ECOSOC

Global Preparatory Meeting for the 2010 Annual Ministerial Review "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women". 22 April 2010 – New York, UN Headquarters

Issues Paper

1. The Global Preparatory Meeting will focus on the role of rural women in achieving the MDGs¹. It seeks to strengthen the dialogue among Member States and UN system organizations on concrete actions needed to support rural women's contribution to reducing poverty, improving food security and the right to food, and promoting economic and social development. Insights and conclusions from this discussion can help to guide the international community in accelerating implementation of existing policy commitments.

2. The meeting builds on a growing shift in global attitudes regarding women's role in economic and social development -- from viewing women predominantly as a "vulnerable group" to recognizing women as key contributors to development. Further efforts are needed to translate this new perspective into more robust action to support rural women's role as agents of change and drivers of economic and social development

and the Pacific (excluding China).² Progress to improve agricultural production and productivity thus requires recognition of the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in rural areas.

4. Despite the fact that smallholder farming in most developing countries has a woman's face, women farmers are too often invisible and under-supported when it comes to investments, policies, and programs. For example, women receive less than 10 percent of the credit awarded to smallholders, and female farmers receive only five percent of all agricultural extension services worldwide and only around 15 percent of the extension agents are women.

5. Women smallholders experience the same constraints as poor rural people in general, such as limited access to capital, markets, and services, but these are further compounded by gender-based constraints. These include the double burden of responsibility for both productive and reproductive work, including unpaid family work. Women farmers often suffer from ill health, have less access to land and financial resources, experience limitations on their mobility outside their homes, and are often not included in community-level decision making or in decision making within producers' organizations. As a result, rural women often have less disposable income than men and fewer pathways out of poverty. Women belonging to indigenous and minority groups are often doubly discriminated against, as they face both gender inequalities and exclusion on the basis of ethnicity.

6. On the other hand, women's increased access to resources such as land, credit, technology, training and marketing can lead to improved agricultural productivity and production. Increases in incomes and overall improvements in women's lives often have an immediate positive impact on the well-being of household members -- particularly on the nutritional status and education of children, as women typically spend a higher proportion of their income on food for the family than do men. Promoting women's on- or off-

Secretary-General on the situation of rural women, for example, shows that member states and United Nations entities have taken measures to improve rural women's participation in public life, as well as theie

achieve greater food security through agricultural and rural development. Each of these actors needs to examine its role in contributing to the empowerment of women and equality between men and women. All are urged to deepen their commitments and improve the effectiveness of their efforts, working to ensure that their own mechanisms, policies, and practices give priority attention to gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and rural development. Three strategic areas for reflection and action are outlined below.

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Within increased levels of overall investment in agricultural and rural development, adopt measures to ensure that such investments do not further marginalize rural women and implement affirmative measures to ensure that a IF8 11.04 Tf1 0 a1 0 0 1 225.89 683.38 T161 96F8 11.04 ra