



**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**Distr.: LIMITED  
E/ECA/ACGD/CWD.III/2002/Inf.2  
October 2002**

**Original: English**

---

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

*Meeting of the Committee on Women and Development  
Meeting of Experts  
9-11 October, 2002  
Johannesburg, South Africa*

**INFORMATION NOTE  
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT**

**INFORMATION NOTE**  
**COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT**

**What is CWD?**

The Committee on Women and Development (CWD) is a statutory body of experts that advises the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and provides leadership in Africa on gender-related issues. The Committee meets every two years, and is comprised of twenty-one member States, five resource persons and eighteen NGO's.

**When was CWD established?**

CWD was established at the recommendation of the representatives of national governmental organizations during the first Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development organized by ECA in Nouakchott, Mauritania in 1977. During deliberations, strong sentiments were articulated in favour of the establishment of subregional and regional groupings to promote the exchange of experiences, to strengthen solidarity among African women, as well as to plan a common strategy for the integration of women in development. The Regional Conference recommended the establishment of committees for the implementation of plans of action for the integration of women in development within the framework of the ECA.

In this context the Regional Conference recommended the establishment of the African Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) now known as the Committee on Women and Development.

In accordance with the above recommendation, the ECA Conference of Ministers established the structure and terms of reference for CWD as well as subregional coordinating committees in its resolution 365 (XIV) adopted on the 27 March 1979.

**What is the Mandate of CWD?**

The core mandate of CWD includes the following:

1. To play an advocacy and policy guidance role with a view to promoting gender-sensitive policies and necessary institutional changes at national, sub-regional and regional levels;
2. To undertake periodic review of progress in the implementation of strategies for the advancement of women at the national, subregional and regional levels;
3. To play a substantive role in influencing ECA's policy and strategies through the decisions of the Ministers responsible for economic and social planning and finance;
4. To facilitate the exchange of information and experiences;
5. To participate in the activities and meetings of the United Nations and other relevant organizations;
6. To convene every five years, the African Regional Conference on Women and Development; and
7. To report to the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on the activities and programmes carried out in the continent.

## **Who is a member of CWD?**

The membership of the Committee is in three-categories: the Member States, the Non Government Organizations and Resource Persons.

1. **The Member States:** According to the current rules, a total of nineteen member States are selected by alphabetical order and per subregion to constitute CWD every two years. Representation is by country rather than by individual. The language balance is also an important consideration.

The nineteen member States are distributed along the 5 subregions as indicated below.

### **Distribution of membership of CWD by subregion**

<u>Subregions</u>	<u>Number of Member countries</u>
North Africa	3
West Africa	5
Central Africa	3
Eastern Africa	4
Southern Africa	4

The country that chairs the Sixth African Regional Conference on women until she is replaced at the next regional conference, and the country that chairs the Summit of the African Union are also part of CWD as ex-officio members

## **2. Women's Non-Government Organizations**

Eighteen women's non-governmental organizations are selected at the national, subregional and regional levels. The requirements include demonstrated track record of stability, good practice and sustainability as evidenced by:

- Confirmation that they are representatives of women
- At least five-years of stable existence
- A stable financial base as portrayed by the annual reports
- Demonstration of concrete results achieved through their direct intervention

## **3. Service/specialized organizations**

Five organizations which are not women's organizations are selected on the basis of the following characteristics:

- Organizations/institutions that provide services to women as individuals and/or groups e.g. training, counseling, financing etc
- Research institutions that specialize in women's issues
- Institutions/organizations that operate either at the subregional or regional levels

#### **4. Resource persons**

The category of **five Resource Persons** selected to be **ex-officio** members of CWD is filled by individuals with relevant technical skills and knowledge in any of the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. They are therefore expected to provide expertise in the priority areas of focus by the members States and the work of ECA. This includes preparation of technical documents, facilitation of sessions, participation in in-session discussions during the meetings of Experts and servicing CWD meetings upon request.

The membership of CWD also comprises observers from the African Union, the African Development Bank, subregional Intergovernmental organizations, and United Nations specialized agencies.

#### **What are the modalities for renewal of membership?**

Every two years, 2/3 of the membership is renewed while 1/3 is retained to preserve continuity. Operationally, ECA is responsible for selecting NGOs and Resource Persons that meet the above criteria and submitting it to the CWD Bureau for approval.

#### **What is the composition of the CWD Bureau?**

The Bureau is comprised of five Member States out of the nineteen countries selected as members. Each represents one of the five subregions of Africa. The positions of the members include:

1. The Chairperson
2. The First Vice-Chairperson
3. The Second Vice-Chairperson
4. First Rapporteur
5. Second Rapporteur

Additional members of the Bureau include the Chairperson of the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women who is an **ex-officio** until she is replaced at the next regional conference. The country that is chairing the Summit of the African Union also sits in the Bureau in order to create the necessary link between the Committee and the regional institution. The term of office of the Bureau is two-years.

#### **When does CWD meet?**

The Executive Secretary of the ECA convenes biennial meetings of CWD after consultations with the CWD Bureau. The rules of procedure of the Committee are the same as those of the Economic Commission for Africa. CWD meetings have a thematic orientation.

#### **What are the achievements of CWD to-date?**

Some of the achievements of CWD include:

- Promoting gender mainstreaming as a viable strategy for achieving equality between women and men;

- Putting women's issues on the agenda of the ECA Conference of Ministers of finance and planning;
- Articulation of the aspirations and needs of African women as expressed in the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action;
- The promotion of African women to participate in decision-making processes at national, subregional and regional levels;
- Mobilizing and preparing African governments for effective implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action; and
- Undertaking periodic reviews of progress in the implementation of strategies for the advancement of women i.e. the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women - November, 1999.

### **Further Information**

More information on the Committee on Women and Development may be obtained from:

The Director  
African Center for Gender and Development  
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa  
P.O. Box 3001  
Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia

Tel: 251-1-18 31 74

Fax: 251-1-51 27 85