



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
31 May 2001

Original: English

Substantive session of 2001

Geneva, 2-27 July 2001

Item 14 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**Social and human rights questions:
advancement of women**

Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty- third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary General

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* E/2001/100.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly in its resolution 55/71 requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action¹ and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.² Similar mandates are contained in Assembly resolutions 53/120, 52/100, 51/69 and 50/203.

2. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, on a rolling basis, information is provided that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body in order to facilitate its decision-making process. The report to the Economic and Social Council aims at assisting it in its coordination function. The present report supplements information provided in the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session in 2000 (A/55/293), and to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session in 2001 (E/CN.6/2001/2), concerning developments related to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in intergovernmental forums reporting to the Economic and Social Council, in the regional commissions and in the Inter-Agency Meeting on Women and Gender Equality since the submission of the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2000 (E/2000/77).

II. Results of the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the resumed session

3. The Commission on the Status of Women held its forty-fifth session from 6 to 16 March 2001. A resumed session was held from 9 to 11 May 2001. The agenda of the Commission included two thematic issues as well as other matters pertaining to its mandate, as discussed below.

A. Agreed conclusions on women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

4. The Commission adopted agreed conclusions on women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). In the agreed conclusions, the Commission noted that full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights, civil, cultural, economic, political and social, including the right to development — which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated — is of crucial importance in preventing further spread of HIV/AIDS. The Commission noted that the highest level of political commitment to the empowerment and advancement of women and to the prevention, research, care and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, especially HIV/AIDS, must be secured. Bearing in mind that women and girls were disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, the Commission called for the further promotion of the advancement and empowerment of women and women's full enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to development and the control over matters related to their sexuality, in order to protect themselves from high risk and irresponsible behaviour leading to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

5. The Commission requested that Governments, relevant United Nations entities, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, individually and collectively, make combating HIV/AIDS a priority on the development agenda and implement multisectoral and decentralized effective preventive strategies and programmes. Governments, with the assistance of relevant United Nations entities, needed to adopt a long-term, timely, coherent and integrated AIDS prevention policy, with public information, life skills-based education programmes specifically tailored to the needs of women and girls, adapted to their social cultural context and sensitivities and the specific needs in their life cycle.

6. In order to ensure an enabling environment for regional and international cooperation, the Commission called upon the international community, the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify their support of national efforts against HIV/AIDS, taking into

account the specific needs of women and girls. Action should be taken to eradicate poverty which is a major contributory factor for the spread of HIV infection.

7. In particular,

achievement of tangible progress in the improvement of the situation of Palestinian women and their families. In draft resolution II, the Economic and Social Council would condemn the continuing grave violations of the human rights of women and girls, including all forms of discrimination against them, in all areas of Afghanistan. By draft resolution III on the multi-year programme of work for the Commission for 2002-2006, the Economic and Social Council would adopt a multi-year work programme for the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document³ of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". It would also decide that the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in relation to the programme of work should be closely related to its mandate and the relevant provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document, with a view to ensuring their effective implementation through more practical and action-oriented initiatives and outcomes. Under this resolution, the two themes for discussion at the forty-sixth session of the Commission would be "Eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world" and "Environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective".

14. In resolution 45/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned in armed conflicts, the Commission condemned violent acts against women and children in areas of armed conflict, strongly urged all parties to armed conflicts to respect fully the norms of international humanitarian law in armed conflict, and called for the immediate release of those taken hostage. The Commission urged all parties to armed conflicts to protect women and children and to provide them with unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

15. In resolution 45/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, the Commission recommended

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Women was read out by the Secretariat. Gender issues were also raised in the “Special debate on tolerance and respect”.

24. The Commission adopted four resolutions addressing women’s human rights, while gender issues were included in several resolutions on the work of

report of the Secretary-General on the joint work plan for the year 2001 (E/CN.4/2001/70-E/CN.6/2001/3) and encouraged the Secretary-General to make the plan available to the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women for 2002. The Commission stressed the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the preparations, work and outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which would take place in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September 2001, and urged the inclusion of women in delegations to the Conference.

2. Gender issues in the work of thematic rapporteurs, special representatives, and other human rights mechanisms

29. In several resolutions the Commission requested its special rapporteurs, including those on the right to food (2001/25); adequate housing (2001/ 28); education (2001/29); religious intolerance (2001/42); extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (2001/45); the right to freedom of opinion and expression (2001/47); the human rights of migrants (2001/52); and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (2001/62), to apply a gender perspective in their work. The Commission also requested the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to continue to apply a gender perspective in its work (2001/46), and welcomed the specific attention paid by the Representative of the Secretary-General to internally displaced women and children (2001/54). Similarly, the Commission invited the newly established Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people to take into account a gender perspective in carrying out his/her mandate, paying special attention to discrimination against indigenous women (2001/57).

3. Country-specific resolutions

30. The Commission identified the need to address violations of women's human rights in resolutions addressing specific countries, including Afghanistan (2001/13); Iraq (2001/14); Myanmar (2001/15); the Islamic Republic of Iran (2001/17); the Sudan (2001/18); the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2001/19); Sierra Leone (2001/20); Burundi (2001/21); Equatorial Guinea (2001/22) and Cambodia (2001/82).

The immediate cessation of all abductions and attacks on civilian populations in northern Uganda by the Lord's Resistance Army, in particular women and children was called for in resolution 2001/74, and the ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law, in particular against minorities, women and children, as well as the forced displacement of civilians, was condemned by the Commission in its resolution on assistance to Somalia in the field of human rights (2001/81). In its resolution on the situation of human rights in parts of south-eastern Europe (2001/12), the Commission condemned all forms of trafficking in persons, including women and children, and called on all authorities in the region, in cooperation with international authorities, to protect the human rights of the victims and to take all steps necessary to prevent and eliminate trafficking.

4. Issue-specific resolutions

31. The violation of women's human rights and the need to take a gender perspective when dealing with particular topics was identified by the Commission in several issue-specific resolutions. Thus, the importance of systematically adopting a gender-based approach throughout the preparations for and in the outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was stressed in resolution 2001/5 on the subject; the role of women in the process of the realization of the right to development was affirmed, as was the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective means to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate sustainable development in resolution 2001/9, on the right to development. Resolution 2001/26, on human rights and unilateral coercive measures, drew attention to the negative effects of such measures on, inter alia, women and children, and resolution 2001/30, on the question of the realization in all countries of the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, noted with interest the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and called on States to secure progressively, through national development policies and with international assistance, the full realization of the range of rights, giving particular attention to the individuals, most often women and children, especially girls, and communities living in

extreme poverty. Similarly, the Commission reaffirmed that special attention must be given to the plight of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of extreme poverty in resolution 2001/31, on human rights and extreme poverty. The importance of States taking all necessary measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, to take effective action in the context of violations of those rights and freedoms and to eliminate discrimination, including all forms of violence, and harmful traditional practices, as well as trafficking was stressed by the Commission in resolution 2001/75, on the rights of the child.

32. In its resolution 2001/33, on access to medication in the context of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, the Commission called upon States to pursue policies, in accordance with international law, which would promote the accessibility to all without discrimination of such pharmaceuticals or medical technologies and their affordability for all, including socially disadvantaged groups; in its resolution 2001/51, on the protection of human rights in the context of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), the Commission invited States to take all necessary measures to eliminate stigmatization of and discrimination against those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, especially for women, children and vulnerable groups, and to establish coordinated, gender-sensitive, transparent and accountable national policies and programmes for HIV/AIDS.

33. States and the international community were urged to apply a gender perspective in the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious or linguistic backgrounds in resolution 2001/55 on that subject. The important role of national human rights institutions in the protection and promotion of the human rights of women was affirmed in resolution 2001/80, on national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights, in which the Commission also welcomed the participation of national institutions in the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

34. The Commission identified human rights education as an important vehicle for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities through the promotion and protection of the human rights of women in its resolution 2001/61,

on the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004); and the Commission encouraged Governments to consider gender-sensitive training of trainers in any national or regional plans of action for human rights education and public information in resolution 2001/63, on the development of public information activities in the field of human rights, including the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights. The principle of equitable regional and gender-balanced representation in the composition of the staff of the United Nations was affirmed in Commission resolution 2001/65, on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; and in resolution 2001/76, on equitable geographical distribution of the membership of human rights treaty bodies, the Commission recalled that it had already recognized the importance of giving consideration to gender balance with regard to the election of the members of human rights treaty bodies.

35. In its resolution on impunity (2001/70), the Commission urged States to give necessary attention to the question of impunity for violations of human rights and humanitarian law, including those perpetrated against women and children.

E. Commission on Sustainable Development

36. The Commission on Sustainable Development held its ninth session in New York from 16 to 27 April 2001. The Commission called upon Governments to strengthen the role of major groups, including women, through participation in decision-making. The Commission also encouraged Governments to take into consideration the health and safety concerns of women and children in rural energy programmes, and to promote efforts to address the disproportionate burdens experienced by women in rural areas in access to energy supply. Governments were encouraged to improve policies that reduce environmental health hazards, including through plans and strategies to prevent, mitigate and respond to diseases resulting from indoor and outdoor air pollution, giving special attention to the health of women and children.

37. On transport issues, the Commission pointed out that lack of access to transport significantly impacts women's health and limits their having access to markets and other income-generating activities. Transport should therefore be made available and

accessible to women in order to facilitate social and economic progress. The Commission also encouraged Governments to collect and provide access to relevant information for decision-making for sustainable development, including gender disaggregated data, incorporating indigenous and traditional knowledge into information bases for decision-making.

F. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

38. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held its tenth session in Vienna from 8 to 17 May 2001. It reviewed the Action Plan for the implementation of the 2000 Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice prepared by the Secretariat pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 55/59 and 55/60, which, in accordance with paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Vienna Declaration, refers to the need for criminal justice systems to take into account the special interests and needs of women who are victims or witnesses. The Commission also considered the interests and needs of women in contact with criminal justice systems in the context of other agenda items, notably the review of the United Nations Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings and the promotion of United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice (basic principles of justice for victims of crime and abuse of power and information on the elimination of violence against women).

G. Commission on Science and Technology for Development

39. The fifth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development was held from 28 May to 1 June 2001. Oversight of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been undertaken predominantly by the Gender Advisory Board, which was established in May 1995 as a subsidiary body of the Commission to monitor the implementation of the Commission's recommendations on gender, science and technology, to provide assistance to national Governments and the United Nations system in their implementation of the recommendations; and to advise the Commission on the gender, implications of its own work programme. Members of the Gender Advisory Board have

participated in Commission Working Group and panel discussions and, when appropriate, have drawn attention to the gender dimension. Regional secretariats of the Gender Advisory Board were established in South-East Asia, Latin America and Africa. The Board collaborated with UNESCO in the production of a policy toolkit on Gender Indicators in Engineering, Science and Technology. A number of recommendations on gender, science and technology were submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women meeting in New York in March 1999 on behalf of the Board; members of the Gender Advisory Board were also involved in the gender, science and technology event at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000.

H. Statistical Commission

40. At its thirty-second session, held from 6 to 9 March 2001, the Statistical Commission considered a report of the Secretary-General on progress of a project on gender issues in the measurement of paid and unpaid work (E/CN.3/2001/4). The Statistics Division developed this project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Development Research Centre/Canada (IDRC) to follow up on recommendations of the Platform for Action on developing data to provide a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work. The Commission welcomed the initiatives of the Statistics Division in the measurement of paid and unpaid work, in particular the development of the guide to producing statistics on time use and the web site on time-use surveys. The Commission noted the value of time-use statistics, not only for issues related to gender but also more broadly for quality-of-life concerns, social accounting, care of the elderly, estimates of the workforce and total work accounts. The Commission endorsed the outline for the guide, subject to suggestions made by the Commission, and raised a number of specific issues related to the design and methods of time-use surveys that the guide should address. Considerations related to the dissemination and use of time-use statistics, including in the valuation of unpaid work, were also raised. Many countries expressed interest in sharing the results of their work and continuing to collaborate with the Division in the development of the guide.

46.

experts identified priority issues in the region, such as globalization and poverty reduction, gender-based violence and trafficking in women and girls, women in decision-making, women's human rights, ICT, HIV/AIDS, peace and conflict resolution, and women and the environment. In December 2000, ESCAP organized the Regional Conference on Asian Women for a Culture of Peace, in Hanoi, jointly with the National Commission of UNESCO in Viet Nam and the UNESCO Culture of Peace programme. The Conference, attended by over 100 participants, adopted the Hanoi Declaration and the Asian Women's Plan of Action for a Culture of Peace and Sustainable Development.

52. To assess the current situation of the use of the Internet among women's organizations and to explore possible methods of assistance for those countries which are less advanced in terms of access to ICTs, research on ICT use among women's organizations in Central Asia and the Pacific was undertaken. ESCAP is also undertaking an in-depth evaluation of the impact on women of the various social safety-net schemes implemented during the Asian financial crisis. In September 2000, ESCAP convened the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific at Kitakyushu, Japan. A review of the progress made and obstacles encountered in promoting the role of women in sustainable development was prepared for the Conference, enabling gender issues to be integrated into the deliberations of the Conference.

53. The implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the importance of the Convention's reporting process in establishing benchmarks to monitor progress in the status of women were highlighted in a workshop in the Pacific co-organized with the Division for the Advancement of Women, in close collaboration with the Government of New Zealand, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNDP and UNIFEM. The subregional training workshop on support to the preparation of State party reports to be submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was held from 13 to 15 February 2001 in New Zealand.

54. To support the incorporation of gender perspectives into the substantive work of ESCAP, the Commission has established an Inter-divisional Task Force on Mainstreaming Gender Equality into

ESCAP's Training Activities. The initial task is to ensure that all training programmes offered by ESCAP include relevant gender equality perspectives as an integral part of the training. Also, to strengthen the Women in Development Section, a local-level post was redeployed to the Section to strengthen information technology and research support services of the Section.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

55. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) continues to provide assistance to national machineries for women in capacity- and institution-building. Governments have become aware of the central importance of such machineries, and have also recognized the need to endow these machineries with adequate human and financial resources for effectiveness and efficiency of results. The Commission focused on coordination and collaboration within the United Nations system and with regional organizations. The mandate was given to ESCWA to work closely with regional organizations such as the League of Arab States and the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research for speeding up the process of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Gender budgeting is still at an embryonic stage in the Commission, and ESCWA is part of the second phase of a project initiated by the Inter-Agency Meeting on Women and Gender Equality (IAMWGE).

56. Several countries, including Palestine, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, have been taking concrete steps to formulate poverty alleviation strategies with a focus on poor women and their empowerment. The third session of the Committee of Social Development of ESCWA (Beirut, 27 to 28 March 2001) focused on dialogue between NGOs and Governments, and recommended the establishment of a special coordinating mechanism to liaise with NGOs and governmental bodies. The Committee also recommended the development of region-specific indicators to monitor developments and achievements, especially on the follow-up to global conferences. A standard outline was devised to assist States to meet reporting requirements on progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of other global conferences of the 1990s.

Turin College to use this concept paper as the basis of a module on gender mainstreaming with practical tools/guidelines to be included in the CCA/UNDAF syllabus at the Turin Training College. The Meeting supported the initiative of the task force to work with the United Nations Development Group Office (UNDGO) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to compile and disaggregate a set of specific indicators under each development goal of the Millennium Targets, and to analyse this data from a

reform to strengthen this work. It will assess the activities of the Meeting in terms of working methods, outputs, clients and beneficiaries, and identify the unique contribution made by the Meeting so far to support implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other gender-related global commitments. The Meeting's submission to the ACC will further include proposals on how the inter-agency collaborative work on critical issues for gender