identified in the African Platform for Action,*
- *Thoroughly examining various strategies and approaches for the realization of those objectives;*
- *Looking into mechanisms and modalities for enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes and for strengthening their role in the socio-economic and political spheres;*

- **Identifying appropriate approaches, mechanisms and modalities for the realization of overall as well as sector-specific objectives;**
- **Defining practical strategies for strengthening programmes of action at the country level, on the basis of the approaches and overall mechanisms identified;**
- **Aligning the various approaches and mechanisms with roles and responsibilities for various actors;**
- **Setting out a programme of activities for the training of resources persons and production of mechanisms that may be required by various actors;**

**The meeting is expected to last 10 days.**

## **PART II**

### **EXPERT MEETING ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN**

#### **A AGENDA**

42. *The agenda was adopted without amendment as follows:*

1. *Opening of the meeting*
2. *Election of officers*
3. *Adoption of the agenda and programme of work*
4. *Presentation and discussion on the working paper: Draft Framework for the Implementation of the Global and Regional Platforms for Action. Proposals for:*
  - (a) *Development of strategies for the sensitization, dissemination and implementation of the Africa Platform for Action;*
  - (b) *Guidelines for National Action Plans for implementation of the Global and African Platforms for Action;*
  - (c) *Priorities and strategies for resource mobilization;*
  - (d) *Establishment of Coordination mechanisms and the most appropriate approaches in addressing the critical areas of concern;*
  - (e) *Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of activities by the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the integration of Women in Development (ARCC);*
  - (f) *Post Beijing follow-up meetings.*
5. *Any other business;*
6. *Adoption of the report;*
7. *Closure of the meeting.*

## **B. OPENING ADDRESSES**

43. The meeting was officially opened by the ECA Executive Secretary, Mr. K. Y. Amoako. In his opening remarks, the Executive Secretary of ECA, welcomed all participants to the meeting of Experts on Follow-up to the fourth World Conference on Women. He commended the Bureau for taking a timely lead to translate declarations and commitments made in Dakar and Beijing into concrete actions. He confirmed the need to harmonize programmes and activities at national, sub-regional/regional levels and to share responsibilities in the implementation.

44. The Executive Secretary observed that both Platforms for action establish a set of measures that should lead to fundamental changes in the political, social and economic roles of women. In this regard, immediate and concerted action was required, as well as focused and realistic gender programmes which would take into account the prevailing social, economic and financial conditions of African Countries.

45. He noted that implementation was primarily the responsibility of Governments but nonetheless it was also dependent on a wide range of institutions in the public, private and non-governmental sectors. He further noted that implementation of both Platforms - the Global and Regional Platforms of Action needed to be facilitated by transparency, by increased linkage between networks and organizations a consistent and timely flow of information by all parties concerned. It was therefore necessary for governments to establish or improve the effectiveness of national machineries, set clear objectives and goals, and create mechanisms for accountability. It also required political commitment by governments to give priority to gender programmes, and make available financial and human resources. He further underscored the need for mainstreaming gender issues at national, regional and international levels.

46. Commenting on the ECA's role in the implementation process, the Executive Secretary informed the meeting of ECA's strategic focus, where gender was considered as a priority issue and was identified as a cross-cutting programme which would be given prominence in all ECA's Substantive programmes and strategies. The meeting was further informed that poverty was an area of concern in the ECA's programmes, and the wider recognition of women as assets in its eradication was a compelling ground for action.

47. The Executive Secretary concluded by thanking UNDP for joining hands with ECA to organize the meeting and urging the experts to advise ECA on how to serve member States effectively. He wished the meeting fruitful deliberations.

## **C. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU**

48. The experts elected the following officers for the bureau:

Ms Netumbo Ndatiwah Chairperson  
Ms Elizabeth Kharono 1st Rapporteur  
Ms Khardiata Lo'Ndiaye 2nd Rapporteur

Ms Gertrude Mongella was requested to assist the Chairperson in leading discussions.

Sessions were:

from 9:00 to 13:00

and from 15:00 to 19:00

49. The Chairperson thanked the experts for the confidence entrusted to her and the rapporteur for conducting the meeting. She also thanked the Executive Secretary for sparing time to share his views with the experts.

#### **D. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS**

##### **Review of the Working Paper: Framework for the Implementation of the Global and Regional Platforms for Action in the African region (agenda item 4)**

50. The working paper on "A framework for implementation of the Global and Regional Platforms for Action in Africa" was introduced by the Chief of the African Centre for Women. She thanked the Chairperson and welcomed the participants to the meeting.

51. She went on to recall that during the fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in September 1995, the Global Platform for Action that was adopted at the Conference identified 12 critical areas of concern. In Africa, the Regional Preparatory Conference had identified 11 critical areas of concern in the African Platform for Action: African Common Position for the Advancement of Women. These 11 critical areas of concern for the African region were subsequently incorporated in the Global Platform for Action adopted in Beijing. Thus the most important elements of the African Platform for Action are mostly contained in the Global Platform for Action. However, it is important that Africa does not lose sight of the African Platform for Action because it is regionally specific on women's concerns and gender issues in the region. Furthermore, in Beijing, several African delegations made specific commitments for the implementation of both the Global Platform and the African Platform. The objective of the working paper is therefore to provide a framework against which these commitments for implementation can be actualized.

52. The paper outlined the deciding factors for the implementation strategy and the components for the strategy. It also emphasized the need to prioritize the actions to be implemented and proposed that it is more cost-effective in terms of time and resources to identify clusters of priorities based on cross-cutting critical areas of concern and on the need to generate greater impact on African women. A fundamental prerequisite for the implementation strategy and projects is a thorough understanding of the contents of both the Global Platform for Action and the African Platform for Action. Therefore, sensitization and dissemination of the two Platforms was of critical importance. The role of the experts was to propose and elaborate a realistic framework and the most appropriate approaches for addressing the critical areas of concern.

53. During the general discussion and exchange of views on the working paper, the participants focused on several dimensions and prerequisites for the implementation strategy as follows:

- (a) Elaboration of the implementation strategy has to be specific and action-oriented. Problems and the necessary actions to address them have been clearly identified in both the Global Platform for Action and the African Platform for Action. What was needed was to go beyond this stage and give direction to how implementation and actualization can be done;
- (b) The Meeting of Experts and the Bureau is taking place at a very opportune moment when ECA is in the process of re-articulating its strategic vision and focus;
- (c) The experts convened to focus on what ECA and OAU can do to catalyze and speed up the implementation and monitoring process of the Global Platform for Action and the African Platform for Action;
- (d) It was further stressed that a small number of people know about the Platforms. A lot of sensitization was therefore required at the national, subregional and regional levels;
- (e) The issue of indicators and measurement of success was emphasized as evidence of success - or failure - will be needed in the monitoring process.

#### **FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PLATFORMS FOR ACTION**

##### **Development of Strategies for the Sensitization, Dissemination and Implementation of the African Platform for Action [agenda item 4 (i)]**

54. On this agenda item, the experts discussed the concepts of sensitization, the content of sensitization programmes and the modalities and approaches which could be used.

55. The experts reviewed the sensitization approach which had been used over the past 20 years and which had been more of a unilateral transmission of information, knowledge and models than a two-way dialogue. Others warned against the risk of using up the scarce resources available exclusively for sensitization while women were expecting action to be taken on the Platform.

56. Mindful of these concerns, the experts agreed that for purposes of their meeting, sensitization will be defined as a means of informing and mobilizing various categories of partners around the Global and Regional Platforms for Action with a view to committing them to the implementation of both platforms.



57. Sensitization about the platforms would always be required to secure the widest commitment to both documents and should, in every case, be conducted with concrete action in view. The approaches to be pursued in this regard should take various target audiences into account. For instance, policy dialogue is the most appropriate method for policy-makers and lobbying for parliamentarians. With community leaders, religious leaders and others, dialogue and information would be more effective.

58. The experts recommended the following:

At the national level

- (a) Sensitization efforts should provide not only for information but more especially for instituting a policy dialogue on the place and role that each society is prepared to accept for men and women. The African and Global Platform could serve as an instrument for such a dialogue:
  - (i) Different targets should be clearly defined and the appropriate approach pursued in reaching out to each target category such as policy-makers, parliamentarians, opinion-leaders, religious leaders, youth and local authorities;
  - (ii) Sensitization should be a continuing process particularly when approaching decision-makers and planners who must be made familiar with gender issues;
  - (iii) Indicators should be developed for measuring the impact of sensitization programmes;
  - (iv) The national machinery for the advancement of women should effectively coordinate sensitization activities. Nevertheless, sectoral departments should take the responsibility to sensitize their own agents and target groups; and
  - (v) NGOs, Artists, media professionals, religious and traditional leaders should also be involved in sensitization efforts.

At the regional level

- (b) The experts stressed the important role that ECA and OAU need to play in sensitization activities within their own institutions and policy organs. In that regard, both the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the OAU Council of ministers as well as the ECA Conference of Ministers and their subsidiary organs should be systematically informed on progress made in the implementation of the Platform by incorporating gender as an item in all their meetings. Furthermore, ECA should prepare and ensure presentation to the forthcoming meeting of OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, of a three to four page brochure on the Platforms.

- (c) *ECA should establish a data bank on women, gender and development on national experiences and disseminate the information so that experiences can be shared and where necessary replicated. The experts also underscore the need for mobilizing forthwith, every resource, communications structure and channel for the sensitization effort.*
- (d) *Eminent persons from Africa should be involved in the implementation of Global and Regional Platforms for Africa campaign. In this regard, Mrs Mongella, in her capacity as Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women could make a significant contribution in the implementation and monitoring of decision taken by the Global and Regional Conferences.*
- (e) *The Bureau of the fifth African Regional Conference on Women in close consultation and collaboration with the OAU and the ECA should play a primary role in all regional and international advocacy activities. In this respect, members of the Bureau should form part of their national delegations to all OAU Summits so that they can appropriately lobby the OAU policy organs.*
- (f) *The experts recommended that the Bureau of the Fifth Regional Conference on Women should make the necessary arrangements with the President of the host country so as to consider ways and means of securing the commitment of Heads of State and Government attending the forthcoming OAU Summit to the implementation of the Platform.*

*Proposals for guidelines for the national plans of action [agenda item 4(ii)]*

59. *The experts reaffirmed the importance of all member States to draw implementation plans based on the Platforms for Action which take into account the development parameters and priorities as well as the political and socio-economic situation in the country. It was noted that some countries are in the process of formulating their national plans using participatory approaches involving local communities, different line ministries, NGOs, the private sector and development partners. Other countries have not yet reached this stage. The Experts felt that guidelines were necessary to facilitate the process of transforming the provisions of the Platform into tangible results.*

60. *After discussion, the meeting proposed that the following elements should constitute the guidelines for the national plans of action for implementation of the Global and African Platforms for Action:*

- (a) *The strategy in implementing the national plan of action must be mainstreaming of gender in all sectors of national programmes. An analysis of existing plans must be undertaken to ensure gender sensitivity. The private sector must also be mobilized to implement the Platform for Action;*

- (b) *Responsibility for drawing up the national plan should be clearly defined. A multidisciplinary coordinating body should be set up to ensure inputs from all sectors of society and provide a coordinated overview of the required follow-up action;*
- (c) *National plans must be multi-sectoral with specific targets and indicators of progress and specified time frame. The plans should also address women's immediate and strategic needs. They should also be part of the overall national and sectoral development planning process;*
- (d) *Implementation should be the responsibility of the various line ministries and not only the national machinery for women. Sectoral ministries must be sensitized on the Platforms for Action in order for them to implement the respective critical areas of concern;*
- (e) *There is a need for a strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism to periodically monitor and evaluate progress made by the national machinery for women, sectoral ministries and departments and the NGO sectors, this should incorporate generating gender-disaggregated data;*
- (f) *National plans should reflect national priorities identified through a consultative process in which all actors, including the civil society and financial partners are involved in order to encourage their participation in the implementation;*
- (g) *National machineries and NGOs' should review the national legal framework and expose the contradictions and inconsistencies between the legal framework and the Platforms for Action;*
- (h) *It is more strategic to set a political agenda at the regional level with specific goals which African Governments must achieve within specific time frames; for instance, provision of water by the year 2000;*
- (i) *There is a need for clear delineation of responsibilities of the different actors in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Platforms for Action;*
- (j) *Special effort must be put in strengthening the capacity and capability on gender analysis for planners in sectoral ministries, national machineries, NGOs who are involved and have responsibility for implementation;*
- (k) *Line ministries should be guided in planning their activities to include elements of the Platforms for Action that fall within their sectors and to allocate necessary resources within their budget for the implementation of activities;*
- (l) *Role of national machineries: National machineries should play a strong advisory and monitoring role in the implementation of the plans of action. They should be substantially strengthened financially, and technically to play this role effectively;*

- (m) **Role of ECA:** The African Centre for Women should provide information about government commitments, guidelines on how to intervene in various areas, experiences of other countries and any other relevant information for the implementation of the African Platform for Action and the Global Platform for Action. The entire ECA must be committed to the implementation of the Platform for Action.

**Priorities and strategies for resource mobilization [agenda item 4(iii)]**

61. The mobilization of resources from national budget allocation and contributions from various partners is important for the successful implementation of the Platforms of Action. In the view of the experts, this issue should be considered within the context of Africa's indebtedness, economic and financial crisis and the dwindling resources.

62. Admittedly, even though this was a highly topical issue, many African women lacked the necessary information on the nature, mechanisms and impact of the debt overhang and the implications of structural adjustment policies regarding their own situation.

63. The experts felt that this was particularly worrying given the top priority that Africa accorded to checking the spread of poverty, particularly among women.

64. They stressed the need to promote a better understanding among women of the issues of debt and structural adjustment given their implications for the implementation of both Platforms of Action.

65. To address the situation, the experts recommended the following:

**At the national level**

- (a) National machineries, NGOs and women organizations should seek to be better informed about and involved in negotiations for national and international financing (budget conferences, donor roundtables, joint commissions, etc.);
- (b) New fora for consultation among various governmental and non-governmental players should be instituted in order to avoid competition in the search for financing;
- (c) New sources of financing (private sector, weapons and environmental protection taxes) should be identified and judiciously tapped. Similarly, vigorous action should be taken to reduce the waste of resources (multiplicity of meetings, mismanagement of public funds etc.) and channel such resources into operational activities;
- (d) The input of women parliamentarians should be sought at every stage from the preparation to the approval of budgets with a view to ensuring that national

*machineries for the advancement of women receive adequate resources and that the sectoral departments take the needs and concerns of women into account.*

**At the regional level**

- (a) *ECA should set up a multidisciplinary group of experts to prepare a clear and comprehensive report on debt and structural adjustment and their impact on women. The study should also specify the nature and feasibility of relief measures already proposed (debt forgiveness, reduction or conversion) with reference to the approaches already pursued by UNICEF. The report of the group might be submitted to the post-Beijing meeting in Kampala;*
- (b) *Governments should analyze their debt situation and prepare for the sharing of views on the subjects during the Kampala meeting;*
- (c) *ECA should create a forum for sharing women's ideas on the economy and development which at the same time reflects their long-term vision of society. Such a forum should provide space for thinking and for making proposals on opportunities for development within the context of globalization;*
- (d) *ECA should adopt a more aggressive approach in the mobilization of resources from international institutions. In this regard, it should lobby such institutions as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to bring their programmes into line with the effective pursuit of the implementation of both platforms of action;*
- (e) *OAU, ECA and ADB, together with like-minded subregional institutions, should speedily advocate economic reforms which genuinely benefit Africa.*

**Proposals for establishment of coordination mechanisms [agenda item 4 (iv)]**

66. *For the implementation of the Platform for Action, effective use and strengthening of institutional mechanisms in support of programmes for the advancement of women is a critical element. The meeting suggested the following guidelines intended to stress the need for such institutional mechanisms and what should be done to make them more effective in enhancing the implementation of the Platform for Action.*

**A. National level**

**(a) Coordination**

- (i) *Strengthen national machineries where they exist, and set them up where they do not, to play a coordination role in the implementation of the Platform for Action;*

- (ii) National machineries should play an advocacy role including budget allocations for implementation of the Platform for Action and policy formulation, review and analysis;
  - (iii) National machineries should be located in positions where they have the capacity and political clout to influence policies and programmes;
  - (iv) **Strengthen** NGOs coordination where it exists and set up, where they do not exist, to play an effective role in the implementation of the Platform for Action.
- (b) Monitoring and evaluation
- (i) Each sectoral ministry should have its own sector-specific monitoring and evaluation mechanism;
  - (ii) National machineries for women should not take sole responsibility for implementation; the machineries should coordinate the implementation of the Platform for Action;
  - (iii) A monitoring and evaluation mechanism which is multi-sectoral and including NGOs should be set up to monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action.

#### **B. Subregional mechanisms**

- (a) Create or strengthen subregional mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and evaluation in addition to strengthening the regional mechanisms. Bottom-up sub-regional coordination and networking mechanisms should be encouraged and established where they do not exist already;
- (b) Create an enabling environment that empowers NGOs to take the initiative in assuming responsibility for monitoring, evaluating and implementing the Platform for Action on specific issues;
- (c) Other subregional organizations such as COMESA, ECOWAS, SADCC should be encouraged to set up machineries that will enable them to play a role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Platform(s) for Action.

#### **C. Regional level**

- (a) Coordination: The OAU as the highest regional political organ and the ECA as the technical body should play a strong coordination and catalytic role in the implementation of the Platforms for Action. Furthermore, the OAU should give the necessary political impetus for the implementation of the Platforms for Action.

**(b) Monitoring and evaluation**

- (i) The ECA African Centre for Women should be strengthened in terms of increased technical, human, financial resources and mandate;**
- (ii) OAU's women's unit needs to be strengthened and elevated to a position which will make it effective and operational;**
- (iii) ECA should compile information on government commitments and request reports on steps so far taken by governments and progress made in the implementation of the Platforms for Action;**
- (iv) ECA should look into commitments made in the Platform for Action of donors and other agencies and remind them about these commitments;**
- (v) ECA should develop a database on all activities, progress models for plans of action and share this information with countries;**

**Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation activities by the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee (ARCC) [agenda item 5(iv)]**

**67. ARCC is a regional coordinating committee for the integration of women in development which has been in existence since 1979. It is made up of 15 member States, with three members representing each of the five ECA subregions. Despite its potential, the effectiveness of this regional mechanism has been greatly limited by lack of resources, lack of continuity in member States' representation, and lack of accountability from its members.**

**68. The meeting had a lengthy discussion about ARCC, its role in the past and its possible role in the implementation of the Platform for Action. It was generally observed that although the ARCC was entrusted with the responsibility to monitor the implementation of the African Platform of Action, it lacked visibility, commitment and results. In view of these observations, the meeting recommended that:**

- (a) The role, composition, accountability of ARCC as a regional coordination, monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanism should be urgently reviewed in order to determine its effectiveness in the implementation of the Platform(s);**
- (b) At the subregional level, the role of the MULPOCs should also be reviewed in line with the above recommendation;**
- (c) In view of the fact that the renewal of ARCC membership is overdue, the ECA should urgently initiate the process of election of new members and revitalize the ARCC;**

- (d) A strong recommendation of the meeting was that ECA should strengthen the African Centre for Women as a priority to enable the Centre to have direct communication with all countries. This will require a variety of expertise at the Centre which will be accessible to member States.

Proposals for post-Beijing meetings [agenda item 4(v)]

69. The meeting unanimously agreed that post-Beijing meetings were important and should be encouraged and supported by all parties concerned. However, it was felt that a lot of duplication was taking place, especially with regard to the objectives of the meetings and the themes. In this respect, the meeting strongly recommended that a coordinating mechanism on post-Beijing meetings be established, comprised of ECA, OAU and the Bureau.

70. This mechanism should facilitate the coordination and collaboration of initiatives for convening meetings at national, subregional and regional levels. This information would be consolidated in a calendar form and disseminated to member States, intergovernmental organizations, regional institutions, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies. This mechanism should, in addition, take on the responsibility of advising and guiding on possibilities of collaborating to hold joint meetings, especially where the objectives overlap or where similar themes are identified. The meeting was informed of a few post-Beijing meetings which had already taken place at the subregional level. These include a subregional meeting on women in decision-making which took place in Uganda in February this year and a SADCC subregional post-Beijing meeting held in November 1995.

71. The meeting was further informed of the following planned conferences and activities:

- (a) Kampala Post-Beijing regional conference to be hosted by the Uganda Government in September 1996. The meeting is being organized jointly by the Uganda Government and the OAU in collaboration with UNDP, the World Bank, other UN agencies and NGOs. The meeting is expected to focus on the theme "The empowerment of women through literacy and the education of the girl-child";
- (b) It was reported that another regional post-Beijing meeting was being prepared by the Ghana Government under the theme: African Women taking the Challenge to Forge Action towards Accountability, Peace and Development. The meeting is also expected to focus on the implementation of the African Global Platform for Action. The meeting was discussed in Burkina Faso by the Assistant Administrator and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, the Executive Secretary of the ECA and the Chairperson of the Bureau for the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women;
- (c) ECA expert group meeting on participation of women in the peace process to be held in June 1996. This meeting was being organized as a follow-up to the Kampala meeting on peace and the venue would be South Africa or Addis Ababa;



- (d) *A meeting on peace, gender and development is planned to be held in Rwanda in October 1996;*
- (e) *East African post-Beijing meeting focusing on national and subregional mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the Platforms for Action, is also scheduled for June 1996.*

72. *The experts noted that the two conferences planned for Uganda and Ghana are both regional post-Beijing meetings. Preparations for the Ghana meeting have already been initiated, the conference objectives and programme of work have all been specified. Plans for the meeting in Uganda are also advanced and have already been endorsed by the OAU Council of Ministers. It was observed that it could be more cost-effective for the Kampala meeting, which already had resources mobilized, to expand its agenda so that it becomes a regional meeting to review progress made in the implementation of the Platforms for Action a year after the Beijing Conference and two years after the African Regional Conference on Women. Decision on the two regional conferences was, however, left to the Bureau which would also determine the level of participation, theme and timing.*

73. *Additional recommendations with regard to this agenda item included the need to inform and involve NGOs in all post-Beijing meetings and at all stages.*

**Any other business (agenda item 5)**

74. *Under this agenda item, the following issues were raised:*

- (a) *Constitutional Amendment 14 in Zimbabwe: This is a constitutional amendment relating to marriage of Zimbabwe to foreign spouses. The amendment discriminates against Zimbabwean women who marry non-Zimbabwean spouses. After discussion, the experts agreed on the following:*
  - (i) *NGOs should take the lead through their networks to send messages of solidarity to Zimbabwe women;*
  - (ii) *This issue will be tabled to the Bureau meeting to discuss what can be done at ministerial level on the issue;*
  - (iii) *A regional mechanism should be set to prevent such situations arising in any African country.*
- (b) *The case of a Zimbabwean indigenous NGO that closed down by Government for mismanagement: the meeting was informed that the NGO has since taken the case to court. It was agreed that since the case is sub-judice it is better to wait for the process to come to its logical conclusion.*

**(c) Peace in Africa:**

- (i) A proposal was made for the forthcoming Kampala meeting to lend support to the peace movement in the Great Lakes area;**
  - (ii) A message from UNIFEM on the African Women in Conflict Initiative (AFWIC) was read. The meeting noted the need for coordination of peace initiatives in the region by NGOs, Governments and others in Africa;**
  - (iii) The meeting was informed about the Group of Eminent Women on Peace which was an outcome of the recent post-Beijing seminar held in Entebbe, Uganda;**
  - (iv) It was recommended that the OAU mechanism for conflict resolution should be used to resolve conflict between African States instead of the International Court of Justice.**
- (d) UNDP announced the availability of gender-training videos. The videos highlight case studies on violence and other forms of gender-based discrimination inherent in culture and traditional practices. They are available at a fee at UNDP headquarters and offices.**
- (e) African models of communication should be developed;**
- (f) Concern was raised about the general transport and communication problem in Africa. In this respect, the meeting requested the ECA and OAU to seriously look into the communication problem on the continent;**
- (g) Exchange visits between grassroots organizations should be supported and encouraged and regional immigration regulations should facilitate easy and regular travel between countries.**

**Adoption of the Report of the Meeting of Experts (agenda item 6)**

**75. The report of the meeting was adopted with amendments.**

**Closure of the Meeting**

**76. Before closing the meeting, the Chairperson thanked the experts for their substantive contributions throughout the meeting. She also thanked the rapporteurs for the quality of the report produced, and the interpreters for their patience.**

**77. The Chief of ACW thanked all the participants on behalf of the ECA Executive Secretary for sparing the time at a very short notice to come to this Expert meeting. She noted that this clearly demonstrated their commitment to the issues. One of the experts moved a vote of thanks for the Chairperson for her excellent work in steering the discussions.**

**78. The Chairperson then declared the meeting closed on 3 March 1996.**

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