

## AIDE MÉMOIRE

### The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

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United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

In collaboration with:  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Hosted by:  
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE)



## I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work (ECOSOC resolution 2009/15), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), at its fifty-fourth session from 1-12 March 2010, will review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

2. In preparation for the CSW session, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) will organize an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”, from 11-13 November 2009, in Geneva, Switzerland.

3. The findings and recommendations of the meeting will provide input to the Secretary-General’s report to the CSW, and will assist the Commission as it contributes to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

4. In July 2010, the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council will focus on the theme of “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women.” The outcome of the EGM will be an input to this session.

## **II. Conceptual framework**

### **A. Background**

5. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by 189 Member States of the United Nations in 1995. The Platform for Action is a global agenda for women's human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, developed through a process of dialogue and exchange within and among Governments, international organizations, including the United Nations, and civil society. The Platform for Action covers 12 critical areas of concern: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment; and the girl child. For each critical area of concern, strategic objectives are identified, as well as a detailed catalogue of related actions to be taken by Governments and other stakeholders, at national, regional and international level. At the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, to review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Governments agreed on further actions to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action and to ensure that commitments for gender equality, development and peace are fully realized.

6. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Millennium Summit on 8 September 2000<sup>1</sup>, built upon the outcomes of the major summits and world conferences of the 1990s, including the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In the Declaration, Member States confirmed their resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate truly sustainable development. The importance of ensuring the equal human rights of women and men and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were also highlighted in the Declaration.

7. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) derived from the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the global conferences of the 1990s, are accompanied by a series of time-bound targets for advancing development and reducing poverty by 2015 or earlier. The MDGs aim to: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (goal 1); achieve universal primary education (goal 2); promote gender equality and empower women (goal 3); reduce child mortality (goal 4); improve maternal health (goal 5); combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (goal 6); ensure environmental sustainability (goal 7); and develop a global partnership for development (goal 8)<sup>2</sup>. They are accompanied by 18 global targets and 48 technical indicators to measure progress towards achievement of

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/55/2

<sup>2</sup> A/59/2005, Box 1.

the Millennium Development Goals. This monitoring framework was subsequently expanded<sup>3</sup> with four new targets and related indicators, on: full and productive employment and decent work for all; universal access to reproductive health services; access to HIV/AIDS treatment; and biodiversity.

8. While two goals – MDG 3 and MDG 5 – are gender-specific (see box), there are clear gender dimensions in all the MDGs, and there is now broad recognition that gender equality is both a goal in itself, as well as a means towards the achievement of all the MDGs. Achievement of MDG 3 is essential for the achievement of all other MDGs. Conversely, achieving the MDGs has implications for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

MDG 3, *promote gender equality and empower women*, has one target, namely:

- Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Three indicators serve to monitor progress, namely:

- ✓ Indicator 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- ✓ Indicator 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- ✓ Indicator 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

MDG 5, *improve maternal health*, has two targets, namely

- Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio;

Two indicators serve to monitor progress, namely:

- ✓ Indicator 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio;
- ✓ Indicator 5.2: Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel;

- Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health.

Four indicators serve to measure progress, namely:

- ✓ Indicator 5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate
- ✓ Indicator 5.4 Adolescent birth rate
- ✓ Indicator 5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)
- ✓ Indicator 5.6 Unmet need for family planning.

<sup>3</sup> See A/RES/60/1 ('2005 World Summit Outcome'), where Member States agreed to add four new MDG targets – on full and productive employment, access to reproductive health services, access to HIV/AIDS treatment, and biodiversity. Technical work to select the appropriate indicators for these targets was undertaken by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDG indicators. The Secretary-General presented the revised monitoring framework to the General Assembly, as an annex to his 2007 Report on the Work of Organization (A/62/1). The Assembly took note of this Report at its 62<sup>nd</sup> session.

9. Since these goals are mutually supportive, there is a need to better identify the linkages between the Platform for Action and the MDGs – for example, linkages at policy, programme and institutional levels were highlighted in conjunction with the ten-year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action in 2005.<sup>4</sup> At the time, Member States confirmed that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.<sup>5</sup>

## **B. Overview of issues**

10. While the MDGs with their specific, time-bound targets and measurable indicators provide valuable and effective benchmarks for monitoring progress and achieving concrete results, they are, however, only a sub-set of the goals and commitments of the global conferences of the 1990s, which provided comprehensive frameworks for action in the areas they cover. In regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women, this framework is contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly and subsequent intergovernmental outcomes, such as the Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women. This framework, and in particular the strategic objectives and related actions in the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, provide comprehensive guidance for achieving all the MDGs in a gender-responsive manner, and for effectively mainstreaming gender perspectives in all areas covered by the MDG framework.

11. The importance of keeping in mind the overall comprehensive objectives of the policy frameworks adopted in the global conferences in the 1990s is apparent when, for example, examining MDG 3 – *promote gender equality and empower women*. The target for MDG 3 is ‘to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015’. The related indicators for monitoring progress cover enrolment ratios, non-agricultural wage employment, and share in parliamentary seats. This target and its related indicators fall short in capturing the full scope of MDG 3 itself, as well as of the overarching global policy framework on gender equality. The absence

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, E/CN.6/2005/2, Report of the Secretary-General on: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”.

<sup>5</sup> Declaration of the Commission on the Status of Women on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, ECOSOC decision E/2005/232 of 21 July 2005

of targets and indicators on, for example, violence against women, has been pointed out.<sup>6</sup>

12. Different stakeholders have endeavoured to strengthen the utilization of the Platform for Action as a means for achieving all the MDGs, including MDG 3. Some countries have adjusted the global targets and indicators, and added country-specific ones – for example, several countries have added a national indicator on violence against women, and the Secretary-General’s Campaign “Unite to End Violence against Women” will continue until 2015 to emphasize the link between violence against women and the achievement of all the MDGs.

13. However, within the MDG frameworks, efforts aimed at realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women continue to be largely confined to Goal 3 and its targets and indicators.<sup>7</sup> While many Member States are keeping track of progress towards the MDGs through national reports,<sup>8</sup> there is a need to increase attention to the gender equality perspectives in regard to all the MDGs, and to highlight good practices in integrating gender perspectives in efforts to achieve the MDGs. Attention to the gender dimensions in global monitoring and reporting<sup>9</sup> remains inconsistent and there is little disaggregation of data by sex.

14. Many Member States are implementing national strategies, policies and action plans for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, based on the Beijing Platform for Action. This significant experience, which includes analysis of achievements, gaps and challenges identified in review processes, represents a still insufficiently tapped resource for the achievement of the MDGs. Lack of use of this experience constrains progress towards the MDGs and sustainability of such progress beyond the target date of 2015. At the same time, a strong but narrow focus on achievement of the MDGs may also constrain the implementation of the full scope of the Platform for Action.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality pointed out several gaps, including on violence against women. UN Millennium Project 2005. *Taking action: achieving gender equality and empowering women*. Task Force on Education and Gender Equality

<sup>7</sup> See E/2005/27, Summary submitted by the moderator of the panel discussion entitled “Addressing the linkages between the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration: progress, gaps and challenges”. In 2003, a UNDP report concluded that gender equality perspectives were not adequately mainstreamed into the MDG reports, and discussions on gender were primarily confined to Goal 3 (gender equality), Goal 5 (maternal mortality) and Goal 6 (HIV/AIDS). *Millennium Development Goals. National reports: A look through a gender lens*. UNDP 2003. A 2005 report demonstrated the added value of including a gender equality perspective in future reporting and tracking of progress in the implementation of the MDGs. *En Route to Equality. A gender review of national MDG reports 2005*. UNDP 2005.

<sup>8</sup> According to UNDP, so far, national MDG reports have been published in more than 140 countries. See: [http://www.undp.org/mdg/tracking\\_countryreports2.shtml](http://www.undp.org/mdg/tracking_countryreports2.shtml), visited on 23 September 2009

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the annual MDG reports (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008, United Nations, 2008).

15. The Commission on the Status of Women can highlight opportunities, good practices and entry points for strengthening attention to gender perspectives in efforts aimed at the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals, at all levels, and by different stakeholders. The Expert Group Meeting is expected to put forward practical and concrete proposals for action to be taken towards this end.

### **III. Objectives of the Expert Group Meeting**

16. With the target dates for the MDGs fast approaching, there is increased urgency to consider concrete ways for shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the MDGs; to sharpen the focus on the practical realization of the principle of the equality of women and men (art. 2, CEDAW) through MDG processes, policies and instruments; and to document examples of results achieved and of good practices in linking the efforts of implementation of the Platform for Action and achievement of the MDGs, as well as lessons learned and obstacles encountered.

17. The objectives of the Expert Group Meeting are to:

- Examine how the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions outlined in the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action contributes to accelerating progress towards achievement of all MDGs;
- Consider case studies and good practice examples of initiatives at the national level to integrate the gender equality framework in efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs, and identify gaps and challenges for doing so.

18. Based on experts' and observers' papers and the discussions at the meeting, the Expert Group Meeting will propose a limited number of concrete and practical steps and policy recommendations for governments, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders for accelerating achievement of the MDGs through enhanced implementation of the Platform for Action. Experts will be invited to develop a framework (guidelines, checklist) to support such work by different stakeholders at the national level.

### **IV. Profile of the participants**

19. The Expert Group Meeting will be attended by 15 experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Expert Group Meeting will also be attended by observers from governments, the United Nations system (especially from United Nations Country Teams), inter-governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and academia.

20. In selecting the experts, the criteria of geographical balance and, to the extent possible, gender balance, will be taken into consideration. Experts will

include academics and practitioners from relevant fields, in accordance with the objectives identified above.

21. Experts will be invited to present papers in the areas of their expertise. A small number of representatives from United Nations Country Teams will be invited to present, as observers, good practice examples from development assistance frameworks.

22. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to the appointed experts. Observers attend the expert group meeting at their own expense.

## **V. Documentation**

23. The documentation for the meeting will include:

- a consultant's paper commissioned by the Division for the Advancement of Women, providing a literature review and outlining the major issues to be discussed;
- papers prepared by experts on specific MDGs, in line with their expertise;
- papers prepared by observers, in particular good practice examples presented by UNCTs.

## **VI. Organization**

24. The EGM will be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The meeting will be hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva.

25. The EGM will be conducted in English and all documentation will be in English.

26. The EGM will meet in plenary and in working groups. In an opening plenary meeting, presentations by the experts will create a conceptual framework for discussions. The plenary will be followed by in-depth discussion of specific issues in working groups and drafting of the report (narrative summary of major issues and policy recommendations).

## **VII. Expected outcome**

27. The report of the Expert Group Meeting, containing a summary of the discussion and recommendations, will be adopted by the experts on the final day of the meeting. The report will be distributed at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and will be posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

*For further information, please contact*

Ms. Christine Brautigam  
Senior Social Affairs Officer  
Division for the Advancement of Women  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Tel: + 1 212 963 0535  
Email: [brautigamc@un.org](mailto:brautigamc@un.org)

Ms. Sharon Taylor  
Social Affairs Officer  
Division for the Advancement of Women  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Tel: + 1 212 963 5226  
Email: [taylors@un.org](mailto:taylors@un.org)

Ms. Katarina Salmela  
Social Affairs Officer  
Division for the Advancement of Women  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Tel: + 1 212 963 4017  
Email: [salmela@un.org](mailto:salmela@un.org)