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### ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

#### UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

Geneva, 14-15 December 2004

#### INFORMATION NOTICE

In compliance with the decision of the Commission the UNECE will organize the **Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10 year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**. The meeting will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, on **14-15 December 2004**.

The meeting will focus on three areas of concern covered by the Beijing Platform for Action, which are of particular relevance for the UNECE region: (i) women and economy (employability, gender budgets, social protection); (ii) institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality; and (iii) trafficking in the context of migratory movements.

For each of these themes the main objective of the meeting will be to review progress achieved in the UNECE member countries since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. It will highlight good practices and remaining challenges in these key areas. In addition, UNECE member States will have an opportunity to discuss emerging issues in the context of the changing socio-economic and geopolitical situation in the region.

The outcome of the meeting will take the form of Chairperson's conclusions. It will constitute the contribution of the UNECE region to the global 10-year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which will take place on the occasion of a special session of the Commission on the Status of Women (New York, March 2005).

The meeting will draw on the format of the Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review (Beijing +5), organized by UNECE on 19-21 January 2000 in Geneva. Thus the meeting will be organized in close cooperation with other organizations and institutions active on gender issues in the UNECE region, particularly the European Commission, UNDP, UNIFEM, Council of Europe and OSCE. Furthermore an active involvement of civil society in this event is expected.

## **I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

1. In March 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women will hold a special session on the ten-year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The regional commissions are expected to provide contributions to the global 10-year review, in line with the role assigned to them by the General Assembly in the review of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the major United Nations conferences and summits.
2. During the fifty-ninth annual session of the Commission (4-6 March 2004) and the Ad Hoc Informal Meeting held on 28 May 2004, UNECE member States decided to convene the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
3. The meeting will be based on the past experience of the UNECE related to the support of the Beijing process and especially the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Beijing Conference (Vienna, 17-21 October 1994) and the Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Geneva, 19-21 January 2000).
4. The meeting will also draw on the results of the Regional Symposium on Mainstreaming Gender into Economic Policies organized jointly by UNECE and OSAGI/DAW (Geneva, 28-20 January 2004).

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

5. The main objectives of the meeting are to:
  - Support the implementation of the Beijing commitments at national level through the provision of a regional platform for the assessment of progress;
  - Identify gaps and remaining challenges;
  - Exchange good practices to facilitate the process of policy convergence based on successful experiences; and
  - Contribute to the global 10-year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

## **III. THEMES AND PROGRAMME**

6. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, countries of the UNECE region have experienced both progress and setbacks in its implementation. The situation has varied substantially by area as well as by country and subregion. It should be also reviewed in the context of deep demographic, socio-economic and geopolitical changes in the region, including the recent enlargement of the European Union.
7. Despite the diversity within the UNECE region countries share similar concerns. Economic aspects of gender equality, institutional mechanisms and trafficking are the most important areas of concern, where action is needed to sustain progress or reverse negative trends. This reflects the specific situation in the UNECE region where, in a number of countries, systemic changes have resulted in a deterioration of women's position in the economy due to

disproportional cuts in employment and highly unequal distribution of privatized assets. The strengthening of women's economic position also face the following problems: slow progress in introducing a gender perspective into economic policies and market institutions; weaknesses in the implementation mechanisms of national action plans for gender equality; persistent wage gap; insecurity of part time and atypical forms of employment, which are highly feminized; negative impact of welfare reforms and cuts in budgetary expenditure on women's situation; and poverty especially among older women.

8. There are new challenges related to extending and adapting existing good practices in the following areas: strengthening gender equality in the economic area within a Wider Europe; making the best use of flexible work arrangements; using new tools (such as gender budgets and E-learning); and ensuring equal opportunities for women in the private sector, including through self-employment and entrepreneurship. This requires further progress in gender mainstreaming into economic and social policies which can be only achieved if institutional mechanisms for gender equality are strengthened through effective implementation of progressive legislation and concerted action of all stakeholders, including line ministries. Finally, trafficking of women in the UNECE region has drastically increased. It is now one of the main concerns to be addressed by all countries of the region.

9. Against this background, the meeting will address the following areas and themes, covered by the Beijing Platform for Action:

I. Women in the economy (*3 sessions*)

- Access to financing and assets;
- Employability and support to employment;
- Gender budgets;
- Social security and pensions.

II. Institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality (*2 sessions*)

- Role and responsibilities of stakeholders (gender bureaux, line ministries, parliamentarians, civil society, academia);
- Legislation for gender equality;
- Building partnership among stakeholders.

III. Trafficking of women in the context of migratory movements (*2 sessions*)

- Patterns and causes;
- National, regional and international responses;
- Trafficking and women's economic situation.

10. Participants are also invited to refer to two major cross-sectoral issues of concern for the UNECE region: poverty and violence against women, in a way, which would be relevant for their themes.

11. In addition a round table session on emerging issues is proposed to exchange views on future challenges and opportunities. There will be also a concluding session.

#### **IV. EXPECTED OUTPUT**

12. The expected outcome of the meeting will be the Chairperson's conclusions, which would highlight the main points raised and views expressed during the deliberations of the meeting as well as future challenges for gender equality in the region. These conclusions will subsequently be transmitted to the Commission on the Status of Women and will constitute, together with the regional synthesis report, the contribution of the UNECE region to the 10-year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

#### **V. FORMAT AND PARTICIPANTS**

13. The meeting will have the format of a region-wide event. The core group of participants will be representatives of national gender machineries and line ministries. NGOs and academia from all ECE member States will be actively involved in the meeting. Several international organizations will also be represented.

14. Countries are encouraged to ensure that national delegations are headed by high-level representatives. They are also encouraged to include representatives of concerned line ministries (ministry of labour, economy and finance) and national institutes responsible for mainstreaming gender into substantive work on budgets, employment policies, including support for SMEs development and entrepreneurship and welfare reforms, including pensions.

15. Each theme will be introduced by one resource person and three panelists representing government, NGO community and academia. The presentations will be followed by an interactive discussion among all participants. It is expected that positive experiences and good practices, as well as major gaps in the implementation of the Beijing commitments, will be discussed.

#### **VI. PARTNERS AND PREPARATORY PROCESS**

16. The preparations will be shared among the regional organizations with specific expertise and experience in the areas addressed: European Commission, UNDP, UNIFEM, Council of Europe and OSCE. The UNECE will provide a substantive contribution to the area of women in the economy and will play a catalytic role in other areas. Furthermore, the UNECE secretariat will work in close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women in order to ensure linkages between the regional and global levels of the review.

#### **VII. VENUE**

17. The meeting will be held on 14-15 December 2004 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. Interpretation in English, French and Russian will be provided.

#### **VIII. NGO PARTICIPATION**

18. As in previous meetings of this kind, NGOs will be actively involved in the event. In this respect, the UNECE secretariat will cooperate with the NGO Working Group for Women in the

UNECE region, a Geneva based platform established in 1993 for the regional preparation of the Beijing Conference and which played the same role for the UNECE meeting on the 5-year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action. European networks of women NGOs (both regional and subregional) will also be actively involved in the process in order to ensure a real and well-balanced representation of civil society from UNECE countries, with the expected support of funding agencies, both public and private.

19. NGOs with ECOSOC status as well as NGOs which were accredited at the Beijing Conference (1995) and subsequently at the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (19-21 January 2000) will be invited to participate in the meeting. In order to obtain this invitation, they must inform the UNECE secretariat of their intention to attend, and provide the list of members who will represent them at the meeting.

20. Other NGOs must follow an accreditation procedure which is presented on the UNECE website: <http://www.unece.org/oes/gender>.

21. In order to prepare their presence at the intergovernmental meeting, NGOs will organize a Forum on 12-13 December 2004, Geneva, Switzerland.

## **IX. DOCUMENTATION**

22. Documentation for the meeting will consist of 1-3 background papers for each substantive theme, prepared by UNECE and partner organizations. It will also include a regional synthesis of the national responses to the global questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for action which was sent by DAW/OSAGI. The regional synthesis report is being prepared by UNECE.

## **X. TRAVEL AND OTHER COSTS**

23. Travel, accommodation, medical insurance, and other expenses are to be borne by the participants.

## **XI. HOTEL ACCOMMODATION**

24. All participants are responsible for finding their own accommodation in Geneva. A list of hotels (which provide special UN rates) is available at the following web page: <http://www.unece.org/oes/gender/Welcome.html>.

## **XII. PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS**

25. 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.

### **XIII. REGISTRATION**

26. All members of national delegations are requested to complete the Conference Registration Form, which will be attached to the formal invitation letter addressed by the UNECE Executive Secretary to all UNECE member States. The forms must be returned to the UNECE secretariat, **at the latest by 15 November 2004**, either by fax (+41-22-917.00.36) or by e-mail ([amanda.van.oostendorp@unece.org](mailto:amanda.van.oostendorp@unece.org)).

27. The accredited NGOs which have informed the UNECE secretariat of their intention to attend will receive a formal invitation together with a registration form, to be returned also **at the latest by 15 November 2004**, to the above fax or e-mail address.

28. 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, for the issuance of an identification badge.

For further registration details, please contact:

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