



UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

*Meeting of the Bureau on Follow-up to  
the Fourth World Conference on Women*

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

*3 - 5 March 1996*



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REPORT

1. The meeting of the Bureau was held in Africa Hall from 3 to 5 March 1996. It was 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. The meeting was preceded by that of High-level Experts from all sectors of activity.

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.

Opening of the Meeting (agenda item 1)

3. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson of the Bureau of the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women.

4. Mr Alieu 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.

5. She commended the Economic Commission for Africa 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 Africa 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.

6. Women must be regarded as agents of change and 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.

7. 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.

8. He commended the experts who 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.

9. 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

towards 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.

10. 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.

11. The Executive Secretary further 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.

12. 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.

13. He informed the meeting that to ensure implementation, the African Centre for Women (ACW) was to be strengthened organisationally 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.

14. 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. Another message was with 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.

15. 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 on 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

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

19. 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.

Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work (agenda item 2)

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

1. Opening ceremony
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. Closing of the meeting.

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

21. The report of the meeting of Experts dealt with seven issues.

22. The Bureau considered the report and made amendments to the following items:

- (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 recommended that the heading should be "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. In this regard, the Bureau decided that the role of advocacy should be left to eminent persons from Africa.

Role of national machinery in the sensitization effort

26. 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.

Closing of the Meeting (agenda item 7)

36. Before the closing of the meeting, 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. In his closing speech, the Executive Secretary thanked the experts for travelling from distant lands to participate in the deliberations, and also the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia who stayed on to take part in the Bureau meeting. 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. The Chairperson of the Bureau thanked the Executive Secretary and the staff of ECA, as well as the OAU, UNDP, and the experts. 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

Agenda item 4 (i)	Replace the title by: <b>"Sensitization and social mobilization strategies for the implementation of the global and African Platform for Action"</b> .
Para 18 (a)	<p>At the regional level</p> <p>Insert <b>"Obstacles encountered"</b> after <b>"progress made"</b></p> <p>Replace <b>"ECA should prepare"</b> by the <b>"joint ECA/OAU secretariat should prepare"</b></p> <p>After <b>"presentation"</b> insert <b>"after consideration"</b></p>
Para 20 (d)	Replace <b>"sensitized on"</b> by <b>"committed to"</b>
Para 20 (l)	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:
Para 25	<p><u>At the national level</u> (c) third line after <b>"multiplicity of meetings"</b> add <b>"duplication of studies"</b></p> <p>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></p> <p><u>At the regional level:</u></p> <p>(a) first line not applicable to English text</p> <p>4th line after <b>"conversion"</b> insert <b>"and debt recycling"</b>.</p> <p>Cancel last sentence of the paragraph</p> <p>(b) Cancel the paragraph</p>

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 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"

<p>Para 33</p>	<p><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></p>
<p>Para 34 (a)</p>	<p><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></p> <p><i>Cancel the rest of the paragraph up to "African countries".</i></p>
<p>Para 36</p>	<p><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></p>

**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.*

Meeting of the Bureau  
on Follow-up to the Fourth World  
Conference on Women,  
3 - 5 March 1996,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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