



Administrative Committee on Coordination

ACC/1996/6
7 June 1996

ENGLISH ONLY

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-FIRST AD HOC INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON WOMEN

(New York, 6-8 March 1996)

SUMMARY

The main work of the twenty-first Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women centred on a discussion of the draft system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women and, in particular, on practical aspects of coordination and collaboration in its implementation. A detailed discussion was held on two areas - namely, women and poverty, and women and the media. The Meeting approved the draft system-wide medium-term plan contained in document E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2 and transmitted it for approval to ACC. The Meeting discussed possible terms of reference and priority themes for the work of the proposed inter-agency committee on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be established under ACC. It held an exchange of views with the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The twenty-first Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women was held at New York from 6 to 8 March 1996, prior to the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Meeting was opened by the Chairperson, Deputy Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Director of the Division addressed the Meeting. The Meeting adopted its agenda as proposed by the nineteenth Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting. The agenda and the list of participants are contained in annexes I and II.

I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION

Recommendations

2. The Meeting, having held a discussion on practical aspects of collaborative action in the implementation of the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, contained in E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2, approved the plan and transmitted it to ACC for adoption.

3. With regard to the proposal of the Secretary-General that ACC proceed at its next session to the establishment of an inter-agency committee that would address in a comprehensive way all aspects of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action 1/ coming within the purview of the system and would interact closely with both the new task forces and the consultative committees of ACC, the Meeting presented the following recommendations for consideration to ACC on the proposed terms of reference of the proposed committee and on priority themes for it to consider.

A. Proposed terms of reference of the proposed inter-agency committee on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

4. Under the aegis of ACC, the Committee will undertake to examine, in a comprehensive way, all aspects of the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women coming within the purview of the United Nations system, by identifying major policy issues relating to the follow-up to the Conference and related conferences and by advising ACC on ways and means of addressing those issues so as to ensure effective cooperation and coordination of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The proposed inter-agency committee will:

(a) In light of the guidance and instructions received from ACC, contribute to and support the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan on the advancement of women, based on information provided by organizations of the United Nations system and other ACC bodies;

(b) Identify policy issues and emerging issues requiring attention from a gender perspective anywhere in the system and identify areas for collaboration,

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best practices to serve as examples for the development of methodologies and approaches, and major gaps and constraints affecting United Nations-system cooperation in implementing the Platform for Action;

(c) Advise ACC on effective ways and means - especially in the identification of practical tools - for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all areas of work and throughout the United Nations system, including information collection and the development of databases, research and policy analysis, and operational public information and outreach activities at the national, regional and international levels;

(d) Ensure that mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective are effectively pursued in the follow-up to all recent United Nations conferences and summits;

(e) Formulate, for consideration and decision by ACC, recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system in the implementation of the Platform for Action;

(f) On the basis of the above, prepare brief reports identifying issues and making recommendations on overall policy and coordination, particularly for mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system, for decision by ACC. The reports should be prepared in such a way as to provide a basis for subsequent reports of ACC to the relevant intergovernmental bodies;

(g) Serve as a forum for information exchange, the promotion of programme coordination and of collaborative arrangements among organizations of the system around critical areas of concern, and review their progress periodically;

(h) Perform other tasks as required by ACC, including, where appropriate, monitoring the follow-up of relevant ACC decisions.

5. Membership in the committee should be as broad as possible. The committee will draw on the expertise of its member organizations to fulfil its functions and, as necessary, may convene task-oriented working groups to assist it in addressing priority themes within its mandate.

Chairmanship: Non-rotating
United Nations

Secretariat: Division for the Advancement of Women, DPCSD

Periodicity of meetings: The committee will meet twice a year, including once possibly in conjunction with the Commission on the Status of Women. It would also meet informally, as required.

6. The committee will support the work of ACC in relation to the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies, as required. It will determine its own methods of work in accordance with its terms of reference.

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B. Priority themes for the work of the proposed inter-agency committee

7. The work programme of the proposed inter-agency committee on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women should be linked to the multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission's consideration of critical areas of concern, and to the system-wide medium-term plan. To that end, the inter-agency committee will discuss annually such areas with a view to making a contribution to the work of the Commission, with particular emphasis on coordination and cooperation within the United Nations system on those issues, including deeply rooted obstacles and resistance to full implementation of the Platform for Action.

8. The following should be taken up, inter alia, for in-depth consideration and to ensure ongoing coordination and cooperation:

(a) Exchange of matrices prepared by organizations making explicit their follow-up to conferences and internal division of tasks;

(b) Mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels, including conceptual and operational aspects;

(c) Resources and personnel for women and gender issues;

(d) The situation of women staff as it affects programme delivery;

(e) Impact evaluation and best practices;

(f) Coordination of gender training;

(g) Electronic information exchange;

(h) Indicators and databases: methodological issues, data collection, exchange of data, sharing of sectoral check lists;

(i) Linkages with ACC task forces on follow-up to global conferences;

(j) Relevant provisions of United Nations conventions and international norms and standards as they apply to critical areas of concern.

9. With regard to the status of the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting, it is recommended that, should ACC proceed to the establishment of the proposed inter-agency committee, the Meeting should be reconstituted to form the core of the new committee in order to build on the experience gained, monitor the system-wide medium-term plan on women, and carry out other functions, as spelled out in the terms of reference.

10. It is recommended that ACC include a standing item on its agenda on gender mainstreaming and follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and other international conferences and summits.

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11. It is recommended that ACC continue to address the status of women in the United Nations secretariats when discussing personnel questions.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

12. The Meeting held a discussion on the provisional agenda and proposed programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session and anticipated contributions from the representatives of the United Nations system. The proposed new methods of work of the Commission were reviewed, as was the documentation before the Commission. The contribution of the United Nations system to the Commission's panel discussions in three areas - poverty, women and the media, and child and dependant care, including sharing of the responsibilities between men and women - were discussed, and the United Nations system's support and participation were encouraged.

13. A number of representatives presented highlights of developments resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women with regard to actions of governing bodies, institutional developments, programme planning and operational activities. An increased interest and growing commitment to women and gender issues, at various levels, including the highest levels, was noted. At the same time it was stressed that, notwithstanding greater awareness and interest in the mainstreaming of a gender perspective, moving it from an accepted conceptual approach to an integral and automatic part of work programmes would require substantial further work, including the development of tools, such as guidelines, manuals and other mechanisms and gender sensitization and training.

14. Emphasis was placed on the relationship between the implementation of the regional plans and platforms for action and the Beijing Platform for Action. The need for close interaction was stressed. Ways in which regional commissions had reached synthesis for implementation and monitoring were presented and discussed. The coordinating role of the regional commissions in that regard was also discussed.

III. PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION MATTERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO WOMEN

A. Implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for 1996-2001

15. The Meeting took note of the revised system-wide medium-term plan as the system's indicative tool for joint and collaborative action in facilitating implementation of the Programme for Action, as finalized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, on the basis of agency contributions and contained in document E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2. The plan was not a substitute for agency-specific planning and programming but was intended to reflect system-wide efforts for the advancement of women and provide a basis for synergies between various agencies and for maximizing the system's comparative advantage and value-added in each of the critical areas of concern.

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16. It was noted that a planned section on the specific mandates and comparative advantage of each of the participating entities had to be omitted, due to the length of the document.

17. It was pointed out that the lists of activities contained in the plan were the starting point for specific collaborative activities and for inter-agency coordination as they highlighted the involvement of many players in particular types of activities or areas of concern. At the current stage, the plan represented an expression of the commitment of the participating entities to strive towards collaboration, including through an improved exchange of information. The usefulness of the plan for the coordination of activities at national, regional and international levels was pointed out. It could serve as a framework for developing further inter-agency coordination in relation to planning, evaluation, monitoring and data collection, for example.

18. The Meeting held a detailed discussion on two critical areas of concern which were on the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session (poverty and women in the media) to identify priorities for collaboration. The intersection of poverty with other critical areas of concern, especially education and women and the economy, was pointed out. The critical importance of the collection of gender-disaggregated data, the development of indicators, and information on best practices in helping women to overcome poverty were highlighted. The Meeting prepared comments for discussion by the Commission.

19. With regard to women and the media, the Meeting noted efforts in the areas of training and awareness-raising for mainstream media and support for alternative women's media. The increasing role of electronic forms of communication was noted. Efforts were under way to establish a joint Web page called "WomenWatch", and a number of entities used the Internet to provide gender-specific information to field offices and other institutions and non-governmental organizations. Future possibilities for posting comprehensive system-wide information on the page were noted, as were possibilities for cross-referencing to the agencies' own Web sites. The successful and increasing use of e-mail in inter-agency communication was noted.

20. The Meeting agreed that, should the ACC proceed with the establishment of the proposed committee, one of its priority tasks might be the elaboration of a matrix, or several matrices, of operational agency collaboration, based on the system-wide medium-term plan. Such a matrix would, inter alia, identify the specific activity, the collaborating agencies and their respective contributions, time-frames, methodology, expected outcome, and new aspects resulting from the Platform for Action. Since a number of agencies had developed matrices in critical areas of concern of particular relevance to them (such as UNICEF on the girl child, UNHCR on women in armed conflict, UNFPA on women and health), it was agreed that they would be shared in order to facilitate the identification of areas of collaboration. The importance of working towards targets set in the Platform for Action and in other international agreements was stressed.

B. Coordination of report preparation

21. Agency contributions would be required to a number of reports and events to be prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women over the next 12-18 months. While a number of reports were required on the basis of existing mandates, the upcoming decision of the Commission on its long-term programme of work and methods of work would have an impact on future reports and the issues to be covered (see annex IV on the multi-year work programme of the Commission). Contributions were required for:

(a) Expert group meetings on violence against migrant women workers (27-31 May 1996); on women in decision-making, with particular reference to peacemaking and conflict resolution (7-11 October 1996); and on women in economic decision-making (dates to be announced). Agencies would participate in the meetings and/or contribute to the background papers to be prepared by the Division;

(b) Report on trafficking in women, to be completed in June;

(c) Report on effective mobilization of women in development for the General Assembly in 1997. The report to the Second Committee would emphasize mainstreaming, highlighting a gender perspective in the issues before the Committee;

(d) Report on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Programme for Action: annual report to the General Assembly, through the Commission and the Economic and Social Council. Its details would be specified by the Commission, but it was expected to be a flexible report, focusing on new developments;

(e) Contributions from the agencies would be required in preparation of the discussion of the critical areas of concern, in accordance with the long-term work programme.

22. With regard to monitoring the implementation of the Programme for Action, it was noted that the Commission would determine the pattern and timetable, but that it would be up to the Secretariat to design the tools and methods for compiling the information. A review and appraisal would take place in 2000, which was also the third review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. With regard to recommendations emanating from expert group meetings, further thought needed to be given to their implementation at the country level. With regard to the preparation of national plans of action, called for in the Programme for Action, the question of indicators, guidelines and practical assistance would be pursued further. The specific role of the regional commissions and other United Nations entities, especially those with field presence, in assisting in the preparation and analysis of national plans was mentioned.

C. Status of the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women

23. The meeting discussed the proposed new inter-agency committee on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, its terms of reference, and

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priority themes. In order to assist in its deliberations, the Meeting was briefed by members of the ACC Task Forces on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, and on Basic Social Services. Emphasis was placed on the terms of reference, methods of work, participants, and results of the Task Forces. Lessons learned from the Task Force on the ICPD Implementation were presented.

24. The Meeting was addressed by and held an exchange of views with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues. In her remarks, she referred to the first initiatives taken, in particular the convening of a meeting with representatives of the United Nations proper and the establishment of three working groups to deal with research and policy, operational activities, and gender balance.

25. She spelled out the rationale behind the Secretary-General's proposal for an inter-agency committee, rather than a task force, to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women. Those included, inter alia, that the committee's scope should go beyond operational activities and support for resident representatives and beyond economic and social considerations. The cross-cutting nature of gender issues required that political, peace-keeping and other issues be addressed. The committee's reach should clearly be global, thus dealing with developing and developed countries. She stated her expectation that the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting would indeed form the core of the new committee and would meet prior to or possibly in conjunction with the Commission, and that its 20 years of experience should be fully utilized. Therefore, the anticipated establishment of the committee should be the institutionalization of the work of the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting.

26. Concern was expressed by agencies regarding the establishment of the three working groups, taking into consideration the need to avoid overlapping and to provide coordination between the system as a whole, including coordination with working groups and linkages with other task forces. The Special Adviser was encouraged to develop and strengthen direct communication with heads of agencies as a key component of her role and to undertake to advise the Secretary-General on how to achieve full accountability for gender mainstreaming. Links between the regional and the global ACC mechanisms were encouraged. As the proposed inter-agency committee would focus on gender issues, it was seen as essential to develop and establish links to the task forces set up by ACC, to bring in a gender perspective and to other subsidiary machinery of ACC.

27. The Meeting discussed possible terms of reference for the proposed committee and priority themes for its work. It was felt that the committee should focus on gender mainstreaming and its practical requirements in the framework of the implementation of the Platform for Action and other recent international conferences and summits. The promotion of coordination and cooperation on women and gender issues, based on the system-wide medium-term plan, information exchange on women and gender issues, and linkages with other ACC subsidiary machinery and task forces so as to integrate a gender perspective were also identified as areas for the committee's work. In addition to the regular meetings at Headquarters, it was considered that regional coordination meetings of regionally based staff at the headquarters of regional commissions should be encouraged, and that at other headquarters locations such as Geneva,

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Rome, Vienna and Nairobi, meetings on specific topics might be arranged for entities located there.

28. In discussing the work programme of the proposed committee, the Meeting agreed that it should be linked to the multi-year programme of work to be adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, with regard to the critical areas of concern, and to the themes of Economic and Social Council sessions. A number of additional priority subjects for the attention of the committee were identified. As to the methods of work of the proposed committee, it was felt that the committee should encourage the involvement of agency colleagues at the technical level in issue-specific discussions. As to the periodicity of the meetings of the new committee, it was felt that, in addition to two regular annual meetings, informal meetings of representatives at Headquarters could be convened more frequently, especially on specific issues. In that regard, the practice established in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women could serve as useful guidance. Comprehensive information exchange was stressed as an essential aspect, especially between Headquarters-based focal points and their field-based representatives, and between focal points and general information units (JUNIC). It was stressed that information exchange between the global and the regional levels needed to be strengthened. The use of e-mail and of electronic conferencing would be further encouraged.

D. Follow-up to international conferences

29. The Meeting was briefed on the results of the recent session of the Commission on Population and Development. In accordance with its multi-year work programme, that Commission dealt with reproductive rights and reproductive health issues in the framework of the International Conference on Population and Development. Particular attention was placed on an integrated approach to those issues. The need for indicators to assess progress and impacts was stressed by the Commission on Population and Development.

30. The Meeting was briefed, and held an exchange of views, on the preparations for Habitat II, to take place in June 1996 in Istanbul, and its gender implications.

31. The Meeting was informed about preparation for the World Food Summit, organized by FAO, which would take place in December 1996. Members of the Meeting requested information about the extent to which a gender perspective was applied in the preparations, and asked what reports were being prepared with a view to contributing gender-specific content.

32. The Meeting was informed about the World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (August 1996).

IV. OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

33. The meeting reviewed the initiatives of a number of United Nations entities to strengthen support for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

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against Women, in the aftermath of a discussion held at the nineteenth Meeting with the Chair of that Committee.

34. Under the same item, the Committee was informed about recent steps taken by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to establish a trust fund for activities to eliminate violence against women, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/166. While UNIFEM's initiatives in that regard were welcomed, concern was expressed that in the area of violence against women there was an acute need for more and better coordination and consultation, since a number of entities were undertaking activities in that field. One example was support to women suffering from gender-specific violence in situations of conflict. The need for consistency in approach was highlighted, and early and comprehensive consultation among all entities involved in the field was urged. It was decided that a report would be presented to the next session of the IAM on inter-agency activities and coordination on violence against women, especially in conflict situations.

V. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

35. The Meeting, in adopting the provisional agenda for its twenty-second meeting (see annex III) decided that, should the ACC proceed with the establishment of the proposed inter-agency committee on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the provisional agenda would serve as provisional agenda for the Committee's first meeting. The twenty-second Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women, or a meeting of the new inter-agency committee, should be convened in conjunction with the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Notes

1/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing,
4-14 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, resolution I, annex II.

Annex I

AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST AD HOC INTER-AGENCY
MEETING ON WOMEN, NEW YORK, 6-8 MARCH 1996

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.
4. Programming and coordination matters of the United Nations and the United Nations system related to women:
 - (a) Implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for 1996-2001;
 - (b) Coordination of report preparations;
 - (c) Status of the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women;
 - (d) Follow-up to international conferences (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, World Conference on Human Rights, International Conference on Population and Development, World Summit for Social Development, and preparations for Habitat II).
5. Operational activities.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report.

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Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

United Nations

Department of Policy Coordination
and Sustainable Development

Division for the Advancement of Women

Ms. Angela E. V. King
Mr. John Mathiason
Ms. Kristen Timothy (Chairperson)
Ms. Christine Brautigam (Secretary)

Department for Economic and Social
Information and Policy Analysis

Ms. Joann Vanek
Ms. Mary Beth Weinberger

Department for Development Support
and Management Services

Ms. Tsu-Wei Chang

Department of Public Information

Ms. Susan Markham
Mr. Hasan Ferdous
Ms. Marian Awwad

United Nations Centre for Human Rights

Ms. Rukia Hussen-Aden

Economic Commission for Africa

Mrs. Mebo Mwaniki

Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific

Ms. Thelma Kay

Regional commissions, New York office

Ms. Sulafa Al-Bassam
Ms. Margaret McCaffery

United Nations Conference on Trade
and Development

Ms. Gloria Veronica Koch

United Nations Children's Fund

Ms. Misrak Elias
Ms. Sreelakshmi Gururaja

United Nations Development Programme

Ms. Rosina Wiltshire

United Nations Development Fund for Women

Ms. Maxine Olson
Ms. Achola Pala Okeyo

United Nations Environment Programme

Mr. Pierre Quiblier

United Nations Drug Control Programme,
UNOV/UNDCP

Mrs. Sylvie Alpert Bryant

/...

Office of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees

Ms. Ann Howarth-Wiles

United Nations Relief and Works Agency
for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Mr. William Lee

United Nations Population Fund

Ms. Virginia Ofosu-Amaah

International Research and Training
Institute for the Advancement of Women

Ms. Martha Duenas-Loza
Ms. Borjana Schieber

World Food Programme, New York office

Mr. A. Husain-Naviatti

Specialized agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Ms. Touré Boubacar
Mr. Toshihiko Murata

International Atomic Energy Agency

Ms. Marlene O'Dell

International Labour Organization

Ms. Jane Youyun Zhang

International Monetary Fund

Mr. Justin Zulu
Ms. Harriet Shugarman

United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Ms. Ingeborg Breines
Ms. Breda Pavlic

United Nations Industrial Development
Organization

Ms. Ayumi Fujino

World Bank

Ms. Monica S. Fong

International Maritime Organization

Ms. Pamela Tansey

Guest speakers

Special Adviser of the Secretary-
General on Gender Issues

Ms. Rosario Green

Executive Coordinator, Task Force on
ICPD Implementation

Ms. Catherine Pierce

Officer-in-Charge, DSPD, representing
the Department for Policy Coordination
and Sustainable Development on the
Task Force on Employment and
Sustainable Livelihoods

Ms. Andrzej Krassowski

Officer-in-Charge
UNCHS, New York office

Ms. Aliye Pekin Celik

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Annex III

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND AD HOC INTER-AGENCY
MEETING ON WOMEN, NEW YORK, 1997

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Discussion of critical areas of concern in accordance with multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women.
4. Coordination of gender training.
5. Programming and coordination matters of the United Nations and the United Nations system related to women:
 - (a) Implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for 1996-2001;
 - (b) Coordination of report preparation;
 - (c) Follow-up to international conferences (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, World Conference on Human Rights, International Conference on Population and Development, World Summit for Social Development, and Habitat II), and activities of task forces.
6. Operational activities.
7. Other matters.
8. Adoption of the report.

Annex IV

MULTI-YEAR WORK PROGRAMME OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN

(Draft resolution recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women to the
Economic and Social Council in E/CN.6/1996/L.13)

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| 1997 | Education and training of women (Platform for Action, chap. IV.B) |
| | Women and the economy (chap. IV.F) |
| | Women in power and decision-making (chap. IV.G) |
| | Women and the environment (chap. IV.K) |
| 1998 | Violence against women (chap. IV.D) |
| | Women and armed conflict (chap. IV.E) |
| | Human rights of women (chap. IV.I) |
| | The girl child (chap. IV.L) |
| 1999 | Women and health (chap. IV.C) |
| | Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (chap. IV.H) |
| | Initiation of the comprehensive review and appraisal of the
implementation of the Platform for Action |
| 2000 | Comprehensive quinquennial review and appraisal of the
implementation of the Platform for Action |
| | Emerging issues |
