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Commission on the Status of Women

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Agenda item 3 (c)

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Panel discussion entitled “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”

Summary submitted by the Moderator (Kyung-wha Kang)

1. At its 8th meeting, on 3 March 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women held a panel discussion followed by a dialogue entitled “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”. The panellists were: Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa; Mr. Zéphirin Diabré, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Ms. Naila Kabeer (Bangladesh), fellow, Institute of Development Studies/University of Sussex, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Ms. Caren Grown, Director of Poverty Reduction and Economic Governance, International Centre for Research on Women, Washington, D.C.; and Ms. Susana Chiarotti, Director, Institute for Gender, Rights and Development, Rosario, Argentina. The panel was moderated by Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. An issues paper prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women provided the framework for the dialogue, and the report of the Expert Group

Meeting organized by the Division entitled “Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals”¹ (Baku, Azerbaijan, 7-10 February 2005) also supported the discussion.

3. Participants stressed that the linkages between the Beijing Platform for Action and the time-bound development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration, known as the Millennium Development Goals, needed to be explicitly addressed. The High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to review implementation of the Millennium Declaration, scheduled to take place in September 2005, and its preparatory process provided a valuable opportunity for ensuring the linkages. Participants underscored the importance of a rights-based approach to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the protection and promotion of women’s human rights. In this regard, attention was drawn to the contribution of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

4. Participants underscored the point that gender equality and the empowerment of women are goals in themselves, as well as an important means towards the achievement of all the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and thus, the Goals could not be achieved without women’s empowerment and gender equality. In turn, progress in reaching the internationally agreed development goals contributed to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Therefore, the integration of gender perspectives into all policies and programmes aimed at the implementation of the Goals was crucial.

5. Participants noted the high visibility and level of commitment to the Millennium Declaration. While the specific and time-bound nature of the Millennium Development Goals provided effective benchmarks for monitoring progress and achieving concrete results, participants drew attention to the comprehensive content of the Millennium Declaration, which, in addition to development and poverty eradication, also addressed such issues as human rights, democracy, good governance and peace and security, in all of which the promotion of gender equality should be a central consideration.

6. Participants expressed concern that, although the linkages between gender equality and all the other Millennium Development Goals were widely acknowledged, efforts aimed at realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women continued to be largely limited to Goal 3 and its targets and indicators. Connection was rarely made between the other Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Providing concrete examples of how actions to integrate gender perspectives enhanced efforts to achieve the other Millennium Development Goals on poverty, child mortality, HIV/AIDS, health, water and sanitation, the participants agreed that much greater efforts were needed to highlight the gender dimensions of the Goals. Furthermore, since the Goals represented a minimum set from all the internationally agreed development goals, policy makers and other stakeholders should continue to fully address the comprehensive objectives of the Beijing

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/bpfamd2005/EGM-BPFA-MD-MDG-2005-REPORT-final.pdf>.

Platform for Action. This was especially relevant in regard to women's sexual and reproductive health, which was not covered in the Millennium Development Goals.

7. Adequate human and financial resources were necessary for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session, as well as for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, especially in developing countries. It was therefore critical to enhance global partnerships and to honour commitments to official development assistance (ODA) (Goal 8). Debt relief and market access for developing countries would enhance implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and contribute to the achievement of Goal 3. Preliminary calculations in some countries had shown that, compared to other expenditures such as debt servicing, the costs of gender-specific interventions to meet Goal 3 were quite small. The impact of globalization on women also had to be taken into account in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

8. Participants noted that the knowledge-base, technology and resources existed to reduce gender inequalities and empower women. Although a number of countries will miss the first of the Millennium Development Goals (eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005), increased and targeted efforts would make it possible to reach the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women by 2015. This would, however, require concrete steps to scale up investments in gender equality and empowerment of women and enhance gender-sensitive budget processes at local, national and international levels. Attention to gender perspectives in policy and programming frameworks at the country level, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and poverty reduction strategy papers, should be assured. Better use could also be made of the reporting process under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

9. Participants noted the seven interdependent strategic priorities which the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (Task Force 3)² had recommended for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women: (a) Strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education; (b) Guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights; (c) Investing in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens; (d) Guaranteeing women's and girls' property and inheritance rights; (e) Eliminating gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation; (f) Increasing women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies; and (g) Combating violence against women and girls. These strategies were in line with the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session and should be speedily put into practice. The needs of vulnerable groups of women, especially poor women, indigenous women, women living with HIV/AIDS, women in conflict settings and young and adolescent women, required particular attention.

10. Participants indicated that political commitment, enhanced technical capacity, institutional and structural change, as well as increased monitoring and

² *Taking action: Achieving gender equality and empowering women*, 2005.

accountability, in addition to adequate resources, were crucial for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. They also called for improved tools for gender mainstreaming and for holistic programmes to tackle the synergies among the various policy documents. Lack of sex-disaggregated data continued to pose challenges for monitoring, requiring improvements in the quality and frequency of data collection.

11. Further efforts were needed to strengthen the gender dimensions of the targets and indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals, and additional targets and indicators should be considered. Participants in the High-level Plenary Meetings should consider adding a new target, namely to provide access to sexual and reproductive health through the primary health-care system.

12. National machinery for the advancement of women had a critical role in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. Cooperation between Governments and civil society, as well as Parliaments, trade unions and women's networks should be strengthened and greater efforts should be made to ensure the contribution of men and boys towards gender equality.
