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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPERegional Symposium on Gender Mainstreaming into Economic Policies
21-23 January 2004**INFORMATION NOTICE ***

The Regional Symposium on Mainstreaming Gender into Economic Policies will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland on 21-23 January 2004. The symposium is a joint event organized by the **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe** and the **Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI/DAW)**. Its purpose is to exchange ideas, experiences and good practices on gender mainstreaming at the regional level in the following policy areas:

- Increasing womens' access to financing and Assets;
- Gender budgets;
- Improving womens' employability and supporting womens' employment;
- Gender and pension systems;
- Institutional mechanisms for mainstreaming gender into economic policies.

The Symposium aims at supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the-region specific priorities agreed at the UNECE Regional Meeting for the 5-year Review of Implementation of the Platform for Action (Geneva, 2000). It is also a contribution of the UNECE region to the 10-year review which will take place in 2005.

* New accreditation procedures have been introduced for all delegates attending meetings held at the Palais des Nations. Delegates are therefore requested to complete the attached registration form and to transmit it to the UNECE secretariat, at the latest by 6 January 2004, either by fax (+41-22-917-0036) or by e-mail (amanda.van.oostendorp@unece.org). Prior to the session, delegates are requested to present themselves at the Pass and Identification Unit of the UNOG Security and Safety Section, located at the Villa Les Feuillantines, 13, Avenue de la Paix (a map is attached) for the issuance of an identification badge. In case of difficulty, please contact by telephone the UNECE secretariat (internal extension 71171 or 72307).

I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1. The symposium is the second in the series of regional meetings organized at the initiative of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women (OSAGI/DAW) and respective United Nations regional commissions¹. Its purpose is to have a regional exchange of ideas, experiences and good practices on gender mainstreaming² in major economic policy areas.

2. Economic aspects of gender equality have been identified as a priority area for action within the context of the UNECE region at the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Beijing Conference (Vienna, October 1994) and the Regional Meeting on the 5-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (January 2000) (E/ECE/RW.2/2000/7). The exchange of good practices on mainstreaming gender into economic policies during the Symposium will assist UNECE countries in implementing the recommendations agreed at these meetings, particularly those recommendations adopted in 2000 and related to women's employability and social protection.

II. OBJECTIVES

3. The symposium aims to:

- Support gender mainstreaming at the national level through identification of approaches and entry points for gender sensitive policies in the economic field;
- Identify potentials and remaining constraints and challenges to gender mainstreaming in the UNECE region;
- Support the work of UNECE on gender mainstreaming and enhance the reporting of activities in the UNECE region to the Commission on the Status of Women.

4. In addition, the Symposium will contribute to strengthening synergies between the mainstreaming work of the United Nations and efforts undertaken at national and regional levels, and will support the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women in gender mainstreaming worldwide.

III. MAIN THEMES

5. Economic aspects of gender equality are a priority in the UNECE region in the general context of relatively high rates of unemployment and substantial cuts on public expenditure which is compounded, for a number of countries, with the particular deterioration of women's position in the labour markets, their loss of social protection and the resurgence of traditional views on women's role in society. This priority also reflects the comparative advantages of the

¹ The first such meeting was hosted by ESCAP (Bangkok, 11-13 December 2001).

² A definition and the mandate for gender mainstreaming is provided in the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2, the twenty-third special session of General Assembly (Beijing+5) and ECOSOC resolution 2001/41.

UNECE expertise in gender issues and the profile of its activities, which aim at promoting regional dialogue on gender-sensitive economic policies.

6. The symposium will:

- Review and discuss the gender aspects of economic policies, based on what has been done so far for engendering the macroeconomics, and taking into account commitments made in this respect at the relevant United Nations global Conferences, including the Monterrey Conference;
- Present good practices, as well as remaining challenges, in selected areas of economic decision-making with a focus on: (i) gender aspects of access to resources and financing; (ii) gender mainstreaming in budgets at central and local levels (especially fiscal policies and selected types of public expenditures such as proactive employment, health and housing); (iii) support to women's employability (especially training and retraining schemes, access to self-employment and ICT, and measures for making compatible work and family responsibilities); and (iv) pension schemes and security of income for ageing women;
- Identify tools and mechanisms for mainstreaming gender into the economic areas (data collection and academic research, gender training, lobbying);
- Discuss roles, responsibilities and accountability of the various actors involved in the mainstreaming process (Governments, parliamentarians, local authorities, the private sector, NGOs, academic community) as well as the institutional mechanisms which can best ensure continuing dialogue among these actors and ensuing effective decision-making.

7. The programme of work of the Symposium, as presented in Annex I, highlights five main themes for discussion as well as specific sub-themes for each of them.

IV. EXPECTED OUTPUT

8. It is expected that the symposium will advance the process of practical implementation of gender mainstreaming in public decision-making at the national level and policy convergence based on good practices at the sub-regional and regional levels. It should also forge partnership among governments and civil society at all levels to promote gender mainstreaming into economic policies.

9. The content of the debate, together with conclusions and possible recommendations based on lessons learned, will be presented as a report to the Commission on the Status of Women.

V. FORMAT AND PARTICIPANTS

10. The symposium will have the format of an expert meeting with a region-wide coverage. The core group of participants will be representatives of governments, in particular from

substantive ministries (e.g. finance, economy, social affairs) and gender equality units. Representatives of selected regional NGOs and international organizations will also be invited.

11. Each theme will be introduced by one resource person and 2-3 panellists who will be national and international experts from the region: practitioners in the respective areas addressed including from governmental circles, academia, and research institutions. The presentations will be followed by an interactive discussion among all participants. It is expected that both positive experiences and good practices, as well as illustrations of major gaps in gender mainstreaming, will be discussed.

VI. VENUE

12. The symposium will be held on 21-23 January 2004 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. Interpretation into English, French and Russian will be provided by the UNECE.

VII. DOCUMENTATION

13. Background papers and issues notes will be prepared by experts and the UNECE secretariat for each theme addressed by the Symposium.

14. In addition to the above, participants may wish to prepare a written contribution. For contributions not exceeding 7 pages, the secretariat would reproduce and circulate them in the original language. They should be sent to the UNECE secretariat not later than **6 January 2004**. In the case of longer contributions, the authors would be responsible for bringing their own copies (about 100) for distribution to participants.

VIII. TRAVEL AND OTHER COSTS

15. Travel, accommodation, medical insurance, and other expenses are to be borne by the participants. A limited number of travel grants will be available to participants from countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

IX. HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

16. All participants are responsible for finding their own accommodation in Geneva. A list of hotels can be sent to participants on request.

X. PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

17. Participants must have a valid passport and, as necessary, a visa for entry into Switzerland (to be obtained from the Swiss Consulate in the respective countries). Participants are advised to make their visa applications well in advance of the date of travel.

XI. REGISTRATION

18. Each participant of the symposium is requested to complete (typewritten or in handwritten block letters, please) the *Conference Registration Form* (see Attached) and to send it by mail or preferably by fax as soon as possible, but not later than **6 January 2004** to the address given below:

Office of the Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Fax: (+41 22) 917 0036

E-mail: Amanda.van.oostendorp@unece.org

All questions concerning the symposium should be addressed to:

Ms. Ewa Runinska-Zimny, Senior Social Affairs Officer
Phone: + 41 22 917 16 98
E-mail: ewa.zimny@unece.org



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA *Please Print*
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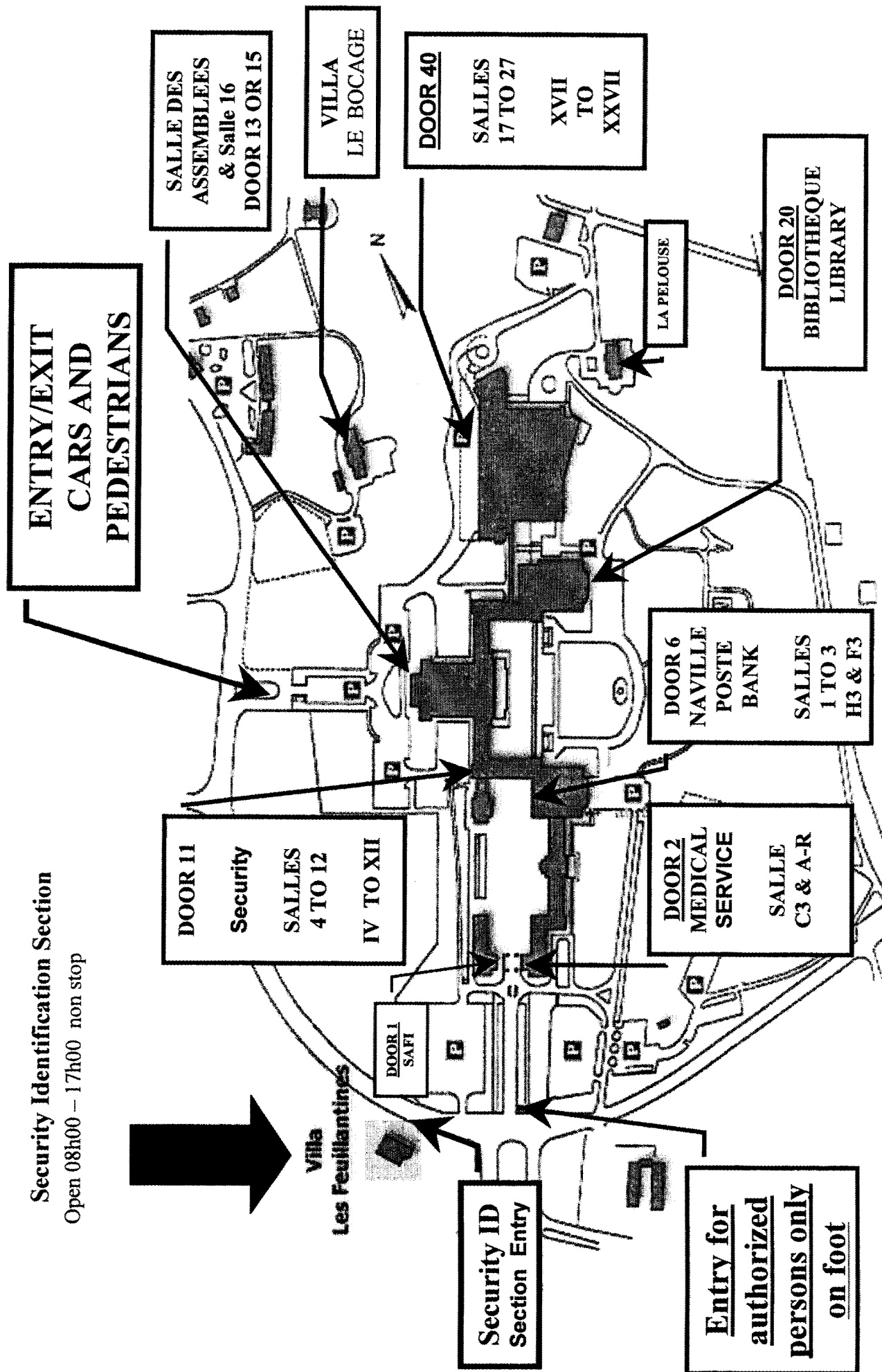
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