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Report of a Mission to a Brainstorming Session on the
Preparation for the Women's Meeting and
Mainstreaming of Gender in the process of the
International Conference on the Great Lakes
Nairobi, Kenya, 16 February 2004

Prepared

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**Report of a Mission to a Brainstorming Session on the Preparation for the
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Nairobi, Kenya, 16 February 2004**

In the context of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing + 10), ECA/ACGD and the Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative to the Great Lakes Region had been exploring the possibility of collaborating around the preparations for the imminent International Conference on the Great Lakes and the Subregional Decade Review of Beijing + 10 in Eastern Africa. One of the preparatory activities of the Conference on the Great Lakes was a planned Regional Women's Meeting to discuss and harmonize their contribution to the Conference. As this meeting was planned for May 2004 and would be attended by a large number of countries who are also part of the ECA East African Subregion, discussions had started between ACGD, Special Representative's Office and the UNIFEM Office in the Great Lakes to consider combining it with the Subregional Decade Review Meeting on Beijing + 10 for Eastern Africa.

It is against this background that ACGD decided to respond positively to the invitation by the Office of the Special Representative to attend the Brainstorming Session on the Preparation for the Regional Women's Meeting and Mainstreaming Gender in the process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes. The Session was organized in Nairobi, Kenya on 16 February 2004. ACGD therefore dispatched Hannah Tiagha who is the Task manager of the Beijing + 10 process to attend this meeting.

Mission objectives

The mission objectives of Mrs Tiagha were to:

- Share with the participants of the Brainstorming Session information on the Beijing + 10 process in Africa at the national, subregional and regional levels
- Discuss the feasibility of organizing combined or back-to-back meetings on the Subregional Decade Review Meeting on Beijing + 10 and the Regional Women's Meeting preparatory to the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

The Mission

In preparation of the Regional Women's Meeting to be held in May 2004 in the framework of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations for the Great Lakes Region (OSRSG/GLR), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), held the one day brainstorming session bringing together representatives from the National Preparatory Committees (NPC), civil society organizations, UN agencies, African Union, NEPAD, as well as international organizations.

Ms Tiagha was asked to brief the meeting on the Beijing + 10 process at the national, subregional and regional levels in order to facilitate the discussion that would follow on the preparations for the Regional Women's Meeting.

The meeting discussed the preparatory process, the calendar and the structure of the preparations for the Regional Women's Meeting within the framework of the International Conference on the Great lakes Region. In this regard, they outlined clearly what activities should be undertaken at the national and subregional levels. Participants at the Regional Women's Meeting was also discussed and the criteria for their selection. They also focused on the stakeholders, the experts they would require for the meetings well as the need to harmonize the meeting with other related activities going on during the same period to avoid duplication. In this connection, they recommended that at the national level, the national preparatory Committees should link up with the Beijing + 10 process. They should also use the National Evaluation Reports on Beijing + 10 for information as well as the Experts for the Beijing + 10 process for the needs of the Regional Women's Meeting. They emphasized the need to harmonize the Beijing + 10 process and the Regional Women's Meeting at the national and subregional levels. A summary of the Conclusions is attached in Annex 2.

Ms Tiagha also had bilateral discussions with the UNIFEM Representative for the Great Lakes on the specifics of collaboration between ACGD and the Office of the Special Representative and UNIFEM in organizing the two subregional meetings. We explored many options and the consensus is attached in Annex 1 entitled "*Note on Collaboration between ECA/ACGD and the organization of the International Conference on the Great Lakes.*" This was to be discussed further between the Office of the Special Assistant, the Coordinating Preparatory Committee and UNIFEM, which was responsible for coordinating the technical preparation and organization of the Regional Women's Meeting.

Conclusion

This meeting provided an opportunity to explore in earnest the possibility of enriching the Beijing + 10 process in Eastern Africa with other stakeholders who were involved in similar concerns. It offered an opportunity to harmonize the review process, to avoid duplication and to maximize the efficient utilization of public resources. Such exploration, however, required the taking into account of a set of complex political factors that only too often override the technical and practical considerations sited above.

Annex 1

Note on Collaboration between ECA/ACGD and the organization of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

Context

Ten years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) to promote gender equality and enhance the advancement of women, Africa will join the rest of the world in taking stock of progress made in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action (Beijing + 10), and the extent to which women's status has improved in this regard. Africa is therefore fully engaged in the process of evaluating its performance in implementing the BPFA at the national, subregional and regional levels. At the national level, Governments are preparing their evaluation reports, which should be submitted, to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) by end of February 2004. The NGOs should be engaged in a similar process that should result in shadow reports. ECA will subsequently synthesize the national government evaluation reports of each subregion in preparation for discussion and adoption during the subregional experts' review meetings to be organized between April and May 2004. The outcome of the subregional reports will be synthesized into one regional report that will be presented for discussion and endorsement at the Seventh African Regional Conference on Women in November 2004, which ECA will organize at the ministerial level. The outcome of the Regional Conference will then be submitted to New York as Africa's contribution to the global review process of Beijing + 10.

Given the above context, the Beijing + 10 process can enrich the preparatory process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region which is focusing on "launching a multifaceted approach to address the structural and the proximate sources of conflicts in the region" and "the establishment of a regional mechanism that would monitor and follow-up the conference's decisions" with regard to the issues of peace and security, democracy and good governance and economic development and regional integration. The Beijing + 10 process will in particular assess the extent to which States have addressed the issue of women in conflict which is one of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action. They should examine the extent to which the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels has been achieved and what measures have been taken to protect women living in armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation. Progress made in the promotion of non-violent ways of conflict resolution and the reduction of human rights abuse in conflict situations will also be examined, as well as promoting women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace. Focus will be put also on the kind of protection; assistance and training that is provided to women's refugees and displaced women.

It is in this context therefore that the Beijing + 10 process can contribute substantively into the preparatory meetings of the ICGLR by sharing the information that will be generated for the national reports and enhanced during the subregional review meetings and finally consolidated at the Regional Conference on Women. The seven core countries of the Great Lakes Region constitute part of the 14 countries that make up the ECA Eastern Africa Subregion. They include Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros, and Madagascar. When they meet to review their performance at the subregional level, their findings, views and recommendations

will serve to enrich the deliberations of the meeting of women's associations in May 2004. At the national level, the Beijing + 10 evaluation reports can also serve as working documents for the National Preparatory Committees of the IC-GLR thereby reinforcing the integration of the gender dimension in their deliberations. They will also serve to enrich the national women's meetings. Similarly, the NGO's national and subregional shadow reports could be used by the NPCs and the national and regional women's meetings. This enrichment of the preparatory process of the IC-GLR is possible because the Beijing + 10 process has already started and should be completed at the national level by March 2004 and by May at the subregional level. The NPC on the other hand are in the process of being established in most core countries while the women's meetings at the national level are planned for March and April.

Proposed modalities of collaboration

Objective

The objectives of the proposed collaboration between ECA's activities on the Beijing + 10 process and the IC-GLR are:

1. To reinforce the integration of gender concerns into the preparatory meetings and the final outcome of the International Conference
2. To cross fertilize the ideas and substantive proposals of NPC, the women's national and regional meetings in the core countries of the Great Lakes Region with those of the ECA's Eastern Africa Subregion through the use of Beijing + 10 national reports and the outcome of the Beijing + 10 subregional review meeting
3. To cut cost and avoid duplication by not convening two separate meetings for the Great Lakes Region core countries i.e. the Beijing + 10 Subregional Review Meeting and the Regional Women's Meeting preparatory to the IC-GLR.

Proposed modalities

The proposed modalities for collaboration therefore entail the following:

At the national level

1. That the NPCs and the Women's National Meetings use the Beijing + 10 National Evaluation Reports as working documents to enrich their deliberations. They would also use the NGO shadow reports where available. The Ministers in charge of gender would coordinate the work of the preparatory work at the national level
2. That Experts from the ministries of gender, agriculture, commerce and industry, health, finance and economic planning would hold a preparatory meeting prior to the Regional Women's Meeting to brainstorm and formulate their contributions to the Regional meeting along the 4 thematic areas of the IC-GLR. The Experts would therefore be from the same sectors that ECA would invite to the Beijing + 10 Subregional Review Meeting

At the (Subregional) Regional Level

1. The Beijing + 10 Subregional Review Meeting for Eastern Africa would be organized in the last week of May 2004 for the first three days of the week in Kigali, just before the Women's Regional Meeting preparatory to the IC-GLR which would be organized in the next three days in the same premises
2. The IGOs to be invited to the Beijing + 10 Subregional Review Meeting would be ECCAS, EAC and IGADD
3. The outcome of the report of the Beijing + 10 Subregional Review Meeting would be presented to the Women's Regional Meeting to be used as necessary
4. UNIFEM and the Office of SRSG would make the necessary logistical and protocol arrangements for the Beijing + 10 Subregional Review meeting including Conference Rooms, local transportation, equipment and interpretation. ECA, however, would pay for the interpretation costs.
5. The outcome of the Women's Regional Meeting would be presented to the Second Preparatory Committee Meeting of the IC-GLR

Annex 2

Brainstorming Session

Preparation for the Regional Women's Meeting and Mainstreaming of Gender in the process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes
Nairobi, 16 February 2004

Conclusions

In preparation of the Regional Women's Meeting to be held in May 2004 in the framework of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations for the Great Lakes Region (OSRSG/GLR), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), held a one day brainstorming session bringing together representatives from the National Preparatory Committees (NPC), civil society organisations, UN agencies, African Union, NEPAD, as well as International organisations. The session was opened by Mr. I. FALL, Special Representative of General Secretary for the Great Lakes region

The meeting made the following recommendations:

1. Calendar, Process, and Structure

National Level

- Speed up the preparatory process, especially at grass-root levels.
- Build on established linkages with ongoing processes, such as the Beijing+10.
- Support the organisation of women's meeting in the seven core countries, through existing women's structures and networks at local and national levels.
- OSRSG/GLR (Gender Expert) to provide guidelines to NPCs and ensure close monitoring of process with the support of UNIFEM.
- Ensure coordination of women's meeting in close collaboration with National Coordinators (NC).

Regional Level

- Ensure dissemination of information on women's meeting within the IC/GLR framework at grass-root, national, and regional levels through traditional as well as new channels.
- A pre-regional meeting with women from the seven core countries to be held during the first days of May with a focus on harmonising differences.
- The Regional Women's Meeting to be held during the last three days of May 2004.
(Reviewed and updated meeting schedule attached)
- Strengthen coordination, collaboration and networking.

2. Representation and Participation

Representation at the national and regional women's meetings should include the following:

- Civil society, including women's business organizations, the media, faith-based organisations, etc.
- Parliament
- Government structures, including security forces
- Grass-roots organisations
- Traditional structures

Criteria should include, among others:

- Involvement in national preparatory processes
- Involvement in peace processes
- Strong field work experience
- Involvement in negotiation processes in the region
- Skills and research
- Fair geographical representation

Specific recommendations:

- Give special attention to the participation and input from women at grass-root levels.
- Work on modalities of ensuring the participation of the diaspora, including refugees.
- Support women's networks from the Great Lakes region.
- Take into account written contributions.
- Involve men.

3. Stakeholders

- Participants to the brainstorming session to forward an updated list of identified stakeholders (including full contacts) by 23 February 2004.
- Identify relevant regional networks.
- Include traditional stakeholders and identify new ones.
- Establish a network of Friends of the Women of the Great Lakes Region.

4. Expertise

- Identify and take into account existing expertise, research, and studies
- Facilitate the desk review of women's recommendations including, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (DRC), and the Arusha peace process (Burundi).
- Make use of Beijing+10 expertises at national level.

5. Harmonisation

Ensure the harmonisation of:

- Reports of national women's meeting's
- NPC's output in area of gender
- Views of women in the region
- Beijing+10 and IC/GLR processes

6. Funding

- Pending the establishment of the funding mechanism for the IC/GLR, UNIFEM in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinators should mobilise resources with the support of the OSRSG/GLR in order to facilitate women's meetings at national level.
- Ensure that women at the grass root level have access to funds to allow their full participation and contribution to the process.

Done in Nairobi on 16 February 2004