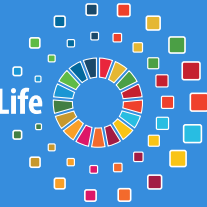


Summary of the synthesis Arab report on the periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years





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CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-3	1
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. PROGRESS IN EMPOWERING WOMEN	4-33	2
A. Achieving inclusive development, common prosperity and decent work	4-6	2
B. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services.....	7-14	2
C. Freedom from violence, stigmatization and stereotypes	15-21	4
D. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions	22-29	4
E. Peaceful societies where no one is marginalized.....	30-32	6
F. Environmental preservation, protection and rehabilitation	33	7
II. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCEDURES	34-36	7
III. DATA AND STATISTICS	37-39	7
IV. BEIJING+30	40-42	8
A. Lessons learned with a regional dimension	40	8
B. Regional and national priorities.....	41-42	9

Introduction

1. Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to human rights. They are also considered crucial for achieving sustainable and equal development. For a quarter of a century, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have been international pathways for countries to advance the status of women and girls and achieve equality. The year 2020 is pivotal for accelerating gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In 2020, the fifth review of the Beijing Platform for Action will coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995,¹ the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security,² and the fifth anniversary of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³

Objectives of the periodic regional review

2. The synthesis Arab report on the periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years reviews the achievements made by Arab countries in fulfilling their commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It also analyses the challenges facing the region in that regard by highlighting the regional dimensions related to political, security, economic, social and cultural contexts. The regional report is largely based on detailed national reports prepared by 20 Arab countries for the period 2014-2019. It also depends in many aspects on information and data provided by the United Nations and other sources.⁴ The regional report benefited from the outcomes of parallel consultations with civil society and young people, held in Beirut (April 2019), Tunis (April 2019) and Cairo (August 2019), to discuss progress and future priorities from the perspective of non-governmental stakeholders.

3. The regional report draws on the national reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action submitted by Arab countries. It consists of five sections. Section I reviews the general framework of the status of women in the Arab region. Section II presents progress made in empowering women, adopting the same framework used in the guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews (six overarching dimensions and their subheadings).⁵ Section III provides an analytical review of Arab countries' efforts in establishing and developing bodies and institutions concerned with implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Section IV examines the efforts of States in providing gender-disaggregated data to measure progress and identify weaknesses, despite general shortfalls in the gender statistics system and a lack of gender-disaggregated data in most Arab countries. Section V focuses on analysing lessons learned, highlights national and regional priorities and makes recommendations to assist Arab countries in working towards gender equality. The following is a summary of the synthesis Arab report on the periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years.⁶

¹ https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf.

² S/RES/1325(2000).

³ A/RES/70/1.

⁴ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/gender-justice-law-assessment-arab-states>.

⁵ https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/u1281/18-359nve_annex_1_-_guidance_note_english_annex.pdf.

⁶ To ensure brevity, the present summary follows the same structure as the synthesis Arab report on the periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years, with the exception of the first section on the general framework of the status of women in the Arab region.

I. PROGRESS IN EMPOWERING WOMEN

A. ACHIEVING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, COMMON PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

4. Despite progress in a number of areas related to the empowerment of women and girls, the gender gap in the Arab region remains wide at around 40 per cent in 2018.⁷ The average participation of women in the labour force in the Arab region was 18.4 per cent in 2018, compared with a global average of 48 per cent and a regional average for men of 77.2 per cent.⁸ Clear disparities also exist between countries with regard to women's economic participation, ranging from 58 per cent in Qatar and Bahrain to 6 per cent in Yemen. The rate in seven Arab countries is below 20 per cent, and ranges between 20 per cent and 30 per cent in eight other countries.

5. While some States have continued to implement their existing labour legislation, some have enacted new legislation promoting equal pay and prohibiting gender-based discrimination, while others have revised their internal regulations to prohibit workplace harassment and enforce equal pay. These efforts also include strengthening mechanisms to ensure the implementation of such legislation, including policies to achieve gender equality, eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and ensure the economic empowerment of women, in addition to harmonizing family duties with work requirements and promoting the principle of equal opportunities.

6. Countries have taken various measures, such as the expansion of early childhood care services, to help working women balance their professional and family roles. A number of countries have also expanded institutional support for older persons with chronic or ageing-associated diseases, or for those who need intensive health and psychological care, thus reducing the responsibility placed on working women. Moreover, a number of Arab countries offer benefits associated with maternity/paternity leave.

B. POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

7. Arab societies suffer from varying degrees of poverty; however, no updated and comparable data exist for all Arab countries. Based on World Bank data on the proportion of the population living below the national poverty line, the proportion of the population living below the international poverty line, or the proportion of the population suffering from multidimensional poverty, results show that poverty is worsening in the Comoros, Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen. Moreover, no data exist on the gender gap in poverty rates because poverty is measured at the household level, but the feminization of poverty is evident when comparing poverty rates among women who are responsible for their households, especially divorced women or widows, compared with other members of society.⁹

8. The regional report indicates that a number of countries have implemented measures to adapt social protection systems to the changing realities of the labour market, as highlighted by the introduction of maternity and unemployment insurance benefits, and the expansion of coverage for certain categories of self-employed persons. However, these measures do not ensure universal coverage and adequate benefit levels for all. Social security schemes tend to focus on the provision of pensions while other risks, such as unemployment or maternity, are not covered. The lack of adequate mechanisms to ensure financial security and health care for the most vulnerable citizens is a major concern in most Arab countries. According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), only 27 per cent of older persons receive retirement pensions in the Arab region.

9. By introducing or strengthening social protection programmes for women and girls, such as cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment schemes for working-age women, and pensions

⁷ World Economic Forum. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2018: Insight Report*, 2018, p. 15.

⁸ ILO estimates (accessed in December 2019).

⁹ Rense Nieuwenhuis and others, *Gender equality and poverty are intrinsically linked*, UN Women, 2018.

for older women, some Arab countries have increased conditional human capital and enhanced women's rights in family decision-making, thus improving economic-productive integration, increasing women's financial inclusion and combating violence against women. Moreover, projects to mainstream gender equality in rural development programmes have also emerged, alongside information technology projects to create jobs for women and increase young women's chances of finding decent work. Most Arab countries have adopted policies and implemented successful programmes to support women's entrepreneurship development. Young Arab women have particularly benefited from these programmes to overcome discrimination in the labour market.

10. Several Arab countries have made progress in reforming participatory social protection programmes to enhance women's access to and use of such services, and in providing or strengthening social protection for women, including the provision of scholarships for male and female students to study in the country or abroad. A number of countries have also made progress in providing and strengthening conditional cash transfers and social pensions which, if sustained, can contribute to reducing poverty among Arab households in general, and women and girls in particular.

11. Moreover, most Arab countries are conducting public health campaigns, focusing on women's health, particularly the early detection of breast and cervical cancer. Several Arab countries have also developed maternal health services to increase the number of births under medical supervision and the number of visits to the doctor during pregnancy. This has been accompanied by an improvement in women's access to health services through the expansion of universal health coverage or public health services, resulting in a marked reduction in communicable and infectious diseases and a reduction in maternal mortality.

12. Although there is a literacy gender gap in favour of males, the academic achievement of girls who attend school exceeds that of their male peers. Over the past five years, Arab countries have seen an increase in girls' enrolment (gross and net) in primary and secondary education, except in the Syrian Arab Republic where girls' gross enrolment in primary education has dropped from 117 per cent to 75 per cent, and net enrolment has decreased from 93 per cent to 62 per cent. Enrolment rates in secondary education declined over the same period from 72 per cent to 49 per cent for gross enrolment, and from 67 per cent to 45 per cent for net enrolment. As a result of improved girls' education, the Gender Equality Index (female to male enrolment rate in education) in most Arab countries is close to 100 per cent, with the exception of Djibouti, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen.

13. Furthermore, a significant achievement has been made in gross enrolment rates for post-secondary education, exceeding 50 per cent in seven Arab countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, Oman, State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) compared with three countries only in 2010 (Libya, where the rate has dropped from 61 per cent to 50 per cent; the State of Palestine; and Saudi Arabia). This achievement has been reflected in the Gender Equality Index for higher education,¹⁰ exceeding 100 per cent in most Arab countries except the Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Mauritania and Yemen.¹¹ Most Arab countries have taken measures to increase girls' access to technical and vocational education, and training and skills development programmes, which benefit girls to varying degrees across Arab countries.

14. In the last five years, most Arab countries have witnessed efforts to enhance skills and expand training in new and emerging fields, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), to harness the potentials of girls whose achievements have not been adequately translated into added value in gross domestic product (GDP) because of a cultural system that limits women's competitiveness in the labour market.

¹⁰ Data may not include those enrolled in higher education institutions outside the country.

¹¹ Data for Somalia is not available.

C. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMATIZATION AND STEREOTYPES

15. Gender-based violence prevents women and girls from going to school and work, and from participating in public life. It is an affront to women's dignity and a grave violation of human rights. Arab countries' have implemented laws, policies, strategies and institutional measures to prevent all forms of violence against women. Moreover, they have established reporting mechanisms, increased the severity of punishments for perpetrators, and encouraged survivors of violence to report abuse. They also provide medical and psychological support to survivors.

16. The drop in child marriage rates, as a form of violence against girls, varies between countries and more efforts are needed in countries with high rates, such as the Comoros, Iraq, Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen.

17. Despite a lack of data on the prevalence of violence against women, the aggravation of the problem has made addressing the issue over the past five years a priority for Arab countries. In general, data on measuring violence against women in society cover only a small number of Arab countries and are not collected in an organized manner that allows for identifying trends. Moreover, data on violence against women is not collected periodically and there is no common definition for the concept within national statistical offices.

18. Progress is being made in introducing or strengthening measures to increase women's access to justice (such as specialized courts, judicial and police training, protection orders, redress and reparations), but prevailing values and stereotypes in some societies prevent many women from accessing justice, especially marginalized women and women from conservative backgrounds.

19. Many countries have made numerous achievements in addressing violence against women at the legal and policy levels. Arab countries have prioritized eliminating child and forced marriage; addressing sexual harassment and violence in public places, in educational settings and at work; and combating domestic violence, including sexual violence. Combating female genital mutilation has also been a priority in countries where it is practised.

20. At the legal level, the constitutions of few Arab countries explicitly provide for the protection of women and girls from violence. Most Arab countries have established a legislative infrastructure to address violence against women by enacting or amending relevant laws. Some countries have imposed harsher punishments for perpetrators. At the policy level, seven countries have developed specialized strategies to discuss violence against women. Measures have also been taken to implement relevant laws and policies, including the establishment of specialized departments in ministries of interior to combat violence against women and of a women's police force to reduce violence in the public sphere. In parallel, Arab countries have made progress in providing or strengthening services to prevent violence, such as telephone helplines, mobile applications, and services for survivors of violence, such as shelters, health and psychological services, legal services and counselling.

21. To eliminate violence against women and girls, particularly technology-facilitated violence, most Arab countries have increased public awareness and changed stereotypes and negative attitudes. A successful initiative carried out in most Arab countries is a 16-day campaign to combat violence against women and girls as part of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Several countries have designed these campaigns using data from national databases, including statistics on domestic violence.

D. PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

22. Arab countries have taken a number of measures to increase public participation, leading to an increase in the political representation of women in the region. This is evidenced by the increase in the proportion of seats held by women in parliament (both elected and appointed, in line with the political systems of each country). Women representation exceeded a quarter in five Arab countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq, the Sudan

and Tunisia), ranged between 15 per cent and 25 per cent in nine Arab countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and the United Arab Emirates), and registered less than 15 per cent in the remaining Arab countries.

23. Despite this progress, women remain largely underrepresented at all levels of government in the Arab region. The average share of women members of parliament at the regional level stands at 19 per cent, which is well below the global average.

24. As for women's representation in the judiciary, there are clear disparities among Arab countries, with over 40 per cent representation in Algeria, Lebanon and Tunisia, 39 per cent in Djibouti, 24 per cent in Morocco, 22 per cent in Jordan, and between 18 per cent and 7 per cent in seven countries (Bahrain, the Comoros, Iraq, Libya, the State of Palestine, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic). The proportion in the remaining Arab countries is below 7 per cent.¹² Constitutional reforms have also been reflected in the executive sector, with a larger proportion of women holding ministerial portfolios over the past five years. The share of women ministers in Arab Governments exceeded 20 per cent in Mauritania, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates, and between 10 per cent and 20 per cent in Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, and the Sudan.

25. The past five years have not witnessed many amendments at the constitutional level in the Arab region, except for some constitutional amendments providing for quotas on women's participation in politics, guaranteeing at least 30 per cent of seats to women in parliamentary and municipality elections. Constitutional amendments enshrine the right of women to access political bodies with local and national representation; and the fair and equitable distribution of men and women in Government. Reforms also included introducing legal amendments to the electoral law or identifying working mechanisms for parliamentary councils to ensure women's representation in presidential bodies. Regarding capacity development, Arab countries did not spare any effort to build the capacity of women to effectively participate in the public sphere. Specialized long-term programmes were developed to enhance women's participation in various decision-making and leadership positions. Governments worked on a variety of issues to empower women to attract voters, run election campaigns, participate in the formulation of public policies, and review and develop national legislation. Governments also worked with women to enhance their communication, networking and advocacy skills.

26. In the context of empowering women to use technology, countries have pursued various approaches to enhance women's capacity to use technology and support them to receive financing to purchase computers, enhance their access to the Internet and decrease taxes to facilitate this; and improve the information technology infrastructure by encouraging telecommunication companies to apply the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment in recruitment, pay, training or promotion. Some countries designed safety information programmes for women and families, in addition to supporting employers in the area of media and technology or by encouraging women to have more interest in technology.

27. Countries exerted considerable efforts to develop strategies and action plans to achieve socioeconomic development goals at the national level that are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. A number of countries started integrating women's issues in these national strategies or those concerned with a thematic topic, such as education, poverty and rural development. In the same context, the number of countries that developed specialized strategies for the advancement of women or to achieve gender equality increased to 12. Violence against women has emerged as a priority for countries at the legislative and procedural levels. Countries' efforts were not limited to combatting domestic violence or violence in general, but extended to include trafficking in women, which some countries have developed specialized strategies to combat. Issues, such as rural women, for example, did not receive considerable attention, and only Morocco and Iraq developed specialized strategies for them.

28. In the same context, attention was given to the issue of harmful practices. The past five years witnessed the development of national strategies on child marriage and female genital mutilation. Other countries gave

¹² [E/ESCWA/ECW/2018/Brief.1](#).

more attention to issues related to motherhood, especially reproductive health, and developed specialized strategies on these issues.

29. The majority of Arab countries are working on implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, by developing strategies or national action plans for the advancement of women. However, only a few countries have developed action plans and timelines to adhere to these recommendations. Few countries have established national mechanisms to report on the international human rights conventions and on monitoring recommendations emanating from international mechanisms for human rights.

E. PEACEFUL SOCIETIES WHERE NO ONE IS MARGINALIZED

30. The regional report highlights the impact of conflict on the stereotyping of gender justice concepts, and on the rise of sexual, gender-based and domestic violence. This is further exacerbated by pervasive obstacles to women's access to justice.¹³ However, States have adopted and/or implemented national action plans on women, peace and security, and on the integration of women, peace and security commitments into key policy, planning and monitoring frameworks at the national level and in ministries and executive bodies. Efforts have also been made to develop plans for the use of communication strategies, including social media, to raise awareness of the women, peace and security agenda, and to increase budgetary allocations for its implementation. However, despite all these achievements, efforts are not commensurate with the risks that women and girls face in Arab countries as a result of armed conflicts and the resulting flows of forced migration to neighbouring States. Although only five Arab countries have developed national plans to implement the women, peace and security agenda, information shows that a number of countries are currently seeking to develop national plans in line with international obligations.

31. Despite the fact that most Arab countries have acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and despite efforts to protect children, especially girls, many serious challenges remain. Armed conflicts in the Arab region have resulted in a tragic situation for thousands of children who now face multiple forms of danger, such as poor health services, malnutrition, no access to education and early school drop-out. Education for all remains an elusive concept in the Arab region, with some 5 million school-age children who remain out of school, 60 per cent of whom are girls,¹⁴ in a context of violence that leads to the killing of children in Iraq, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan and Yemen,¹⁵ as well as other serious phenomena such as child labour which have increased as a result of the fragile economy, the lack of educational opportunities, and the prevalence of unfavourable social norms.¹⁶ Other major challenges include the negative health consequences attributed to malnutrition, early pregnancy (such as anaemia), and contraction of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. These challenges, among others, require the implementation of policies and programmes that aim to eliminate child labour, and the excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girls.

32. States have made considerable efforts to provide protection against violations affecting women and girls in conflict situations. Legislative measures have been taken to combat violence against women and to promote access to justice for refugee and displaced women by building the capacity of security services. The region has also documented the use of rape as a weapon of war in some conflict-affected countries. However, many Arab countries have yet to accede to the Rome Statute and the 1951 Refugee Convention. Some Arab countries have also contributed to international peacekeeping forces, thus playing an important role in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and crisis response. States have also committed to include

¹³ [E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/4](#).

¹⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *UNESCO Arab Regional Education Support Strategy* 2016.

¹⁵ <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2018/12/1024451>.

¹⁶ https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_675263/lang--ar/index.htm.

women in their peacekeeping forces to render these forces more inclined to prevent violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations against women and girls in situations of armed conflict.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

33. While recognizing that some efforts have been made to support women's participation and leadership in the management and governance of the environment and natural resources and in increasing women's access to and control over land, water, energy and other natural resources, these efforts continue to fall short of mainstreaming gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies in an organized and sustainable manner. More attention is needed to monitor and evaluate the impact of environmental policies and sustainable infrastructure projects on women and girls. This also requires strengthening evidence and proof relating to the impact of these policies. Moreover, and while recognizing that efforts in some countries to raise awareness of gender-specific environmental and health risks (such as consumer products, technologies, and industrial pollution) are moving in the right direction, the priority given to environmental conservation and protection in most Arab countries is eclipsed by urgent programmes aiming to meet the basic needs of citizens.

II. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCEDURES

34. Approaches to the establishment of national women's machineries and their roles have varied, and so have their work approaches and the national measures taken by these institutions to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, with an emphasis on SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. At the institutional level, the majority of Arab countries have stepped up their national efforts to advance women and promote gender equality in several ways, including conducting institutional reviews to introduce new institutions that complement existing ones, restructuring and repositioning of existing institutions to enhance their role based on relevant national priorities, and reviewing the working methods of national women machineries in response to national priorities.

35. The types of existing institutional frameworks vary among countries. While some countries have ministries that deal with issues relating to women, children and older persons combined, national women's machineries in a number of other countries deal with issues that are essentially considered functions of the ministries of development or social affairs. Other countries have been active in setting specific areas that deal with the family, and others that deal with women's issues to make sure appropriate attention is given to the latter. The work of national women's machineries in the region includes, but is not limited to, expressing opinion on laws and government programmes related to women, following up and evaluating public policies related to gender equality, expressing opinion on relevant international conventions and frameworks, ensuring State representation in international forums and organizations concerned with women's affairs, monitoring information and data on women, conducting relevant studies and research, and raising public awareness of women's issues. These tasks are linked to the mandate of national women's machineries, which often perform a comprehensive cross-sectoral advisory role for the benefit of policy and decision makers.

36. National women's machineries and their complementary institutions seek to develop operational and procedural tools to help them increase the pace and effectiveness of their work, and to enable them to fulfil their assigned role and respond to new and emerging mandates, such as assigning focal points or creating specialized bodies and committees. With regard to resources, achieving progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda requires additional resources and intensified efforts to translate national commitments and plans into action, and to operationalize institutional frameworks to improve the status of women and society.

III. DATA AND STATISTICS

37. Collecting, analysing and classifying data to produce gender-disaggregated statistics is of great importance when it comes to activities related to development policies in general, and women's empowerment policies in particular. Providing these statistics periodically and with adequate coverage for all segments of

society is the cornerstone of evidence-based reviews that aim to identify problems, allocate resources for interventions, and assess the impact of such interventions.

38. Although there has been increased focused on gender equality statistics in recent decades, there are challenges to systematic and gender-sensitive monitoring, including unequal coverage of gender equality indicators across the SDGs and their targets, the absence of internationally agreed standards for data collection, and imbalances in the continuous provision of gender equality statistics among countries.

39. All Arab countries are making efforts to develop a database of gender statistics, and make such data available on the websites of statistical agencies or institutions that act as national women's machineries. Most Arab countries have also established statistical institutional frameworks that include units responsible for gender equality statistics. The past five years have witnessed various information additions resulting from the implementation of field surveys for the first time, such as surveys on household violence, violence against women, costing violence against women, time-use surveys, and field surveys related to priority care social groups. Most Arab countries also publish periodicals on gender equality statistics. The regional report refers to three areas in which Arab countries have made progress over the past five years. These include: new surveys to produce background information on specialized topics related to gender statistics such as harmful practices and violence against women; reprocessing existing data to produce gender-disaggregated statistics; development of centralized databases or dashboards on the Internet. Moreover, some countries have produced knowledge products related to gender statistics and prepared numerous policy briefs, infographics, posters, leaflets and non-traditional publications for use in the media and in community dialogues on women's empowerment.

IV. BEIJING+30

A. LESSONS LEARNED WITH A REGIONAL DIMENSION

40. In the light of Arab countries' achievements over the past five years, of consultations carried out by Arab civil society organizations, and of the literature review related to the status of Arab women, the following lessons can be drawn:

(a) Legislation alone is not enough. A comprehensive and coordinated approach is needed to eliminate discrimination against women, based on human rights principles and programmes that address all stages of the female life cycle;

(b) Government interventions alone are insufficient. It is necessary to adopt a participatory approach, provide an enabling environment for civil society organizations, and make way for local initiatives and innovations to empower women and girls and achieve gender equality;

(c) Education and training alone are not enough to empower women and girls. It is necessary to eliminate all barriers that discriminate against women and prevent them from obtaining paid employment, promotions and access to key political, judicial and business positions in equality with men;

(d) Social protection programmes that target women are insufficient. It is necessary to implement a comprehensive set of policies to support women and girls, which addresses not only the symptoms of the problem but also its causes;

(e) Without an integrated system of gender equality statistics, it is impossible to document successes, identify failures, formulate policies and establish priorities;

(f) Achievements that are reflected by one-dimensional averages and that are measured at the national level are not a substitute for equity development, and do not necessarily lead to women and girls not being left behind;

(g) Women and girls suffer the most from conflict, wars and environmental risks, and are the most affected by economic reform programmes that tend to reduce social spending and to cut employment in the government and public sectors.

B. REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES

41. To achieve the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs, particularly with regard to gender equality, member States are advised to give priority to the following areas over the next five years:

(a) Update legislation and policies related to gender equality to ensure: (i) coverage of all aspects of gender equality; (ii) protection of women and girls from all types of violence; and (iii) that no social or spatial segment of women and girls are left behind;

(b) Move forward with the economic empowerment of Arab women, and transform progress achieved in the field of cognitive empowerment over the past years into a driving force for the economies of Arab countries;

(c) Protect the most marginalized and primary-care segments through parallel paths that incorporate social protection programmes and economic empowerment programmes, which include providing access to quality education for girls and creating job opportunities for young women;

(d) Strengthen the institutional framework by providing more resources to national women's machineries and to institutions and associations working in the fields of women's rights and the economic and political empowerment of women and girls, while intensifying action at the local level;

(e) Update gender equality data and statistics in terms of: (i) content to allow for the calculation of indicators of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and SDG indicators on gender equality; (ii) coverage of the different social and spatial segments of society, especially marginalized groups, refugees and displaced persons; and (iii) regularity of periodic data collection and transparency in making data available.

42. Based on the above, the following recommendations emerge to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. These recommendations fall under the below general headings:

1. *Gender-sensitive policies and programmes*

(a) States should strive to localize global commitments related to gender equality by integrating them into national development plans, policies, legislation and other relevant frameworks. Countries should also operationalize appropriate mechanisms to implement programmes and interventions at the decentralized/local level whenever possible, and place gender equality as a priority goal when designing and implementing development programmes at the national and local levels;

(b) Develop effective strategies to reach out to the most marginalized women and girls, and collaborate with researchers and women's rights organizations to identify marginalized groups of women and girls, design appropriate interventions for each group and allocate resources to implement such interventions;

(c) Achieve gender justice by ensuring women's access to decent work, promotion opportunities, and senior executive positions in government institutions, in addition to introducing suitable legislation and incentives that guarantee this can be achieved in both the private and public sectors, including on corporate boards;

(d) Support women in their role in the workplace, and in their domestic role as related to the performance of unpaid domestic and care work. This includes motivating men and boys to increase their contribution to such work, creating a supportive environment for women's work (establishment of day care facilities) and updating work systems (introducing flexible working arrangements and work from home modalities);

(e) Integrate social protection policies in a way that achieves a shift from protection to empowerment, and that takes into account the perspective of positive discrimination in favour of women and girls;

(f) Move beyond isolated approaches and dealing with gender equality issues in a partial and seasonal manner, and adopt an interdependent, coherent and integrated approach that focuses on the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

2. Leaving no one behind

(a) Design development programmes that prioritize the weakest and most vulnerable social groups, including women with disabilities, poor women, women heads of households, older women, women working in the informal sector, domestic workers and workers without social protection, noting that these groups vary between countries. Governments should adopt a criterion to identify development project priorities based on the extent to which they meet the needs of these groups;

(b) Identify the weakest and most vulnerable social groups through a participatory approach as an alternative to one-dimensional taxonomic analysis when conducting socioeconomic diagnostic studies and assessing the effects of multiple discrimination against women and girls;

(c) Redistribute available resources to ensure that vulnerable groups receive a fair share to achieve inclusive and sustainable development and ensure that no one is left behind;

(d) Ensure minimum protection and basic care for refugees and displaced women and girls, and take measures to guarantee a safe and dignified life for them.

3. Protecting women and girls from all forms of violence

(a) Enact laws to protect women and girls from all forms of violence, including domestic violence, in countries that have not passed such laws, and amend or remove all contradictory provisions set out in other laws;

(b) Enact legislation to protect women and girls by taking preventive measures against all forms of violence; provide specialized training for workers in this field, and ensure that all women and girls who suffer from violence have access to protection and long-term care to ensure their recovery and integration into society; implement legislation related to the prevention of violence against women and girls, and enforce and adjudicate in an independent manner to ensure that perpetrators do not go unpunished;

(c) Promote values that oppose violence against women and girls, and provide monitoring mechanisms and supporting information.

4. Governance of the gender equality system

(a) Support national women's machineries and provide them with the necessary resources to fulfil their role at the national and regional levels, and establish communication between them and Governments, parliaments, women's rights organizations, the media and study centres;

(b) Provide an enabling environment for women's rights organizations and civil society organizations to conduct their own assessments of progress at the national and regional levels, and support them with resources and information;

(c) Produce all statistical indicators that measure progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in a periodic manner and in sufficient detail to represent the most vulnerable segments, and make these indicators available to all development partners;

(d) Support citizen-led initiatives to implement non-traditional approaches to achieving gender equality, monitor discrimination against women and girls, and promote success stories and viable models for empowering women and girls.

5. *Gender equality data and statistics*

(a) States should undertake an assessment of gender equality statistics to identify gaps at the national, local and social levels, especially among the most marginalized groups, and incorporate this assessment into national statistical strategies implemented by the national statistical system, which includes all governmental and non-governmental producers and users of data. This assessment also includes information gaps and material and human resource needs, and identifies priorities to guide resource allocation;

(b) Update data and statistics systems that allow for an assessment of progress made in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda through the following parallel tracks:

- Collecting and disseminating data currently unavailable on the following topics:
 - Use of time, unpaid work and care work;
 - All types of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence;
 - Women working in the informal sector;
 - The situation of marginalized and disadvantaged women and girls, including women with disabilities and older women.
- Conducting a national survey on the situation of women and girls that addresses the various aspects related to gender equality, and allows linking economic and social variables with the characteristics of women and girls, and identifying the social relations dynamic within the family and its impact on gender equality throughout the female life cycle;
- Conducting surveys on the situation of displaced and refugee women to identify their humanitarian needs and to assess basic services provided to them, in a way which allows the calculation of indicators that are useful for policymaking and for resource allocation when addressing issues of displacement, asylum and forced migration at the national and regional levels;
- Ensure better use of existing censuses and surveys to obtain estimates of gender-equality indicators, including indicators on decent work, modern types of employment (remote work and work from home) and child marriage;
- Ensure better use of government and non-governmental administrative records, and produce and disseminate gender-disaggregated data on workers as related to their level of employment; on those who have been promoted to leadership positions, chief executive officers, board members/secretaries of public bodies, private companies, public benefit institutions, non-governmental organizations, trade unions and sports clubs; on those who have received loans from government funds and private banks; on those who work in the judiciary and police forces; on worker productivity by sectors; and on members of local councils;
- Periodically collect data that monitor trends in the role of women in the public sphere and its development over time, and explain the system of cultural values that aggravate discrimination against women and girls.

- (c) Build national capacity in the field of gender equality statistics, including through the following:
- Building analytical capacity in statistical agencies and national mechanisms to empower women and academic institutions;
 - Building knowledge and skills related to collecting gender equality data in statistical bodies, national women's machineries, ministries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector at both at the national and local levels;
 - Building human capacity in the design and dissemination of statistics using modern techniques and media.

(d) Utilize modern information and communication technologies (including mobile applications) to produce and make available gender equality statistics at lower costs while maintaining data quality and comprehensiveness, and unleash individual innovations in this field and invest in their development.



