

55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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Joint Statement of
the United Nations Regional Commissions

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE),
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP),
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC),
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

At this historic moment in the development of the United Nations' gender architecture as a result of the creation of UN Women, the Regional Commissions extend their congratulations to Ms. Michelle Bachelet for her appointment as Executive Director of the new entity. They commit themselves to working in close cooperation with UN Women to advance women's empowerment in their respective regions.

As the arm of the UN Secretariat that remains several Regional Commissions, in promoting the regional dimensions of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development by focusing on regional contexts, linkages and specifics, they provide a vital bridge between global processes and decision-making on the one hand and country-level realities, experience and implementation on the other.

Experience shows that many issues benefit from shared priorities and interests. In addition, many good practices have been developed at regional levels, including in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, which can be shared at inter-regional, regional and global levels to enhance our joint efforts.

In working with UN Women to implement global commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the agreed conclusions which emerge from their own work sessions, the Regional Commissions will work with their member States and non-State actors through intergovernmental machineries; their regional intergovernmental convening and facilitating authority; their role as convenors of the Regional Councils; and their established close links to regional inter-governmental architecture, dynamics and development, and their longstanding relationships with non-State actors at the regional level.

Underpinning the role and work programmes of the Regional Commissions is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the outcome documents of the twenty-first session of the General Assembly, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the realization that gender equality and women's empowerment is central to achieving each of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

In the context of the shared concerns of the Regional Commissions, common concerns across all regions at the gender biases which remain within education and training

systems at all levels; the under-representation of girls and women in certain fields of science and technology; and for boys and men certain roles in the care between educational and other activities. The Regional Commissions recognize the critical contribution to women's economic empowerment of access and participation of girls and women to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

Towards these and related concerns, the Regional Commissions are engaged in a number of policy and capacity development initiatives within their own texts.

In the African context, for example, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is promoting its Technology Division which acts as an integrated information service and resource center for Africa. ECA makes quality information on African development, especially accessible and assists ECA member States to build national capacities in the use of information and communication technologies for accelerated and sustainable development. It has also involved strengthening geographic information for sustainable development.

In Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is supporting governments to use the emerging access and improved information, communication and other technologies as tools for economic development through its regional centres for information and technology transfer. ESCAP is furthermore collaborating with UN women to enhance the institutional capacities of national mechanisms to effectively advocate access to education, training, science, technology and decent work across the region.

In Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) prioritises the training of women in entrepreneurship, including in new technologies, to increase their opportunities in the market. ECE has initiated a number of initiatives, including women's capacity to gain economic independence through entrepreneurship and successfully set up, manage and grow their own businesses. ECE has collaborated with the United Arab Emirates' International Training Center and Israel's Agency for International Development, since 2006 in providing biannual training workshops for professional women from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. 230 women entrepreneurs from government institutions and SME support agencies, NGOs dealing with small business support and women's business associations and academia have received training and support systems for women entrepreneurs.

In Latin America, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAEC) is planning to support the role of the academic community in the region to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. This will be done in collaboration with specialized agencies to hold an expert meeting to identify the academic resources available in the region to develop a long-term research agenda which will contribute to public policy development on gender and the strengthening of the regional academic community. This process will also draw on successful policy experiences and lessons learned on promoting gender equality in the region. The outcome of this work would be made available to all women to support institutional strengthening of national mechanisms for the advancement of women's interests. The Brasilia Consensus, which was adopted by a group of States of the Regional Commissions in Latin America and the Caribbean in July 2007, gives priority to the economic empowerment of women by advocating avenues for work, income, ownership of assets and a life free from all

forms of violence against women. In this context, the narrative of UN Women's resonance in the Brasilia Consensus.

In Western Asia, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has had a particular focus on addressing the under-representation of women among ICT users. Initiatives to this end have included a project to encourage women to engage in the information society by transforming selected existing ICT access points into hubs for global knowledge networks, and by developing organizing skills and disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities. This initiative involves revitalizing ICT access points, developing for iticipous, intimate training courses and content in the local language, and training managers in knowledge management, e-governance, e-commerce and e-business. ESCAW is currently collaborating in research on the advancement of Arab women in science and technology. The data gathered will be made available to experts and decision makers to advance the status of Arab women in these fields.

In conclusion, the Regional Commissions reiterate their commitment to working in close partnership at a regional level with UN Women and other agencies within the UN system to advance these and other endeavours, with a focus on ensuring on-ground real and enduring results for girls and women on the ground in all societies.

The successful establishment of UN Women offers an historic opportunity to open new horizons for change and to strengthen the critical linkages between the global, regional and national dimensions of our joint efforts to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment everywhere.

forms of violence against women. In this context, the five priority areas of UN Women listed
resources in the Berlin Compact.

In addition, the Commission has been instrumental in the development of women's leadership
particular focus on addressing the under-representation of women amongst ICT users. Initiatives
to this end have included a pilot programme to provide women with digital skills training, capacity
women to engage in the information society by transferring selected ICT skills to women from
into hubs for global knowledge networks, and by developing existing training and
disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities. This transformation involves
existing ICT access points, developing new facilities, including training, technical support
in the local language, and training managers in knowledge management, financial sustainability,
and e-business. ECWAW is currently undergoing a research on the engagement of Arab women
in science and technology. The data gathered will be made available to experts and decision
makers to advance the status of Arab women in these fields.

In addition, the Regional Commission reiterates their commitment to working in close
partnership at a regional level with UN Women and other agencies within the UN system to
advance their and other initiatives, with a focus on ensuring real and enduring results
for girls and women on the ground in all countries.

The successful completion of UN Women's first biennial strategy report
for change and progress, the critical bridge between the global, regional and national
dimensions of the joint efforts to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's
empowerment everywhere.