

Recommendations

1. Chairperson's Conclusions

Speaker: Conchita Poncini

During the two-day Geneva NGO Forum with a view to the ECE Preparatory Meeting on the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), women from the whole region came together to negotiate recommendations that reflect the desires and needs of women of the region. It is regrettable that so few of the 12 areas of the BPfA were to be reviewed in this key regional preparation and that only two days were allocated for this important consultation.

While recognizing that specific attention must be paid to the present global economic crisis, we hope that the NGO interventions yesterday and today have reflected the broad level of concern with the economic situation of women. NGOs also hope to have provided suggestions on how to deal with the root causes of this situation through concrete proposals for the future.

We suggest that the following recommendations be included in the Chair's Agreed Conclusions and that the report and recommendations of the caucuses and sub-regions be incorporated in the official documents as an annex. The NGO ECE forum recommends that:

- ❖ Measures undertaken should take into account **gender differentiated impact** and set a direction that addresses long-term structural problems of the economy. This requires dealing with labour market segregation and creating decent work for women across rural and urban settings and different social groups, eliminating sexual exploitation and violence against women at the workplace exacerbated in times of financial and economic crisis.
- ❖ Economic recovery and stimulus packages should place a **priority on job creation and/or retention of women** through employment guaranteed

programmes both in the private and public sectors. Enforcement of minimum wage regulations and implementation of equal pay for equal work or equal value policies should be part of the response in order to include gender and age based quality employment methodology (based on statistics) that fill in gender gaps, especially of unrecognised, invisible, unpaid and undervalued work. .

- ❖ Public spending measures should **support sensitive gender-equality investments** in both physical and social infrastructures, particularly in education and health sectors, in support of vulnerable groups such as minority and migrant women of all ages.
- ❖ Agriculture and trade policies should be formulated and implemented aimed at **ensuring food security**. Ownership of land and productive assets by both men and women needs to be protected to prevent deepening of poverty especially women's poverty. In countries where agriculture is a major source of employment; women require special social protection on account of their undervalued and often unrecognised work.
- ❖ We urge governments of the ECE region to give priority to the centrality of a **gender-equal rights based approach** to economic and financial **policies as also to international migration**. In this regard, appropriate documentation and a full range of social and legal protection measures must be ensured to migrant and displaced women.
- ❖ We urge action to fully implement legislation in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on **Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings** and to promote its adoption as a minimum standard worldwide.
- ❖ Given the current financial and economic crisis and the disproportionate impact on all women, the **swift creation** of a composite **UN entity** combining policy and operational activities focused **on gender equality and women's empowerment**, that is well-resourced and led by an Under Secretary-General is critical. This new gender equality entity is necessary to ensure that gender equality issues are addressed and women's voices heard at every decision-making level, including in the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, as also at regional and country level.

- ❖ Governments in the region need to **support** women's permanent machineries to advance the **economic independence** and **empowerment of women** as called for by the BPfA and the Millennium Development Goals.
- ❖ Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are urged to **increase** their commitments to **development assistance** in collaboration with civil society organisations, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through **gender mainstreaming** and **women targeted activities**. Strengthen mechanisms to effectively measure resource allocation to incorporate equality perspectives in all areas of development assistance, with indicators that need to be developed, and monitored for quantitative and qualitative activities in MDGs on poverty reduction strategies.
- ❖ Governments must develop and implement preliminary **impact assessment** placing real weight on **inputs of minority women** populations before implementing any new economic program and with the participation of women and girls.
- ❖ Although women are disproportionately affected by environment and climate change due to their overrepresentation among the poor and their critical livelihood and food security, they are not adequately represented in macro economic decision-making bodies. We therefore urge governments as well as business and industry to **include women's voices** and experiences especially relating to **access to clean water and food** and becoming thus agents of change.
- ❖ **Corporations** must be responsible actors and address their **social, cultural and ethical obligations** in the communities in which they operate, through programmes and human resources management that enhance women's education and economic advancement. Governments and corporations must offer skills training including knowledge in micro-financing, use of new communications and information technologies, literacy and numeracy to girls and women of all ages and at all levels to improve their standard of living. We urge governments to implement policies to require corporations to comply with all labour and employment legislation from a gender-equal rights perspective.
- ❖ Finally, we strongly recommend implementation of a coordinated and multisectoral approach to **ending all forms of violence against women** at European level as well as in other countries to ensure uniform protection of

women's rights. This approach must include the role of men and boys in addressing the root causes of male violence and include measures and resources for the prevention of VAW, non-sexist education and support, and protection of victims and their rehabilitation. The elimination of violence against women should include measures tackling trafficking and prostitution, phenomena which are directly linked to economic hardship.

- ❖ Last but not least, governments must address and develop economic and social policies that **identify** the **needs** and help **reduce poverty** of an emerging phenomenon of the increasing number of **widows** of all ages and single-headed household, victims of armed conflicts and ethnic violence, in the context of pensions, social protection and services, inheritance, property and land rights.

2. Eastern and South Eastern Europe

Moderator: Kinga Lohmann

Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential 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 earlier commitments made to gender equality and poverty reduction. Once undone, progress on development goals cannot easily be recovered without considerable re-investment and new political commitments.

Any steps taken should pay due attention to gender differentiated impacts and be consistent not only with short-term measures but should also addresses long-term structural problems of the economy. This requires dealing with labour market segregation and creating decent work for women across rural and urban settings and different social groups.

General recommendations:

- ❖ Expansionary **fiscal policy** must be countercyclical. Progressive **taxation systems** that compensate for gender biases in revenue-collection should be developed