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NEW PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORKS, AND ALLIANCES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Note by the secretariat*

Summary

The Executive Committee of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) at its meeting on 24 September 2008 supported the organization of the Beijing +15 regional review meeting in the ECE region with a focus on economic aspects of gender. One of these aspects is the promotion of gender equality through partnerships, networks, and alliances which are discussed under this agenda item.

The note presents selected examples of successful partnerships, networks and alliances gathering a wide range of governmental and non governmental actors at the regional, national and local levels which are all committed to promote gender equality, in particular through gender mainstreaming in the economic realm. It highlights the processes engaged, the results achieved and points to areas and possible directions for further action.

* This document has been submitted late due to lack of sufficient resources.

INTRODUCTION

1. The principle of gender mainstreaming, as a strategy to promote gender equality, has been introduced across the ECE region. Its effective implementation however remains a challenge and many observers have pointed to a persistent gap between the formal commitment to gender mainstreaming and its implementation in policies and programmes.
2. A variety of reasons account for this implementation gap: the complexity of the process, a lack of awareness and understanding both in public opinion and among policymakers, insufficient political willingness and weak support institutions. In order to remove these obstacles, it is necessary to further mobilize societal and political forces through partnerships, networks and alliances.
3. This note presents a number of examples of such partnerships which have substantially contributed to mainstreaming gender in various policy areas, particularly in the economic realm. It reveals a great diversity of actors involved in these endeavours: intergovernmental organizations, governments, regional and subregional networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations at the national level, social partners, and academia.
4. Due to space constraints many successful partnerships in the ECE region could not be reflected in this note. Rather, the chosen examples are intended to illustrate successful cooperation in promoting gender equality, ranging from joining forces to promote gender responsive budgeting, via gender-sensitive analysis of development cooperation, capacity-building through training and counselling, to engendering policy reforms.
5. Gender equality advocates and governmental actors often operate in separate realms, speak “different languages” and may differ in their perception of societal priorities. The examples below show that regional, subregional and national dialogue among these actors can forge a common understanding of what is at stake in promoting gender equality and women’s rights. These goals becoming truly shared, the cooperation engaged and synergies created can then result in effective progress towards their achievement.

I. JOINING FORCES FOR GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

6. The Beijing Platform for Action called for the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes, as well as the adequate financing of specific programmes for securing equality between women and men. It called upon governments to “systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures; adjust budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures, both for enhancing productive capacity and for meeting needs; and achieve the gender-related commitments made in other United Nations summits and conferences”.¹

¹ Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 346. The full document can be downloaded from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>.

7. Although a number of ECE member States have reported on measures implementing gender responsive budgeting since the last review in 2004, its systematic implementation remains the exception in the region. There is still a long way to go and sustained efforts are needed by all actors, governments, but also civil society organizations, academia, and international organizations.

A. Promoting gender responsive budgeting in academia

8. Research networks have an important role to play in generating new knowledge and analysis on the gender implications of government spending. The Nordic-Baltic Network on Gender Responsive Budgeting is an example of collaboration between scholars to establish gender responsive budgeting as a field of research in the Nordic and Baltic countries, preferably in economic science. The exchange of experience among researchers within economics and other disciplines, such as sociology and women's and gender studies is promoted through workshops and conferences². Thematically, the network concentrates on welfare benefits, social insurance, old age pensions and tax policies, as well as labour markets with two working groups on these issues.

B. Advocacy for gender responsive budgeting at the European Union level

9. An example of joining forces in advocating gender-responsive budgeting in the region is the creation of the European Gender Budgeting Network in 2006. Its membership includes national gender budgeting initiatives across Europe, academia, and international civil society groups such as the European Women's Lobby, the Network of East-West Women, and Women in Development Europe³.

10. The focus of the European Gender Budgeting Network is to network, exchange experience and to lobby the European Commission, the European Parliament and European Union (EU) Member States to adopt measures to integrate a gender perspective in budgetary policies. In their contribution to the European Commission consultation on the review of the European Budget, the network advocated the systematic integration of gender in EU budgetary policies, including systematic gender impact analysis of proposed spending and monitoring of the effectiveness of EU policies in terms of gender equality objectives⁴.

² Discussion papers and more information on the International conference on Gender Responsive Budgeting and Social Justice held in Lithuania in January 2008 can be found at:

http://www.oekonomi.uio.no/grb/conference_launching.xml.

³ For further membership details visit:

<http://www.infopolis.es/web/GenderBudgets/members.html>.

⁴ These recommendations and others were made in the *Contribution by the European Gender Budgeting Network to the Public Consultation in view of the 2008/2009 Budget Review*, which is available for download on the European Commission website:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/library/contributions/ng/20080415_NG_33.pdf.

C. Sensitizing budget experts to gender responsive budgeting

11. The Council of Europe decided in 2001 to make gender responsive budgeting a priority. In 2004, a first report⁵ was published, which gave a definition of gender budgeting and aimed mainly at raising awareness and providing information about gender budgeting in order to encourage its application.

12. In 2006, European ministers responsible for gender equality requested guidelines for introducing a gender perspective in the budgetary processes of member States and to promote the dissemination of information among the different actors involved in the preparation, adoption and implementation of public budgets. To cater for this need, the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men prepared a handbook in 2008 on *Gender budgeting: practical implementation*⁶.

13. This handbook was presented during a high-level Conference on gender responsive budgeting (Athens, May 2009) which aimed to convince relevant decision-makers that the use of gender budgeting was a good investment in terms of economy as public money was better targeted and spent more efficiently. The aim was also to convince them that gender budgeting did not propose any radical change to budgetary lines, but was a tool for sound management of public finance and the promotion of gender equality. The conference gave a new impetus to the implementation of gender budgeting and some countries, such as Greece, the host country of the Conference, committed to implement this strategy.

14. In order to provide further support in sensitizing budget expert to gender issues, the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, proposed to develop a joint three-year pilot project, planned to start in 2010, to support the ministries responsible for gender equality in interested countries in their work with ministries of finance and to build partnerships between them so that they work together regularly to introduce medium-term gender-budgeting pilot projects, which would make it possible to quantify results.

15. This support is planned to be provided in two stages: firstly through the provision of information to raise awareness (including through the provision of documents in national languages) and secondly through practical training in gender budgeting. Priority will be given to results-based management and to providing support in national languages to help government officials to take gender budgeting on board. The presentation of the Council of Europe handbook on the practical implementation of gender budgeting raised the interest of member States as illustrated by the fact that it is being translated into national languages, for instance into Greek, Icelandic and Romanian, and widely disseminated to the relevant bodies.

⁵ Available online at: [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/PDF_EG-S-GB\(2004\)RAPFIN_E.pdf](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/PDF_EG-S-GB(2004)RAPFIN_E.pdf).

⁶ Available for download at: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/PDF_CDEG%202008%2015_en.pdf.

II. PARTNERSHIPS TO ENGENDER POLICYMAKING

16. Multi-actor cooperation between national and international partners can have significant impacts in terms of engendering policy-making to advance gender equality objectives. The four different examples outlined below illustrate the synergy effects that can be achieved in this regard.

A. Women's right to land in Kyrgyzstan

17. In Kyrgyzstan, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has initiated a multi-stakeholder partnership involving the Parliament, governmental entities and civil society organisations with the aim of improving women's access to land.

18. Land reform in Kyrgyzstan started in 1994 with the process of de-collectivization of collective farms and the introduction of private land ownership. Land privatization was characterized as gender neutral, and it was not recognized that the reform affected men and women differently in their access to land and their inheritance and property rights. For instance, land legislation prevented the division of family land and thus limited the possibility for a woman to keep her share of the land in the case of divorce or death of her husband.

19. UNIFEM partnered with the Kyrgyz NGO Women Entrepreneurship Support Association (WESA) to provide rural women and men with legal advice through consultations to facilitate their access to land within the reform process. Within this partnership more than 17,000 women and men benefited from consultations, resulting in 1,200 women gaining access to land, a right which they technically had but were not able to exercise. The development of a database of these cases and their analysis enabled the demonstration of clear evidence of the legal inconsistencies that needed to be addressed.

20. Dialogue between the Parliament, the State Registration Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and civil society representatives such as WESA was facilitated through the setting up of a working group between these actors to address policy and legal inconsistencies and issues that surfaced through the work on the land reform.

21. This partnership led to broad-based outreach, advocacy and mobilization efforts that included a strong capacity development component for land specialists within the Registration Agency, attorneys, members of the Elders' Courts, community leaders, women activists and others.

22. The working group proposed eight amendments to legislation that were critical for ensuring women's rights within the framework of the land reform, and in June 2006 the President signed the Law on Amendments and Changes to the Land Management Law. As a result of these amendments, women had in 2008 12 per cent of farms registered in their name. Furthermore, they now have the right to own their share of land and register it as an independent plot, which can be used or sold at their own discretion. They can also exchange their share of the plot within any part of the country (as opposed to within the village) which has implications in terms of women's mobility, especially in the case of divorce. Finally they can inherit land from their parents alongside their brothers. This example illustrates how concrete results in the area of

economic rights of women can be achieved through dialogue among the different actors involved and their joint efforts to influence policy reform.

B. Gender mainstreaming in Kazakhstan

23. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been partnering the National Commission of Kazakhstan on Women's Affairs and Family-Demographic Policy since the latter was established in 1998.

24. The National Commission is a state consultative body within the Presidential Administration. This is the only state body responsible for coordinating the formulation and implementation of gender policies in Kazakhstan. The National Commission comprises 25 members that are Members of Parliament, representatives of leading women's NGOs, Ministers of concerned ministries as well as representatives of local authorities. International organizations are designated as observers. At its meetings it addresses pressing issues and its decisions are sent for the President's consideration. It also organizes public hearings where any citizen of Kazakhstan can share his or her concerns and ask for decisions.

25. Over the years the UNDP partnership with the Commission has evolved from capacity building support to a strategic and complementing partnership aiming at formulating more effective gender policies, increasing the influence of the Commission and its Secretariat on decision-making and strengthening the relationship with women's NGOs.

26. The current project, started in 2008, supports the efforts of the National Commission to promote gender equality and family values in the country. It is the first one for which the Government and UNDP has a 50-50 cost-sharing agreement. This agreement signifies a strong national ownership and the commitment to advancing the country's gender equality agenda.

C. Gender mainstreaming in employment policy in Serbia

27. In Serbia, the Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality (PSLEGE) of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina partnered with UNIFEM in April 2008 to review and improve current provincial-level policies, legislation and budgetary allocations related to employment.

28. With UNIFEM's support and technical assistance, seven employment-related programmes and their budgetary allocations were for the first time analysed from a gender perspective and recommendations were developed for the improvement of these programmes and also for the development of full-scale gender mainstreaming in the Province. These recommendations were submitted by PSLEGE to the Executive Council of Vojvodina.

29. As a result, the Executive Council decreed in August 2009 that all the provincial bodies will have to develop a gender mainstreaming strategy and, as a regular practice of this approach, to integrate gender equality into all their programmes and projects. They will also have to keep gender disaggregated data on their beneficiaries of these activities in order to monitor their gender impact. To implement this Executive Council decision, the necessary expert assistance and support from PSLEGE to other provincial bodies should be ensured.

30. In this example, the dual role of the Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality – promoting gender equality in labour and employment, and triggering a broader political will and commitment - were key factors in the success of this initiative to which UNIFEM brought the needed elements of technical assistance and capacity development. This partnership illustrates how the principles of national ownership supported by such capacity development and technical assistance from a development partner can ensure success and sustainability.

D. Promoting gender mainstreaming in Georgia

31. In 2004 the Advisory Council on Gender Equality was established under the chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia. It comprises representatives of Parliament, women's groups and the Office of the Public Defender. The Council is supported by the on-going UNDP Project "Gender and Politics", financed by the Swedish International Development Agency⁷. UNDP is also partnering with the women's movement and United Nations agencies (UNIFEM and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)). Furthermore, close collaboration has been developed with women from local self-government bodies.

32. The main goal of the partnership is to establish an enabling environment for gender equality, with a legislative component to enhance women's participation at the decision making level and increase their involvement in politics. As a result of this partnership the Gender Equality Strategy of Georgia is being developed, comprising three interlinked documents: (1) the State Concept on Gender Equality (adopted); (2) a three-year Plan of Action for the implementation of the concept (adopted); and (3) recommendations to the legislative and executive branches of government for the establishment of permanent gender equality mechanisms to monitor and coordinate gender equality issues. This is the first attempt in Georgia to translate the Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into a national policy framework document. At this stage a draft gender equality law has been prepared and has already passed committee hearings in Parliament.

33. UNDP has been supporting the Council through a series of capacity development interventions and analysis of gender equality situation in Georgia. With this support, the Council has successfully lobbied for gender sensitive legislation and policymaking. The adoption of such a legislative framework should thus lead to greater gender equality with particular attention to the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Furthermore close partnership with women's movements is expected to raise institutional accountability and promote transparency in the work of public institutions for better delivery of services.

III. WORKING TOGETHER FOR A STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY

34. Civil society groups play a key role in advocating improvements for women and gender equality at the political level but also in providing direct support and services to women in the economic realm. This section presents an example of partnership among networks of civil society organizations in order to enhance the capacity of NGOs to advocate women's economic

⁷ This and other relevant information can be found at <http://www.genderandpolitics.ge>.

empowerment through economic literacy training. This is followed by another example of a joint endeavour which aims at strengthening the support environment and skills of women in business, this time through development cooperation between Israel and ECE at the regional level.

A. Economic literacy training for women's NGOs

35. The Karat Coalition is a regional coalition of organizations and individuals that works to ensure gender equality in countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In cooperation with the European feminist network Women in Development Europe (WIDE), this coalition offers economic literacy training which aims to increase the economic knowledge of women from NGOs and governmental institutions of this part of the ECE region in order to increase their capacity to advocate economic justice for all women. The training scheme is based on the belief that economic literacy enables them to lobby more effectively for gender and economic justice at the national and regional level and to understand the importance of undertaking projects focusing on the relationship between gender and economy.

36. In order to be successfully developed, this type of partnership calls for a strong capacity building component, benefiting women's NGOs established in countries of Central and Eastern European, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Karat Coalition has addressed this need through the development of a manual and the provision of training based on WIDE's economic literacy programme, but tailored to the specific social, political, and economic context of the region.

37. Over the period 2002 to 2007, two regional and five national workshops in Bulgaria, Serbia, Poland, Georgia, and Romania were organized by the Karat coalition thanks to the financial support and training for trainers provided by WIDE. The workshops were attended by participants from women's NGOs, other civil society organizations, and government institutions. The national workshops were based on a specifically developed "Economic literacy resources kit for CEE/CIS: Gender and Economy: How not to be afraid of economic lobbying and advocacy", which provides information on the basic economic concepts/processes relevant in the region to increase the capacity of the organizations to advocate a gender approach to economic justice. It further links the information to training hints and exercises which allow recipients of the kit to conduct basic economic literacy training in their own organization, community, or country⁸.

B. Training to strengthen women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia

38. The majority of micro and small enterprises are run by women. They are an important source of opportunity and income for women. There is a recognized need for support tools and support systems for women entrepreneurs. Since 2006, the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre, in cooperation with ECE⁹, have organized biannual international training workshops on "Women entrepreneurs and information communication technologies" and on

⁸ The Economic Literacy Kit is available for download in English, Russian and Romanian from: http://www.karat.org/karat/img/fckimages/economic_literacy_kit_eng.pdf

⁹ The capacity-building workshops form part of the programme of work of the Working Group on Gender and Economy under the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

“Support systems for women in small business at national and local levels” to provide this support.

39. The capacity-building workshops, held in Russian, are targeted at women’s entrepreneurs from Central Asia. They provide them with support, guidance and managerial tools on the use of new technologies in the management of small business. Further they address government institutions in charge of small and medium-sized enterprise development at national and local levels, women’s business associations and other civil society organizations to build their capacity to strengthen the support environment for women entrepreneurs.

40. Over the years, the training scheme has not only played an important role in strengthening the support for women entrepreneurship but has also facilitated networking among women entrepreneurs across Central Asia.

IV. PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING GENDER-SENSITIVE ANALYSIS AND STATISTICS

41. Joining forces to advance gender-sensitive analysis of the implementation and outcomes of policies and the collection of sex-disaggregated data which makes this analysis possible is essential to improving our understanding of the situation of women and men in the region and to evaluate progress over time. This is relevant both at the national and regional level where cooperation across countries and regions allows comparative assessments of progress.

A. Gender-sensitive analysis of development aid

42. Civil society organizations play an important role in monitoring gender mainstreaming commitments and advocating that the commitment to gender equality be reflected in policy and resource allocation, for example in the development assistance provided to countries in the region. Through gender-sensitive analysis of Regional and Country Strategy Papers and the translation of commitments into concrete projects, civil society organizations across Europe have been drawing attention to the gaps between the policy and practice of integrating gender into development aid programmes both at European and national levels.

43. An example of this endeavour is the Gender Watch Project of the EU/Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which has been coordinated by the resource Network of East West Women (NEWW-POLSKA)¹⁰ since 2007. The project aims to enable women’s NGOs and networks in countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus as well as in EU neighbouring countries to cooperate in monitoring, lobbying, and advocacy for gender-sensitive development policy and development assistance for these countries by the European Union and its Member States.

44. To this purpose, in 2007 NEWW trained network members on “New instruments of the EU development policies and their monitoring in the region of CEE/CIS” to enable NGOs in the region to engage more effectively with the EU development policy debate. Network members then analysed from a gender perspective the official development assistance (ODA) of three new

¹⁰ More information on the Network of East-West Women and its activities can be found on their website: <http://www.neww.org>.

EU Member States (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Hungary) and how EU Development Aid was used in three EU neighbouring countries (Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine). The reports reviewed the situation of women in the context of transition countries, assessed the national and European Commission strategies for gender equality, and monitored the extent to which gender was taken into account in ODA. They pointed to a lack of targeted support for gender equality. The six reports¹¹ were launched in Brussels in June 2008 and their findings are being used for the network's advocacy work with the European Commission and Parliament, national governments, the media and other civil society organizations.

45. The International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) of civil society organizations from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia took this agenda further in its own activities¹² and prepared a Regional Advocacy Report for the region which was published in November 2008. It also provides a gender-sensitive analysis of the Regional Strategy Paper concerning the European Commission's development cooperation with Central Asia and on this basis, proposes recommendations to the actors involved in its preparation, including EU officials, national governments, and civil society organizations. It further scrutinises Country Strategy Papers for Eastern, South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and critically analyses to what extent gender concerns were addressed in the ODA of the new EU Member States. This research informs IGPN advocacy work with the European Commission's delegations in these countries with the aim of influencing the 2009 revision of country and regional strategy documents.

B. Gender-sensitive analysis at the workplace

46. A Gender Index Measure to analyse a company's personnel policy from an equal treatment perspective was developed in a multi-stakeholder partnership between the EU and UNDP Poland and national actors, including government, civil society organizations, businesses and academia in Poland¹³. Funded by the European Social Fund EQUAL Community Initiative Programme, the Gender Index Development Partnership developed an equal treatment indicator to assess the situation of men and women at the workplace.

47. Part of the project were Equal Opportunities Company competitions in 2006 and 2007 in which over 150 companies of different sizes and from different sectors participated and whose personnel policy was evaluated with the gender index. The partnership further produced *Equal Opportunities Company: Good Practice Guide*¹⁴ which covers a set of 58 good practices from 27

¹¹ All reports are available for download at:

<http://www.neww.org/en/conference/2008/raport/0.html>

¹² The Development Cooperation and Gender Project is funded by the Presidency Fund. For more information on the IGPN and their activities, visit the website: <http://www.igpn.net>

¹³ Partners were UNDP Poland, the Secretariat of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Status for Women and Men, the Warsaw School of Economics, the Polish Confederation of Private Employers, Nordea Poland, Derm-Service Poland, Feminoteka, and the International Forum for Women.

¹⁴ The guide is available for download online:

http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/labour/non_discrimination/Equal_opportunities_company_good_practice_guide.pdf

organizations in the area of ethical principles, recruitment, training and development, compensation policy, work-life balance, counteracting sexual harassment and mobbing, and other activities promoting gender equality. A training module on managing an equal opportunities company was developed and more than 100 employers received training on equal opportunities and diversity management.

C. Building capacity for economic gender statistics

48. The ECE programme on gender statistics is both an example and proponent of effective partnerships. Many of the gender statistics activities conducted by ECE are part of a joint project with the World Bank Institute (WBI). Since 2006, this partnership has improved the quality and use of statistics on the differences between women and men in many countries across the ECE region. The result has been the establishment of national coordination mechanisms for monitoring gender equality and the introduction of new collections, such as dedicated surveys on time use and informal employment. The capacity of countries to produce and use gender statistics has been strengthened through knowledge sharing and training opportunities that are responsive to countries' needs.

49. Furthermore, statistical capacity building relies on building partnerships between the producers and users of statistics. The ECE/WBI gender statistics project places great importance on bringing users and producers together in order to discuss data needs and to consider some of the technical challenges involved in their production. This improved understanding of the different perspectives and allows countries to develop statistical programmes that are more likely to meet user needs.

50. Building partnerships within and between countries has a direct impact on the collection, processing, dissemination and use of gender statistics to inform and monitor policy. The ECE/WBI training covers a range of statistical topics. The module "Making it happen" for example focuses on the importance of building networks and alliances in order to improve the availability and application of gender statistics in policymaking¹⁵.

51. Statistics is a diverse field, covering many economic and social areas. Partnerships are essential in the development of training materials and delivery of technical assistance to ECE member countries. Other examples of partnerships developed by ECE include collaboration with the International Labour Organization in 2007-2008 to create training videos on measuring informal employment and the gender pay gap; and combining resources with the UNFPA to develop materials to help countries with the next round of population and housing censuses. High-quality statistics, sourced from administrative records, censuses and surveys, are vital to the monitoring of economies and the impact this has on quality of life. By developing partnerships with other organizations, ECE is able to provide more powerful capacity building to member States.

¹⁵ An example of a training video on this topic is available at <http://www.unece.org/stats/video/makingithappen.htm>.

V. PRIORITY AREAS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

52. Multistakeholder partnerships have an important role to play in ensuring that gender equality remains on the agenda of governments and civil society, and is integrated into decision-making and policy implementation. Further action to develop such partnerships is therefore needed in the following areas.

A. Gender-sensitive analysis and monitoring

53. Research institutes, universities, civil society organizations, government institutions as well as international organizations should enhance their cooperation in order to advance gender-sensitive analysis. Major directions for further action in this area should include in particular:

- (a) Improving and further advancing the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics;
- (b) Monitoring progress to detect persisting and newly emerging gender inequalities;
- (c) Assessing the impact of existing policies from a gender perspective;
- (d) Evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and policies shaped to advance the gender equality agenda.

B. Sustained advocacy and support for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming

54. Advocacy for gender mainstreaming also calls for the joint engagement of a wide range of actors in the ECE region. Partnerships in this area should focus in particular on:

- (a) Spreading the message in civil society, education and the media that there is much to gain for everybody from a more equal society in which both men and women can thrive to their full potential in all dimensions of life;
- (b) Consistently advocating keeping gender equality as a recurrent priority matter on the political agenda of both governments and parliaments;
- (c) Realizing that beyond public awareness and political lobbying, gender mainstreaming is a long-term and complex process which needs to be supported by expert advice and capacity development;
- (d) Further involving international organizations in such support, both at the national and regional levels, with a particular focus on countries of the ECE region which lack appropriate institutions in this respect.

C. Bridging the economic/gender divide: gender-sensitive economics

55. More gender sensitivity in economic decision-making is key for translating gender equality commitments into reality. This requires developing further partnerships aimed at

engendering economic policies, in particular those related to government budgets. Areas for further action into that direction include:

- (a) Providing training on economic issues to NGOs engaged in promoting gender equality in order to substantiate their advocacy work;
- (b) Ensuring that such training covers not only economic knowledge and the gender implications of economic policies but also an understanding of the economic policymaking processes;
- (c) Multiplying the opportunities of dialogue between civil society organizations and academia on one hand, and parliamentarians and policymakers in economic ministries on the other, in order to create a mutual understanding of priorities in developing gender sensitive economic policies;
- (d) Ensuring that these priorities can be realistically and effectively taken up, which calls for approaches and methodologies tailored to national specificities of public administration, particularly as far as budgeting processes are concerned;
- (e) Creating a regional platform for facilitating a dialogue among senior officials from economic ministries of ECE member countries, and more broadly for creating an interface between all stakeholders engaged in addressing gender issues from an economic perspective.

56. The above priority directions show that in order to be successful, partnerships for gender mainstreaming must be both multistakeholder and multifunctional in nature, and be pursued on a sustained basis in order to keep momentum in advancing the gender equality agenda throughout the ECE region.

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