

SUBREGIONAL NGO REPORTS

Statements Delivered at the UN ECE Preparatory Meeting on Beijing + 15

Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Speaker: Aida Jamangulova, (NGO "Community Development Alliance")

Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential in order to achieve equitable and effective development and to foster a vibrant economy. The financial and economic crisis should not be an excuse for countries to backtrack on commitments made to gender equality and poverty reduction. Once undone, progress on development goals cannot easily be recovered without considerable re-investment and political re-commitment.

Measures undertaken should take into account gender differentiated impacts and be not only consistent with short-term measures but also set a direction that addresses long-term structural problems of the economy. This requires tackling **labour market segregation** and creating **decent work for women** across rural and urban settings and different social groups.

- Expansionary **fiscal policy** must be countercyclical. Progressive **taxation systems** that compensate for gender biases in revenue-collection should be developed along with measures to enhance tax revenues, including more efficient and broader-based tax collection.
- **Economic stimulus packages** should place a priority on **job creation and/or retention** through employment guarantee programmes both in the private and the public sector where so many women are still employed. Enforcement of **minimum-wage** regulations and implementation of **equal pay for equal work** policies should be part of the policy response.
- **Public spending measures** should support gender-sensitive investments in both physical and social infrastructure to support vulnerable groups, such as migrant women.
- **Support to individuals** should especially target those in low-income households, support formal, informal and unpaid care givers, such as including them in high enough unemployment benefits that cover the living cost; and ensure that women-owned SMEs and small producers are able to access credit and microcredit from formal institutions.
- For countries with a heavy economic concentration in the rural sector, long term planning means a **re-balancing of the sectors and investment**, especially private and foreign direct investments, in industrial policy **to reduce the commodity dependence and broaden the employment base for women by providing incentives to sectors which majority of the jobs are occupied by women.**
- Agricultural and trade policies should be formulated and implemented with the goal of assuring **food security**. **Ownership of land and productive assets** by both men and women needs to be protected to prevent deepening of poverty. In countries **where agriculture is a major source of employment (especially for women)** special attention should be given to the classification of unemployment and the eligibility for support to take into account of female farmers and agricultural workers.
- Rising unemployment rates particularly affect **migrant workers**, half of whom are women. **Joint initiatives between countries of origin and destination** are necessary to assure protection of the rights of migrant workers internally displaced people and their families: protection of human rights specifically right to personal safety, decent work, social security, including social insurance. **Unemployment schemes** in countries of origin

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and destination should extend to migrants and return migrants who have lost their jobs. **Regional coordinated responses** are necessary where migration and trade routes are interdependent.

- States should develop and enforce appropriate **national standards for the sectors of health and education, including child care and social services**, supported by **adequate state budgets**, and ensure quality, accessibility and reach to all parts of the country, ensuring coverage for vulnerable groups and citizens outside of main population centres. Some services could be delegated to the private sector and civil society organizations as long as quality control is ensured.
- Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies must **increase commitments** to development assistance in collaboration with civil society organizations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, through gender mainstreaming and targeted activities, and strengthen mechanisms to **effectively measure resources allocated to incorporating gender** perspectives in all areas of development assistance. Indicators for gender sensitive stimulus packages need to be developed, tracked and monitored.
- It is important to ensure that the **International Financial Institutions** take gender perspectives into account in loan approvals, debt servicing and debt relief equality. All **onerous debts** should be reviewed and cancelled as they burden national economies and their capacity to overcome the crisis.

Rights based gender responsive policies and their implementation can only be assured when **decisions are made in a transparent and inclusive manner**, with **monitoring mechanisms** in place. Nationally owned initiatives are essential to assure that policies respond to the real needs of the country and the most vulnerable within them. This requires sustained advocacy and informed demands by gender equality advocates and women's participation in all levels of policy and decision-making. **Support to women's organizing** should be matched by strengthened gender machineries to assure policies are gendered and monitored. In addition, the women's machineries need to be better positioned in policy and budget formulation and crisis response processes as well as public finance management to assure that needs of women are adequately addressed.

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North America and Other High Income Countries

Speaker: Margot Baruch, (Center for Women's Global Leadership)

The following statement from the North American sub region developed at the NGO forum reflects the fact that the participants present were primarily from the United States.

- 1. We call on the US to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 30th anniversary of CEDAW.** The US is the only country in the ECE region that has not ratified this international bill of rights for women.
- 2. We are very pleased that the General Assembly adopted a resolution that supports the creation of a new gender entity on gender equality and women's empowerment.** In reference to the institutional mechanisms in the Beijing Platform for Action, we call on North America and ECE countries to support the launch of the new gender entity and the appointment of the USG by early 2010.
- 3. Governments must also demonstrate leadership in resourcing the new gender entity.** In order to meet the funding goal of \$1 billion, we urge that all governments in the region should triple their funding by next year and increase funding annually in subsequent years considering that the UN women's agencies currently have a budget of approximately \$221 million.
- 4. Globally there must be a redirection of resources and reallocation of the way money is spent to reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.**
- 5. Given the financial crisis resources could be shifted to these other funding issues.**
- 6. The financial crisis has disproportionately impacted poor and rural women.** In order to address this issue effectively, economic stimulus money needs to be supportive of public sector positions, which will have long term impacts on social functions such as in health and education.
- 7. The US must include gender equality in all aspects of foreign assistance as well as overall increases in development assistance.**
- 8. The US must support the ratification of Optional Protocol of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** for the establishment of a mechanism to access justice at an international level for people whose economic, social and cultural rights are violated.
- 9. Finally, we call the North American governments to take action to achieve 50/50 participation of women in political decision making and on corporate boards.**
- 10. We look forward to reviewing the United States questionnaire and working with them in preparation for the 2010 Commission on the Status of Women.**

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Europe including Commonwealth of Independent States

Speaker: Brigitte Triems, (European Women's Lobby)

Women's NGOs from the European region including the CIS acknowledge the significance of the impact of the current economic and financial crisis and hereby wish to stress the importance of the multilayered and complex gender dimension pertaining to this recession. In this regard, we draw attention to the fact that the recovery packages proposed to overcome this crisis must pay due attention to addressing existing deep inequalities between women and men. Beyond economic-dominated solutions, in order to be effective future policies and legislation must notably address all forms of violence against women, ensure the equal participation of women and men in decision-making in all areas, ensure the protection of women's sexual health and reproductive rights and acknowledge and address the existing inequalities between various groups of women.

Pursuant to this, Women's NGOs from the European region and CIS advance the following recommendations for the attention of national, European and international-level policy-makers:

1. **Guarantee continuous support and resourcing (financial and human) of existing institutional mechanisms, policies and programmes for gender equality and women's rights at all levels**, including in ODA and international cooperation and support for women's organizations. Further, ensure the swift creation of a strong new United Nations gender equality entity. The current cuts faced by gender equality institutions in several countries need to be addressed with strong political engagement on the part of decision-makers, especially in the context of the financial and economic crisis. Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies must increase commitments to development assistance that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment, through both gender mainstreaming and targeted activities, and strengthen mechanisms to effectively measure resources allocated to incorporating gender perspectives in all areas of development assistance. Indicators for gender sensitive stimulus packages need to be developed, tracked and monitored.
2. **Ensure that financial and economic recovery plans at all levels include a gender equality perspective both in relation to analysis and to policy proposals**. Economic recovery packages should place a priority on job creation and/or retention through employment guarantee programmes, not only in the private sector but also in the public sector where many women are employed. The reconstruction of the current financial and economic architecture must involve structural transformations, take into account the legal responsibilities for gender equality, introduce gender budgeting strategies and include a strong focus on sustainable development. Binding measures for the equal representation of women with men in high-level economic and financial decision-making must be central to the process of institutional restructuring.
3. **Ensure a consistent gender equality dimension to economic, employment and social policies in order for them to contribute to gender equality, including equal pay and equality in pensions, and to the fight against women's poverty especially for older women**. Governments should introduce and support policies and services for equality in

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training, equal access to lifelong learning, the reconciliation of work and private life, recognize the value of unpaid work and take measures to ensure the equal sharing of unpaid work between women and men.

4. **Implement a coordinated and multisectoral approach to ending all forms of violence against women specifically at European Union level as well as in other countries in order to ensure a uniform protection of women's rights in the region.** The framework of this approach should be the recognition of all forms of violence against women as a manifestation of the patriarchal system and of unequal power relations between women and men in public and private life. This approach must address specifically the root causes of male violence and include measures and resources for the prevention of violence against women, non sexist education and support and protection of victims and for their rehabilitation. The fight against violence against women should include measures tackling trafficking and prostitution, phenomena which are also directly linked to economic hardship.
5. **In the framework of human security, decisions on the disarmament of all weapons should be carried out. Consistent with the provision of UNSC resolutions 1325, 1820 and 1880, a gender analysis of armed conflicts should be performed.**
6. **Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights as a strategic priority for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women,** both in internal and external policies. All States should be accountable and ensure the establishment and implementation of a legislative framework to provide, universal access to information, education and services pertaining to sexual and reproductive health including prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, for both women and men, girls and boys.
7. **Take strong action against the use of arguments based on religious, cultural, customary or traditional values, beliefs or practices to justify any violation of women's human rights.** Member States should invest in transforming these institutions for them to support women's human rights.
8. **Develop and implement an intersectional approach, given that women are not a homogeneous group, to include women's multiple identities within policies and actions which are gender specific and addressed to various groups of women.** These policies must pay particular attention to those women in vulnerable situations.
9. **Ensure that migration, integration and asylum policies are based on a human rights approach and take into account a gender perspective.** Joint initiatives between countries of origin and destination are necessary to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant, refugee and internally displaced women and their families: the protection of these human rights include the right to an individual legal status, to personal safety, decent work, an individual right to social security, including social insurance. Unemployment schemes in countries of origin and destination should extend to migrant women and return migrant women who have lost their jobs. Regional coordinated responses are necessary, where migration and trade routes underlie the interdependence of the countries.
10. **In countries that are predominantly rural and where agriculture is a major source of employment (especially for women) special attention should be given to the classification of unemployment and the eligibility for support that take into account of female farmers and agricultural workers.** For countries with high farmer indebtedness, special funds and financing mechanisms need to be put in place to address

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the problem of agricultural debt. Financial sector reform should ensure that small producers can access credit and microcredit from formal institutions. Agricultural and trade policies should be formulated and implemented with the goal of assuring food security. Ownership of land and productive assets by both men and women needs to be protected to prevent deepening of poverty.

Rights based gender responsive policies and their implementation can only be assured when decisions are made in a transparent and inclusive manner, with monitoring mechanisms in place. Nationally owned and driven initiatives are essential to assure that policies respond to the real needs of the country and the most vulnerable populations within them. This requires sustained advocacy and informed demands by gender equality and women's groups. Support to women's organizing should be matched by strengthened investments in national institutions including national women's machineries to assure policies are gendered and monitored. In addition, the women's machineries need to be better positioned in policy and budget formulation and crisis response processes as well as public finance management to assure that needs of women are adequately addressed.