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Agenda item 3 (a)

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third 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 critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution [2022/5](#))

Interactive dialogue: inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Chair’s summary

1. On 17 March 2025, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue on inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work, to support the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and facilitate exchanges among experts and representatives from Member States and civil society. The Minister for the Status of Women of Costa Rica, Cindy Quesada Hernández, made an introductory statement and chaired the dialogue.
2. The following speakers made opening remarks: an Emeritus Professor at the University of Essex and Chair of the United Kingdom Women’s Budget Group, Diane Elson; a member of the Executive Committee of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) network and researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council, Corina Rodríguez; a Professor at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, Lekha Chakraborty; the Director of Gender at the West African Monetary Union, Barbara Ky; and a Professor at the University of Belgrade, Marija Babović. Representatives from 14 Member States and three civil society organizations delivered statements from the floor.



Context

3. Over the past five years, a succession of crises, starting with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, has had a significant impact on women's economic lives worldwide. Progress towards increasing women's labour market participation has stalled and other indicators of women's economic empowerment have slowed down or regressed. At the same time, responses to the crises have not adequately safeguarded the progress already made. This setback is compounded by the fact that the global gender gap in labour participation remains stubbornly persistent, that occupational segregation and wage disparities are widespread and that most working women are trapped in vulnerable, unprotected jobs. Owing to gender-based discrimination and poverty, many women continue to be pushed into specific sectors and occupations, often within the unprotected informal sector, which are typically characterized by low wages, a lack of rights and poor working conditions.

Prioritizing poverty eradication, access to decent employment and social protection, and reducing the gender pay gap

4. Speakers highlighted the need to make poverty eradication the main goal of national development and growth strategies. They emphasized that breaking the cycle of poverty would require greater focus on intergenerational transmission channels. That would entail creating an enabling environment to foster job creation in high value added and labour-intensive sectors of the economy. Such efforts must be concentrated on sectors where women are traditionally underrepresented, such as science, engineering, manufacturing, the digital sector and green energy. Those efforts must also include vocational training for marginalized women, including those with disabilities, to boost their employability in times of increasing labour demand.

5. Member State representatives recognized the need to focus on the rights of women in the workplace and underscored measures focused on addressing discrimination, unsafe conditions, sexual harassment and violence at work. Several Member States have passed legislation to guarantee collective bargaining rights for all workers, including domestic and migrant workers. To tackle the gender pay gap, several countries have adopted legislation guaranteeing pay transparency and equal pay for work of equal value.

6. Member States have implemented policies to close the gender gap in access to social protection, reiterating the global consensus on the potential for comprehensive and gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors, to contribute to poverty eradication, reduce inequalities, stimulate productive activities and economic growth and strengthen resilience in the face of recurrent crises. Among the specific measures mentioned were maternity benefits, cash transfers, pensions and the overall strengthening of safety nets to reduce gender inequality and enable more women to participate in labour markets.

Investing in comprehensive care systems and services to address the disproportional responsibility of unpaid care and domestic work on women

7. Member State representatives recognized the need to invest in infrastructure such as water, sanitation, electricity and public transportation to reduce the drudgery and disproportional time that women allocate for unpaid care and domestic work. They also emphasized the need for governments to increase investment in affordable care services and infrastructure, to facilitate women's participation in labour markets and other income-generating economic activities. Several countries had adopted a national care system to holistically tackle their national care crisis, which continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Challenges and opportunities presented by the digitalization of the economy and adoption of artificial intelligence for women and girls

8. While speakers and Member State representatives emphasized that digitalization provided many opportunities for women and girls by expanding job opportunities, including remote and work-from-home policies, and improving access to information and education, they warned that gender-specific challenges and risks must be addressed. For example, women and girls have less access to technology, training and digital spaces and are overrepresented in sectors or positions that are vulnerable to job displacement and challenges in terms of work-life balance.

Implementing gender-responsive macroeconomic policies and securing adequate financing to promote inclusive development, shared prosperity and access to decent work for women.

9. Panel members underscored the importance of incorporating a gender dimension into the overall planning, design and implementation of macroeconomic growth policies and strategies. They recognized that the general macroeconomic framework sets the tone for the direction of the economy and is therefore critical for ensuring that policies do not disproportionately affect women. They called for a paradigm shift, especially following the impact of the succession of global economic and financial crises and the austerity measures proposed as responses to those crises.

10. A strong consensus emerged among panel members for a shift towards a renewed, people-centred development paradigm. This approach would prioritize women's empowerment through expanded capabilities, economic inclusion and the elimination of poverty and inequality. More crucially, by making such a shift, governments would create the policy space needed to set economic and social agendas and regulate institutions, while fostering an environment where human rights are universally guaranteed, in order to uphold the principle of leaving no one behind.

Way forward

11. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls requires a multipronged approach that prioritizes poverty eradication, decent work and social inclusion. Such an approach would involve transforming the informal sector and care economy, implementing gender-sensitive social protection and guaranteeing equal property and inheritance rights. Sustained progress hinges on adequate funding, with a requirement for States to meet their human rights obligations. It would involve expanding fiscal space, especially for debt-burdened nations, and employing countercyclical economic policies to drive recovery.

12. To truly advance gender equality, there is need for a global financial architecture that empowers developing countries. This requires reforms grounded in solidarity, fairness and redistribution, which would enable those nations to mobilize resources for gender-responsive social protection and public services. More specifically, there is a need to prioritize sustainable debt solutions and strengthen global tax cooperation. In addition, it is vital to channel international climate finance towards gender equality and boost official development assistance targeting gender equality across all sectors.