



REPORT ON

**THE AD HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO
DISCUSS THE DRAFT PLATFORM FOR ACTION
TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE FIFTH AFRICAN
REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN**

27-29 July 1994
Tunis, Tunisia
ECA/ACW



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with the Government of Tunisia organized an Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting preparatory to the Fifth Regional Conference on Women from 27 to 29 July 1994 in Tunis, Tunisia. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss and formulate a draft Platform for Action which would be tabled before the Fifth African Regional Conference for Women for adoption as the African common position to be incorporated into the Global Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

II. ATTENDANCE

In attendance were participants from the following countries: Algeria, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Also in attendants were participants from various organizations, institutions, NGOs, National Commissions for Women as follows: The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the International Labour Organization, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), African Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF), the Focal Point for WID in UNV, the World Food Programme (WFP), the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Regional Focal Field-level Institution for East Africa(RFFI-EA), NGO Secretariat for Beijing in South Africa, Arab Women Centre for Training and Research, the "Mission francaise de coordination de la 4eme Conference Mondiale sur les femmes, the "Chambre National des Femmes de Chef d'entreprise in Tunis, National Office of Family and Population in Tunis, UNDP, Ministere des Affaires de la Femme (Tunisie), Fondation Tunisienne pour le developpement communautaire, National Coordinating Committee in Nairobi, National Commission for Women in Nigeria.

See Annex I for detailed list of participants.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

The meeting was presided over by Dr Neziha Mezhoud, the Minister responsible for Women Affairs and the Family, who also opened the meeting. Mrs Mebo Mwaniki, Chief of the African Centre for Women at the ECA read a statement on behalf of Mr Layashi Yaker, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa. Madame Marie-Noelle Koyara, Minister of Women Affairs in the Central African Republic gave the vote of thanks.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The meeting adopted the following agenda:

- Opening ceremony
- Election of the Bureau
- Adoption of the provisional agenda
- Historical review of past World and Regional Conferences on Women including plans of action adopted
- Brief review of the agenda of the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women and the outline of issues to be discussion
- Review and discussion of the draft Platform for Action
- Formation of groups
- Review and discussion of the draft Platform for Action (groups)
- Adoption of the draft Platform for Action
- Closing of the meeting.

Election of the Bureau:

The following countries were elected into the bureau:

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| Tunisia | Chairperson |
| Uganda | 1st Vice Chairperson |
| Algeria | 2nd Vice Chairperson |
| Zimbabwe | 1st Rapporteur |
| Senegal | 2nd Rapporteur |

V. PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

Historical review of past World and Regional Conferences on Women

The delegate from Tunisia who was also the chairperson of the meeting gave a brief historical review of past World and Regional Conferences on Women. She highlighted on the past World Conferences namely the first World Conference held in Mexico in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, the third World Conference in Nairobi in 1985 including the plans of action and strategies which were adopted for the advancement of women. She also

highlighted the regional conferences on women held in Nouakchott (Mauritania) in 1977, Lusaka (Zambia) in 1979, Arusha (Tanzania) in 1984, and Abuja (Nigeria) in 1989. These World and Regional Conferences adopted plans and strategies for the advancement of women.

With regard to the agenda of the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women, the ECA representative highlighted the agenda of the Conference as well as the thematic outline of the agenda covering various critical areas of concern to women in Africa. For reference purposes, the agenda and the thematic outline are clearly outlined in FEMMLINE No. 1, a news update on preparatory activities for the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women to be held in Dakar, Senegal, 16-23 November 1994. Following the presentation, some participants raised questions and requested clarifications on some issues; some also suggested that there should be linkages between the agenda of the conference and the issues being presented in the Regional Platform for Action.

Concerning the draft Platform for Action, the ECA representative gave a brief overview of its structure as follows: the mission statement; global and regional overview; critical areas of concern; related strategic objectives and actions to be taken; financial arrangement; and institutional framework. The presenter highlighted the overall socio-economic and political situation world- and region- wide, touching on issues such as structural adjustment and the debt crisis in Africa. Critical areas of concern to women in Africa were also explained as well as proposals for financial and institutional arrangements. Following the presentation, there was a lengthy debate on the draft Platform for Action whereby participants gave general and specific observations on the document.

Formation of Groups

Review and discussion of the draft Platform for Action was conducted in two groups. Group I discussed the following areas of the draft Platform:

Education, Health, Legal and Human rights, Employment, Family Planning and Violence agents women;

Group II, on the other hand, discussed: Economic/Political empowerment, Peace, Poverty, Science and technology, Environment and sustainable development;

Reports of each group are presented in the report that is summarized below:

REPORT ON AMENDMENTS MADE BY BOTH GROUPS I AND II ON THE DRAFT PLATFORM FOR ACTION

GROUP I

Subtitle "A" is amended to read: Culture, Education, Socialization, Health and Employment

The first para. was amended to read " the inter-related question of culture, education, socialization, health and employment to dominate African socio-economic development..... These questions are the most important..... for the Social Summit, the International Conference on Population and Development etc. regarding poverty eradication.....integration.

(a) Culture

Culture often perpetuates discriminatory practices against women in the African society. Often times, women themselves contribute to this practice. In the areas of girls education for example, there are numerous cultural practices that have adversely affected her continuation and completion of education at the highest level possible. While enrolment at primary level in some country is one to one. Disparities to show at secondary tertiary and university levels, as more and more girls begin to drop out due to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, female circumcision and preference for the boy child in the area of educational financing where resources are scarce.

Thus in the conception and visualization of cultural phenomena culture can only be a development factor if it is selectively used. Governments should therefore formulate a cultural policy of cultural training so as to help create a national climate conducive to the promotion of women in all spheres of development.

(b) Socialization

Socialization is understood as the process by which a child is taught the roles he or she is to play (Gender roles) in society. This process determines how adult men and

women behave chief agents of socialization are families, schools and religion. In Africa roles assigned to men and women are specific and different. The family as an agent of socialization assigns different status , values and roles to girls and boys. Discrimination against women and girls start before birth with parental and societal attitudes that promote in preference against daughters.

Para. 43 becomes para. 45 under the title **Education**
Former para. 44 becomes **para. 46**

First sentence see corrections in French version

Third sentence to read as follows:

"This is explained by the fact thatsystem is still **limited** or too few pupils..... successfully."

For other corrections, see the French version.

Former para.45 becomes para.47 and is replaced by the Following formulation:

In the cultures of many countries, one may observe that gaps between the sexes in the field of education are particularly broad in rural areas (figures to be provided). This state of affairs is due to the fact that rural zones have been comparatively lagging behind in development in comparison to urban zones; the inaccessibility of schools to young girls in the rural areas as well as literacy programmes to rural women who are victims of discrimination. Indeed such a situation has long term adverse effects on African development.

Former para. 46 becomes **para.48** and corrected as follows:

Although primary health care (PHC) **adopted** by Alma- Alta..... health for all by the year 2000,still not been **implemented by** the most of African countries.

Former para. 47 becomes para. 49 reformulated as follows:

(d) Health

The World Health Organization's statistics for 1993 show a broadening gap between the least developed countries, most of which are situated in Africa and the rest of the World, with regard to the important health indicators such as weight at birth of infant, child juvenile and mother mortality rates, as well as life expectancy.

The UNDP report for the same year on human development shows that infant and child-juvenile mortality rates, respectively estimated atand at.....for the whole region, vary according to countries fromto, and from.....to

According to the same report, life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at 51,8 years, while infant mortality rate is estimated at 690 for 100 000 livebirths, and maternal death rate at.....for the whole region, thus constituting one of the highest rates in the world. In the countries of East Asia and the Pacific, IMR is 76/1000 live births, life expectancy 68 years and maternal mortality rate 195/100,000. 20-30% of maternal mortality concern adolescents who constitute a particularly vulnerable group requiring specific care, and does not receive the attention it deserves within the health services of the region. In addition, abortions, when they occur without adequate assistance, are one of the most frequent causes of maternal mortality and are in most cases the result of inadequate access to modern methods of birth planning.

Former para. 48 becomes para 50 to read as follows:

Meagre resources..... are still being directed towards curative care with little impact on the Africa..... health service.

Former para 49. becomes para. 51 and has been reformulated as follows:

The HIV/AIDS epidemic poses a major threat to women. This is particularly so because of the women's low status in society; and taboos surrounding sexual health. Women lack negotiating power for abstinence or protected sex thus making them more vulnerable to HIV. Some cities in Africa report 80% HIV prevalence among sex workers. In some African countries 30% of women in reproductive ages are infected. In Zimbabwe, HIV among 15 to 19 year old is six times higher in girls than in boys. The age at which women contract AIDS is lower than that of men. 30% of babies born to HIV infected mothers contract the virus in the womb. This is seen as a threat to women's child bearing and mothering career. Figures from WHO indicate that there will be 10 million AIDS orphans by the year 2000. This has serious implications on women because of their role in the provision of health care for their families.

Former para 50 becomes para 52 reformulated as follows:

Given the African socio- cultural environment, family planning, considered in a multi-dimensional context, including women's right to reproduction, her right to information about the utilization of modern contraceptive methods, overlooks the need for men to be involved in the family planning policies. Family planning is not merely a policy of birth control, it is also a policy of prevention and struggle against sexually transmissible diseases. It is in this context that a strategy of IEC is practical in making family planning services available to women especially in rural areas.

Former para. 51 is changed to para 53 and maintained. At the end of the paragraph, the following has been added:

In view of the fact that resources allocated to the sectors of health and education are usually limited, basic health care as defined in the Alma _Alta and Saitama declarations as well as in the Bamako Initiative is the best stake available to the region for coping with the problems of health which constitute an impediment to long-term growth and development. It must be indicated, however, that structural adjustment programmes have, in some cases, adversely affected the implementation of basic health care activities.

Former para. 52 is cancelled. A new introductory paragraph is to be formulated under subtitle (e) **Employment**.

Former paras. 53 and 54 are combined to become the introductory para. 56. which should read as follows:

Malnutrition which is rife in most countries of the region, affects youth, children and women in particular. Deficiency in iodine, Vitamin A and iron are particularly common manifestations of malnutrition. which aggravates women's fatigue, increases their vulnerability in health and impairs their capacity for work.

New para. 55 reads as follows:

Particular attention should be given to handicapped women who are still the most marginalized category within society. Their numbers are ever on the increase as a result of mutilation due to wars or ordinary accidents, which further reduce their capacity for participating in economic development.

Former paras. 55 to 60 should be reformulated to include the following ideas:

- constraints to women employment in the modern sector
- the status of women in the modern labour sector particularly the relationship between employment and training
- access to skilled work and positions of responsibility
- reconciling family and professional responsibilities
- division of labour in the family

Former para. 91 has been amended to read:

However, a recent comparative study conducted by ECA in 1989 in national laws on the rights and status of women in the region shows that while progressive changes are occurring in some specific areas affecting women, the changes have been made in a piecemeal and uncoordinated manner. Consequently, potential advances in certain areas are reduced or negated by the lack of necessary accompanying change in other closely related areas. For example, advances in labour legislation are

diminished by the lack of accompanying measures to provide appropriate day care facilities.

Former paras. 92 to 94 have been amended to read:

In many countries, the constitutions provide for gender equality. However, while efforts are made to implement and enforce equal rights, progress is often negated by certain customary and/or religious laws. For example, there are countries where, regardless of age, employment or civil status, women continue to be treated like minors under the guardianship of husbands, fathers or brothers. Despite the legal right to work, married women in certain countries cannot do so without the agreement of their husbands. Likewise, while there are countries in which a women, irrespective of their marital status, can own and manage property in their own right, sue and be sued in their own name, there are also countries where women cannot appear in court without the permission or assistance of their husbands or a male relative. Lastly, in some countries, legal provisions dictate that a woman who marries a foreigner loses her citizenship, thus creating an ambiguous situation for their children.

Former para. 96 has been amended to read:

96. Traditional practices which constitute a violation of the physical integrity of women and children, and in particular the genital mutilation of girls, should be regarded as a violation of human rights, and particularly with regard to children who are usually the most directly concerned and are not in a position to say no. Some countries have adopted legal constitutional measures aimed at abolishing these practices which are not always implemented.

Former para. 98 has been amended to read:

Family planning is an emerging issue in respect of women's reproductive rights. This issue is particularly sensitive to women in rural areas, where 75 per cent of the women normally live. They have limited access to information, education and information, which constitute critical elements of the procreation process, and is a cause for great concern.

Former para. 104 has been amended to read:

Women go through unbearable suffering in the course of their flight and meet with serious difficulties in the camps, particularly when they attempt to fulfil their duties as mothers, educator, and often as heads of families. Some of the them may, in their efforts to become integrated into new communities, find themselves caught in situations where they are exploited, due to their dependency on other people for basic vital needs. Indeed they are sometimes forced to keep silent about rape and cruel treatment perpetrated by those very people who are supposed to assist them.

Socialization strategies

African societies should mobilize boys and men in particular as family members for the emancipation of girls and women.

Male and female stereotypes which designate women in the private sphere of activity (maternity, looking after children and other members of the family, emotional support), and men for the public sphere of activity (the professional and political world), and place great value on male tasks, are still quite common in Africa. African societies must combat them through sustained education, information and appropriate legislation.

African parents continue to socialize their children in a traditional fashion, providing boys and girls with specialization in different spheres of activity, and reserving for the girl a status of inferiority and subordination. In this respect it would be advisable to:

- Undertake a sensitization and education programme designed to change the attitudes and behaviour of African parents with regard to the socialization of children.
- Include in literacy programmes a component on socialization
- develop an adequate associative network for training parents and helping them to socialize their children on the basis of emancipation and equality.

GROUP II

The following amendments were agreed upon by Group II:

I. MISSION STATEMENT

The Regional Platform for Action (PFA) is a synthesis of regional perspectives and priorities, and a framework for action for the formulation of policies and implementation of concrete and sustainable programmes for the advancement of women. It is developed in consonance with the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS), the Abuja Declaration and the Kampala Action Plan. The PFA aims to accelerate the social, economic and political empowerment of all women at all levels at all stages of their lives.

Para 3-40

II. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL OVERVIEW

It was agreed that this section should be very African and woman-oriented . It was also agreed that some countries can be named if they demonstrate particularities that we want to demonstrate on the various items. This section establishes the conceptual framework for Women in Development in the Plan of Action at macro level.

The section should be reduced to 1-2 pages maximum and contain the following critical areas in the reformulation of paragraphs.

1. Global overview:

a) Political:

- The demise of communism/end of the cold war and its impact on the economic processes in Africa (investment and aid to E. Europe)as - well as on the democratization process.

b) Economic:

- International recession,

- the globalization of the economy,
- new technologies,
- international migration.

2. Regional overview: critical issues to be used in the reformulation of paragraphs

a) Political:

- A short critical analysis on the impact of the Democratization process on society and women.
- Wars and strife in the Continent
- refugee
- displaced people are especially women and children
- ethnic clashes

b) Economic:

- Poverty
- SAP, devaluation and debt crisis
- Africa's vulnerability in terms of food self sufficiency
- Demographic pressures
- Environmental degradation
- Domination of the informal sector
- Rural/urban migration
- Refugee crisis

NB. National report data and statistics should feed into this; back up statistics should be obtained from existing documentary evidence.

Para 52 - 62

III. Economic empowerment

Sections in the PFA on Poverty and Employment should be merged into one section titled "Economic empowerment".

Strong opening statement:

Poverty in Africa is on the increase (give an up to date figure). This has been aggravated by the SAP and debt crisis, by internal strife, the fragile ecology, demographic pressure etc.

These trends have impacted on women in the following ways:

1. Employment: Private sector and public sector employment levels have contracted due to lay-offs which affect both men and women. Devaluation has led to a decrease in the value of real income.

Export processing zones do not have necessarily positive impacts on the employment of women (cheap labour, bad working conditions etc.)

Both rural and urban employment have suffered but rural women are especially invisible while suffering greatly.

Include impact on girl child. (Sale of child labour as domestic servants/slavery and prostitution)

2. Public spending: has decreased especially in the social sectors eg. housing, health and education. This is especially due to SAP conditionalities.

Para 63 (B)

IV. Political Empowerment/Unequal participation in the decision making process at all levels
The title should include "at all levels".

Opening statement:

1. The continent is at the moment involved in the democratization process and there have been active participants as candidates for election, as voters and as observers of the election process in many countries. A good number of women have entered parliament through their own efforts and through the support of women, women's groups, associations and organizations. (Statistics should be used)

2. Democratization should be understood, however, as meaning:

- the equality of opportunity at all levels (starting from the household to community organizations, cooperatives, trade unions, youth organizations, etc.)

- Popular participation in decision making at all levels
- Transparency and accountability.

Delete paragraph 65.

paragraph 66-72 should be merged to highlight the main impediments. (Socio-cultural, religious, educational, economic) In some cases multipartism has divided women and made them lose some of their few gains that they have achieved.

Women need to be in decision making positions also in UN organizations, in the courts (judges, magistrates etc.).

Para 102

V. WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The introduction should read as follows:*

See introduction to Peace enclosed in the Kampala Plan of Action.

At the turn of the century, 90 per cent of war victims were soldiers, today 90 per cent are civilians mostly women and children who are caught in conflicts to which they are not party. From domestic violence to civil strife and war, women bear the devastating consequences of gender- based power relations.

Africa continues to waste its precious human and financial resources on military expenditures. A reduction of the world's military expenditures by only 3 per cent would save 460 billion dollars that could be oriented to much needed socio-economic development, thus making the "peace dividend" a reality.

Also see introduction on peace in the **Kampala Plan of Action** and include some of the ideas.

The following ideas should be included in this section:

1. The definition of peace should include armed conflict, economic conflict and religious and other extremism intolerance.
2. Adapt the Kampala Plan of Action on Women and Peace. (summarize the document).

3. Paragraph 102 - 108 to be adjusted according to Kampala Plan of Action and Science and Technology.

VI. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Environment and sustainable development is a new para. This topic is critical to the sustained development of women.

Mention issues related to the debt burden, structural adjustment programmes and trade and impact on environment vis-a-vis women.

1. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992 and preparations for it culminated in the recognition of the crucial role of women in sustaining physical, natural and socio-economic environment. UNCED adopted the document '**Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable Development**' within Agenda 21 as chapter 24.
2. Experiences in many parts of Africa has shown that women play a critical role in environmental management, conservation and protection. They are also the first to suffer as these environmental changes affect their ability to obtain firewood, energy, water, food and other resources for household and economic activities.
3. On going rapid environmental and economic degradation in Africa such as desertification, deforestation, natural disasters and toxic waste drastically affect the lives of women and children in rural and urban areas.
4. However, women have been largely absent in decision-making and in the implementation of environmental projects and programmes. Furthermore, their enthusiasm, experiences and knowledge in natural resources management has not been recognized.
5. Key concerns for promoting women's role in natural resources management focus on their access to and control over natural resources - namely, land, water and energy.

6. A crucial constraint for women's involvement in both agriculture and environmental activities is their lack of natural resource tenure rights, information, extension services and training in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture.
7. Other areas of concern include smoking, dumping of hazardous wastes and pesticides and the detrimental effects these have on women's health.
8. Lack of appropriate technological development, and lack of recognition of indigenous science and technology, inter alia, in the fields of sustainable agriculture (including organic farming), natural resources management and energy has contributed to environmental degradation, food insecurity and increased women's work. The direct link between women, appropriate science and technology and sustainable development cannot be overemphasized.

VII. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. Need to look at more innovative strategies e.g. harnessing of popular African artists and media to fund-raise for women's development issues; NGOs; Private sector; ourselves as women;
2. The Regional Meeting for Africa in Dakar should be a publicity event to mobilize new funds for women development programmes and projects in Africa through gala nights, cultural shows;
3. Since women constitute about 52 percent of the total population, governments should reduce military budgets and contribute towards women's projects and programmes;
4. Establish National Trust Funds for the implementation of the Platform for Action;
5. Mobilize resources at the community level;
6. Approach UN and International organizations such as ADB, UNDP, World Bank, PTA;
7. Debt rescheduling in favour of women in development, the environment etc.
8. Governments to allocate and target fund to WID programmes;

9. Governments to reduce military budgets direct these resources to women's programmes;
10. Mobilize the media and performing artist to publicize widely and fund raise for the implementation of the Platform for Action.

Action Plan for Environment and Sustainable Development

Individual Actions

1. Participation/involvement in the planning and implementation of environmental programmes and projects;
2. Networking with other women groups carrying out similar activities, e.g exchange visits;
3. Girls should be encouraged to study science and consider issues related to environment as a possible career field;
4. Journalists should focus more on women's perception of resource use and management.

NGOs should :

1. promote development that begins with local priorities and share these with government, international organizations and government;
2. advocate for policy changes to facilitate control of resources and women's participation in natural resource management;
3. Undertake research on the priority areas;
4. develop appropriate training programmes and packages;
5. ensure regular flow of information.

Governments should :

1. Adopt UNCED's agenda 21, Chapter 24 that focuses on women;
2. review programmes and policies to ensure women's participation in activities related to environment and sustainable development;
3. undertake environmental impact assessment that considers impact on women and children before implementation of large projects;
4. review legislation relating to women's access to natural resources, e.g land tenure rights;
5. introduce environmental education in school curriculum;
6. Recognize and encourage the use of indigenous science and technology in sustainable agriculture, food processing and natural resource management.

International organizations and donors should:

1. Provide financial support for training in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture;
2. Conduct research, case studies, impact studies and profiles;
3. facilitate women's participation in international conferences and debates in sustainable development;
4. Ensure that development aid is not only linked to economic progress but also to environmental and socio-economic indicators and reflect more on the situation on women.

VI. CLOSING

The closing ceremony was presided over by Dr Neziha Mezhoud, the Minister responsible for Women's Affairs and the Family. During the ceremony, Mrs Mebo Mwaniki, the Chief of the African Centre for Women at ECA thanked the participants for their hard work during the entire period of the meeting and urged them to continue their preparatory activities for the Regional and World Conferences with diligence, always keeping in mind that the process of striving for women advancement and gender sensitivity will continue even beyond Beijing. Mrs Hirut Befecadu, Chief of the Women's Unit at the OAU gave a vote of thanks. In her closing statement, the Honourable Minister for Women Affairs and the Family congratulated the participants for their accomplishments during the meeting, ECA for organizing the meeting in collaboration with the Government of Tunisia and the women of Africa, especially the various associations for their tireless efforts to network at regional and international levels to further the cause of women. She then urged them to prepare for the Beijing Conference with one voice, the African women voice so that the meeting can be a meaningful one for them. Wishing everyone safe return to their different destinations, she declared the meeting closed.

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