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**Multinational Programming and Operational Centre
(MULPOC) - Niamey**

**Meeting of the Subregional Committee for
the Integration of Women in Development**

30 March - 1st April 1992

Niamey, Niger

**NOTE ON PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION ON
THE ABUJA DECLARATION ON PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT:
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AFRICA IN THE 1990S**

1. At its twelfth meeting held from 23 to 25 April 1991 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the African Regional Co-ordinating Meeting for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC), requested the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa to organize meetings of the subregional committees in order to bring the member States of each Subregion together to decide jointly on measures for implementing the Abuja Declaration on participatory development and the role of African women during the 1990s. It will be recalled that the Declaration was adopted at the fourth meeting of the African Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development which was held from 6 to 10 November 1989 in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria. Subsequently, the ECA Conference of Ministers, in resolution 684(XXV) endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of that regional conference as set forth in the Declaration. On that occasion, the Conference of Ministers urged member States to ensure that all the recommendations of the Abuja Declaration were implemented and women made an integral part and basic objective of national recovery and long-term development programmes.

2. Two years after the Declaration had been adopted, an assessment of the extent to which its recommendations had been implemented revealed no significant achievement. This note will, therefore, be confined to recalling briefly the main objectives of the Declaration and to describing the measures taken by ECA within the context of the mandate given to the Commission with a view to ensuring the implementation of the Declaration. This note will conclude with a listing of some measures that must be taken in order to achieve the objectives set in the Declaration.

Objectives of the Abuja Declaration

3. The Abuja Declaration is in fact an expression of the aspirations and desires of African women regarding the fundamental issues of women's advancement and development. The Declaration contains an analysis of the progress made to date regarding the participation of women in such key development sectors as agriculture and food production, law and legislation, employment, health, environment, decision making and access to resources including credit and technology.

4. The analysis reveals that women still occupy an important place in agriculture and food production. It indicates that the informal sector deserves greater attention to the extent that it is playing an increasingly significant role in job creation both in the productive and the services sector. Indeed, the Declaration emphasizes the fact that women in West Africa account for 60 to 80 per cent of the total work force in the informal sector which, in turn, accounts for 20 per cent of total production and more than 20 per cent of the total work force.

5. It should also be pointed out that according to studies conducted by ECA in 1985, 75 per cent of the female work force were working in agriculture, 18 per cent in the informal sector and 6 per cent in the modern sector. When these figures are compared with those of 1990 which show agriculture accounting for 76 per cent of the female work force, the informal sector 17.7 per cent and the modern sector for 5 per cent, it is easily understood that the two major employers of women are the agricultural and the informal sectors. A report issued by the International Labour Office also shows that the employment of women in the informal sector has increased sharply in recent years. Indeed, the ILO estimates show that the employment rate of women in this sector rose from 10 per cent of the total female work force to 14.8 per cent in 1980, 17.9 per cent in 1985 and 17.7 in 1990.

6. The Declaration also highlights the importance of providing better access for women into scientific and technical professions as well as to improved technologies that will make their products and productivity more competitive.

7. On the whole, the Declaration concludes that women should play a more active and influential role in promoting rational policies, attitudinal changes and making their voices heard.

8. Rightfully, the objectives set forth in the Declaration cover several development sectors. Both the areas covered and the major objectives are listed below:

- (a) Education: Attaining parity in the areas of literacy, primary and secondary education and ensuring that at least 40 per cent of university students are women;
- (b) Science and Technology: Achieving at least 20 per cent of total enrolment at university level in the field of science and technology;
- (c) Agriculture and Food production: Eliminating all impediments to women being able to acquire and own land. Creating conditions that make for increased women's production and productivity in the sector;
- (d) Modern Sector Employment: Ensuring that at least one out of five of all vacant government professional posts is filled by a woman;
- (e) Informal Sector Employment, Credit and Entrepreneurship: Ensuring better access to the resources and skills required for running enterprises with a view to enhancing profitability and growth prospects;
- (f) Structural Adjustment: Building up interest in the appropriate use of socio-economic indicators that take into account women's programmes;
- (g) Decision making, Development Planning and Mainstreaming: Making sure that at least one in eight top policy and decision making posts in Africa is occupied by a woman and that gender issues are considered as a development planning tool for increased participation of women in national political life;
- (h) Culture: Eliminating those cultural practices that dehumanize and disinherit women, especially in the areas of birth, education, marriage and widowhood;
- (i) Law and Legislation: Signing and ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and enforcement of such legislation;
- (j) Environment: ensuring that all women living in shanties and hamlets in the rural and poor urban areas are provided with decent and durable shelter. Care will need to be taken to secure the effective

participation of women in environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources for development;

- (k) Africa's Internal Strife: Ways must be found to reach and adopt lasting solutions to the problems of refugees and displaced persons and such solutions implemented. Early warning systems should be established and/or improved along with disaster preparedness programmes in order to reduce the impact on victims who are mainly women and children;
- (l) The Role of National Machineries: Such machineries should be strengthened and networks created among them with a view to enhancing the impact of their activities;
- (m) Monitoring Changes in the Situation of Women: Data bases on women should be established and strengthened in order to make for proper planning and the regular evaluation and monitoring of women's programmes.

Activities Conducted by ECA in Implementation of the Abuja Declaration

9. ECA's role in following up the recommendations of the Abuja Declaration is mainly one of securing the widest possible dissemination of the Declaration, co-ordinating efforts to implement the recommendations of the Declaration within the region, helping member States to define areas of concern, prepare programmes and projects for the advancement of women and mobilizing financial resources for their implementation. ECA is also charged with reporting regularly to the ECA Conference of Ministers on progress achieved in this regard.

10. In carrying out this mandate, ECA first made sure that the text of the Declaration was distributed to all member States and concerned institutions, providing some suggestions as to how the objectives of the Declaration might be achieved.

11. In addition to all that, ECA has conducted a campaign to educate people on the substance of the Declaration. Regional and international meetings for promoting the advancement of women have provided ECA with occasions for disseminating the recommendations. ECA also held fruitful discussions and was able to secure useful information on the subject during missions fielded to Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The secretariat is currently finalizing a video film on the Fourth Africa Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development along with a book which describes the situation of African women and their expectations by the year 2000.

Measures for Facilitating the Implementation of the Abuja Declaration

12. As recommended by the 11th meeting of ARCC, a number of measures must be taken to facilitate the follow up and implementation of the Declaration. Such measures include:

- (a) the establishment of national mechanisms or co-ordinating agencies responsible for preparing a strategy for achieving the set objectives of the Declaration. Such mechanisms would consider the provisions of the

Declaration and work out an implementation plan suited to existing policies and measures and national realities. For example, where the target in education is to ensure that by the year 2000 40 per cent of university enrolment is secured by women, intermediate targets should be set and measures defined for action at the primary, secondary and university levels of education;

- (b) national seminars should be organized to analyse the substance of the Declaration, discuss its implementation and educate all parties concerned on the provisions of the Declaration;
- (c) all existing communication media should be used in disseminating the Declaration. To the extent feasible, the Declaration should be translated into national languages;
- (d) an agency or person should be designated to follow up the implementation of the Declaration and report to all the parties concerned. Such a focal point should conduct a comprehensive mid-term review and evaluation of the implementation of the Declaration in preparation for the Fifth Africa Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development planned for 1994.

13. Obviously, all parties concerned will need to intensify their efforts to attain if not actually exceed the targets which African women have set themselves. In that regard, the subregional committees for the integration of women in development have a primary role to play in determining and creating such conditions as would enable the implementation of the Declaration in their respective subregions so that all the efforts being made can yield the expected results and substantially improve the living and working conditions of African women.