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PANEL II

**Addressing the linkages between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration:
Progress, gaps and challenges**

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* The paper has been reproduced as submitted.

Gender in the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action

In the year 2000, the largest ever gathering of world leaders agreed on a set of values, principles and objectives for international development for the 21st century known as the Millennium Declaration. This was an important milestone which moved the Beijing Platform for Action and other UN Conferences, in particular the ICPD, from a set of commitments to a clear set of goals and targets in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Developing countries are increasingly linking their poverty reduction strategies and the implementation of their own national development plans to the MDGs including the national plans on women.

Gender equality is not only a goal in its own right, but one that is critical to the achievement of all the other goals. This is where the comprehensive Platform for Action of Beijing supports the achievement of the MDGs.

While gender is perhaps most evident in MDG 3 on gender equality and MDG 5 on maternal mortality, the other goals can not be reached without actions related to gender equality. For example, women's access to reproductive health services is necessary for poverty reduction (MDG1). Women who plan the timing and number of their births also have greater opportunities for work, education, and social participation outside the home. Smaller families and wider birth intervals allows families to invest more in each child's nutrition and health, and can reduce poverty and hunger for all members of a household. They can also afford to invest more in each girl's education, which normally might have lower priority than that of boys in the family.

Child mortality (MDG 4), which accounts for 11 million deaths every year, is highest among families with large numbers of children and among young mothers.

Women's empowerment - access to opportunities, human rights and having a voice in decision making - is critical to reducing poverty, child mortality, maternal deaths, HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6) and improving access to water and sanitation (MDG 7).

If education remains the single target for MDG 3, it cannot be achieved by building more schools and stating that there must be equal access for boys and girls. Non-discrimination alone does not overturn engrained inequalities and entrenched bias. To ensure that girls are educated there must be a set of critical interventions including, for example, increase in energy services that will free women from the chores of fetching water and fuel and from food processing; better protection of adolescent girls from unwanted pregnancy, violence and disease through access to health services, among others. Otherwise, girls will be pulled out of schools at an early age and the cycle of feminized poverty will continue from generation to generation.

It is neither the number of indicators nor the accuracy of statistical data alone that will make a major difference in the implementation of the MDGs. What really matters is that we use effectively the empirical evidence backed by data from all the MDG task forces to

make the case for specific action at many levels that are in keeping with the broad and comprehensive goal of achieving gender equality.

2005 is an important opportunity to make these links between Beijing and the MDGs with a focus on action and results. Beijing+10 and MDG+5 will review progress made in promoting gender equality and the challenges ahead. UNDP is playing a lead role in both reviews, and we are in the process of finalizing comprehensive reviews of over 75 national and regional MDG reports through a gender lens.

Without preempting the conclusions of this gender review, we can safely say that there is much more that needs to be done on at least three fronts:

1. The disaggregation of the data and information by sex
2. An analysis of the gender dimensions under each goal
3. Ensure the inclusion of the voices of women and civil society in the entire process.

In order to meet the challenge ahead, there are several critical elements:

1. We need to make sure that all MDG targets and indicators are systematically engendered (with more relevant indicators on gender inequalities).
2. We need to make sure that gender analysis shapes the action plans: the PRSP, the UNDAF and most importantly the budgets allocated for the implementation of the MDGs.
3. We need to make sure that at the national level and global levels there are adequate resources and mechanisms to track results, monitor policies and influence allocations.

Only then will the commitments become investments and our reviews will be about tracking results, not failed promises and missed opportunities. The political will that has led to the Millennium Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action must be followed by political action to accelerate their implementation. The Millennium Report carries this call for action and UNDP will be at the forefront of taking the call for action forward.

Thank you.