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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report serves as a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective, as mandated in Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/18. The report is also submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, on an annual basis, a report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme.

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I. Introduction

1. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in 1995. The Platform for Action is the most comprehensive global policy framework for gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of the human rights of women and girls. It builds on commitments made at the previous World Conferences on Women, held in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980 and in Nairobi in 1985, as well as other commitments made at United Nations conferences and summits in the 1990s.

2. The General Assembly conducted a five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2000, at its twenty-third special session, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". The Assembly adopted a political declaration (see General Assembly resolution S-23/2) and an outcome document, entitled "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" (see resolution S-23/3). Governments recommitted themselves to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and agreed on further actions and initiatives to advance the achievement of gender equality.

3. At its forty-ninth session, in 2005, and at its fifty-fourth session, in 2010, the Commission on the Status of Women carried out the 10-year and 15-year reviews and appraisals of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (see E/2005/27-E/CN.6/2005/11 and Corr.1 and E/2010/27-E/CN.6/2010/11 and Corr.1). Following each review, Member States adopted a declaration reaffirming the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session. In both reviews, while welcoming the progress made, Member States stressed that challenges and obstacles to implementation remained and pledged to take further action to ensure the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

4. In its resolution 2013/18, the Economic and Social Council decided that the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session would undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective.

5. The resolution called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and encouraged the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level could inform the 2015 review.

6. The present report provides a review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly at the national level. It uses the responses to a

guidance note provided by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and distributed by the regional commissions to all Member States and observer States in their respective regions at the end of 2013.[1] By 12 December 2014, 164 Member States had responded to the guidance note. An overview of the rate of response, by region, is available as an annex to the present report (see annex).

7. The deliberations of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session, particularly through the focus on the linkages between the implementation of the Platform for Action and the opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda, will provide an important contribution to the ongoing intergovernmental deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda, which are expected to result in a text, to be adopted by Heads of State and/or Government at a summit to be held in September 2015.

II. Regional review processes

8. Prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, regional action plans were adopted by Member States. In the context of the 5-, 10- and 15-year reviews of implementation of the Platform for Action, in 2000, 2005 and 2010, regional review and appraisal processes were also undertaken.

9. The Economic and Social Council encouraged the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level could inform the 2015 review (see resolution 2013/18). As of the end of November 2014, four of the five regional commissions had completed regional review processes. Non-governmental organizations held meetings in the regions in conjunction with, or prior to, those organized by the regional commissions. Non-governmental organizations also participated actively in the regional intergovernmental meetings.

10. The Economic Commission for Europe held its regional review event on 6 and 7 November 2014 in Geneva, with the outcome of the meeting presented in co-chairs' conclusions. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific convened the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, from 17 to 20 November in Bangkok. The conference adopted the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The Economic Commission for Africa held the ninth African Regional Conference on Women, on the theme of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, from 17 to 19 November in Addis Ababa. The conference adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration on Accelerating the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: towards a transformational change for women and girls in Africa. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean held a special session on the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Latin America and the Caribbean during the fifty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago from 17 to 19 November, and the meeting adopted a

[1] The present report provides a review of global trends in the implementation of the Platform for Action. It does not provide specific references to the laws, policies and programmes of individual Member States. The national responses that have informed the report, along with the guidance note, are available from www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations.

statement on the occasion. The Centre for Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia organized an expert group meeting on 22 and 23 October to review the progress realized on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption in the Arab region. An intergovernmental meeting of member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia is scheduled for early February 2015.

11. The regional reports prepared for the regional review processes and the outcomes of the regional intergovernmental meetings will be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women. Findings from the regional reviews, where available, have been reflected in the present report.

III. Overview of 20 years of implementation of the Platform for Action: uneven progress, persistent and new challenges and catalysts for change

12. Twenty years have passed since the Fourth World Conference on Women set out an expansive vision and landmark set of commitments for achieving gender equality in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 1995, gender equality advocates brought to the fore the lack of empowerment and the multitude of human rights violations experienced by women and girls and the need for comprehensive laws and policies, as well as for the transformation of institutions, both formal (e.g., states, markets, national and global governance structures) and informal (e.g., family, community), in order to achieve gender equality and the full realization of the human rights of women and girls.

13. Over the past two decades there has been limited progress towards gender equality. Countries have increasingly removed discrimination in laws and adopted laws to promote gender equality and address violence against women and girls. There have been significant gains in the enrolment of girls in primary and secondary education. In some regions, women's participation in the labour force has increased. Some regions have made progress in increasing women's access to contraception. Harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, have started to decline in some contexts. There have been important gains in women's representation in national parliaments in some countries. Significant normative advances have been made in the global agenda on women, peace and security.

14. Overall progress, however, has been unacceptably slow, with stagnation and even regression in some contexts. Change towards gender equality has not been deep enough, nor has it been irreversible. Discrimination in legislation persists in many countries, particularly in the area of family law. Increasing educational attainment by women and their rising participation in the labour market have not been matched by better conditions of employment, prospects for advancement and equal pay. At the current rate of progress, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), it would take more than 75 years to reach equal remuneration for work of equal value.[2] Too many women remain without access to decent work, are denied equal rights to inheritance and property and are vulnerable to poverty.

[2] International Labour Organization, *Report of the Director-General: A New Era of Social Justice*, report prepared for the International Labour Conference, 100th session, Geneva, 1-17 June 2011 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2011).

Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work continues to limit their enjoyment of human rights in several areas. Violence against women and girls persists at alarmingly high levels, in many forms, in public and private spaces. Unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality persist in some regions. Women's already limited presence in decision-making at all levels is frequently subject to setbacks and women remain significantly underrepresented at the highest levels of political leadership.

15. Overall progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action has been particularly slow for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Stark gaps exist for poor women and girls living in rural areas and in poor urban settlements on several indicators, including enrolment in education, maternal mortality and access to such services as water and sanitation. Young women are at much greater risk of new HIV infections, compared to their male peers. Marginalized groups of women, such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women are at particular risk of discrimination and violence.

16. Progress towards gender equality has been slowed down by the broader political, social and economic context. The succession of global crises since 2007/2008 have thrown into sharp relief the shortcomings of dominant economic models that have deepened inequalities (both within and between countries) and increased the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. Indeed, rising inequality has been identified as one of the proximate causes of the global financial crisis of 2007/2008, which, along with the food crisis, has had a significant negative impact on people, with implications for women and girls in particular.

17. Rising inequalities and increasing vulnerabilities are also linked to the persistence of violent conflict, which has negative impacts on women and girls by limiting their access to services and economic opportunities and increasing their vulnerability to violence. Extremism and conservatism are on the rise, manifested in diverse forms across different contexts, but a common feature is the resistance to women's human rights, for example restricting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, tolerating or even promoting violence against women and limiting women's and girls' autonomy and engagement in the public sphere. Women's rights advocates and human rights defenders, in some contexts, are increasingly subjected to violence as a result of their efforts.

18. Discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes remain pervasive across formal and informal institutions and continue to hold back progress towards gender equality. For example, discriminatory social norms and stereotypes that are embedded in labour markets, such as the unequal division of both paid and unpaid work and stereotypes regarding men as breadwinners, limit women's enjoyment of social and economic rights. Discriminatory social norms and practices that underlie women's unequal access to education and land and other productive resources limit women's enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living. Social norms that condone violence against women and girls prevent them from full and equal participation in social, economic and political life. These entrenched social norms and structural challenges, at all levels, prevent the transformation of gender power relations that is necessary to realize the vision of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

19. There continues to be chronic underinvestment in gender equality, a persistent problem that has been exacerbated as a result of austerity measures adopted in many countries in the post-crisis context. Analysis of public expenditure, on the basis of data from government budgets in sectors relevant to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including sectors important for achieving gender equality, shows that despite an initial period of increased spending in 2008-2009, this trend has now reversed, with spending either stagnating or falling in many developing countries. While the share of official development assistance focused on gender equality has remained relatively stable in recent years, there remains considerable underinvestment in gender equality, particularly when aid spending is broken down by sectors. Aid focused on gender equality is concentrated in the social sectors of education and health, with alarmingly low levels of such aid targeted towards economic sectors. Despite the need, donor funding to support women's role in peace and security and their sexual and reproductive health and rights remains inadequate.[3] Women's organizations at the local, national, regional and global levels remain significantly underresourced.

20. Despite such challenges in the broader context, as will be discussed in the sections below, many countries have made important advances to realize women's rights by introducing and implementing laws, policies and programmes. Many of the transformative advances have been driven by women's movements and have often been more effective where they have worked in alliance with other gender equality advocates, in local and national governments, parliaments and political parties. Such advances have served to ignite several important paradigm shifts in policy responses, such as recognition of and action on the continuum of violence against women in private and public settings as a public concern and recognition of unpaid care work as a public good. Indeed, the role of autonomous feminist organizations in advancing women's rights is recognized in comparative research on 70 countries, over four decades, as the most critical factor in the implementation of gender equality policies.[4]

IV. Framing the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action

21. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action enshrined a broad understanding of gender equality that goes beyond formal equality to guarantee women's enjoyment of their human rights in practice, that is to say, substantive equality. The equal exercise and enjoyment of rights by women and men requires that they have equal access to resources and power, to experience equal respect and dignity and to have equal exercise of voice. Achieving substantive equality requires that both direct and indirect forms of discrimination are addressed and further discrimination is prevented. Specific measures should be adopted that redress women's disadvantages and transform the institutions and structures that reinforce

[3] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Financing the unfinished business of gender equality and women's rights: priorities for the post-2015 framework", Technical Brief (Paris, 2014). Available from www.oecd.org/dac/gender.

[4] Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon, "The civic origins of progressive policy change: combating violence against women in global perspectives 1975-2005", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 106, No. 3 (2012).

and reproduce unequal power relations between men and women. While progress on women's human rights issues is dealt with separately (see paras. 256-288 of the present report), implementation in all 12 critical areas of concern (see sect. V) is analysed from the perspective of human rights and substantive equality.

22. It is important that the review of the 12 critical areas of concern (see sect. V) recognize the significant interlinkages and synergies between them. Poverty eradication strategies, for example, that can effectively address the multiple dimensions of women's poverty would need to encompass action in many areas, including women's rights to work and at work, their right to critical services such as justice, health care and education, as well as the right to be free from violence and discrimination. Likewise, effectively preventing and responding to violence against women requires action that spans across several critical areas of concern, including access to health care of high quality, access to justice services, access to decent work and the provision of comprehensive sexuality education. These interconnections and synergies speak to the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights.

23. As the overall picture of progress shows, gender inequalities always intersect with other forms of inequality. This means that progress in the lives of women and girls is often uneven. Combating the multiple and intersecting inequalities experienced by marginalized groups, for example indigenous women who are also often members of poor households, calls for specific actions that address not only socioeconomic disadvantages but also discrimination, stigma and violence. While women and girls may not benefit equally from household income and wealth as a result of intra-household discrimination in resource allocation, growing income inequality means, on average, greater socioeconomic inequalities among women and girls, and the risk that large numbers of women and girls are left behind. The intersection between gender inequality and other inequalities is highlighted across all 12 critical areas of concern.

24. Finally, the centrality of gender equality, women's empowerment and the realization of women's rights to sustainable development has been increasingly recognized in recent decades. In the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (see General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex), participants recognized the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment across the three pillars of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — and resolved to promote gender equality and women's full participation in sustainable development policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels. The understanding of development that underpins the present review is in line with the definition proposed in the landmark report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, that sustainable development should meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", which involves integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development (see Assembly resolution 42/187). The review builds on that definition by anchoring its analysis within a human rights framework and underlining questions of equality and justice as important for present as well as future generations. Sustainable development, therefore, is economic, social and environmental development that ensures human well-being and dignity, ecological integrity, gender equality and social justice, now and in the future (see A/69/156).

V. Review of national implementation by critical area of concern

25. The present section reviews national implementation in the 12 critical areas of concern. Each sub-section starts with an overview of the strategic objectives from the Platform for Action and significant normative advances, particularly since 2010, when the previous global review of national implementation took place (see E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2). The sub-sections continue with an assessment of global trends using quantitative data, providing information over the past two decades, where possible. Data, particularly trend data, are scarce for several topics, which limits the analysis of progress for some critical areas of concern.

26. Each sub-section then provides an assessment of actions taken by States to address the critical area, identifying trends in implementation. While efforts have been made to identify promising practices and trends, information on the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes was limited in the national responses. The sub-sections conclude with an overview of remaining challenges and actions needed to accelerate implementation.

A. Women and poverty

27. In the Platform for Action, the Fourth World Conference on Women noted that poverty had various manifestations, including, inter alia, lack of income and productive resources, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited access to education and other basic services, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, and social discrimination and exclusion. In the Platform, it was emphasized that poverty eradication strategies should be comprehensive and that the application of gender analysis to a wide range of economic and social policies and programmes, including macroeconomic, employment and social policies, was critical to the elaboration and successful implementation of poverty reduction strategies. The Conference also called upon governments to collect data disaggregated by sex and age on poverty and all aspects of economic activity, as well as to devise suitable statistical means to recognize and make visible the full extent of women's work and all their contributions to the national economy.

28. Since 2010, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights has issued several reports regarding the human rights of women living in poverty, including on the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, women's limited access to social protection and the disproportionate share of women in vulnerable employment.[5] In 2012, in its resolution 21/11, the Human Rights Council adopted the guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights (see A/HRC/21/39), which identified achieving gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving and implementing global poverty eradication goals and objectives.

29. In the agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women,[6] the need to address the multiple and intersecting factors that contribute to the disproportionate impact of poverty on women and girls over their life cycle, as well as intra-household gender inequalities in the allocation of

[5] See A/65/259, A/66/265 and A/68/293 and the report of the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty (A/HRC/17/34).

[6] See E/2014/27-E/CN.6/2014/15, chap. I, sect. A.

resources, opportunities and power, was reiterated. The Commission urged Member States to realize the human rights of women and girls, including the right to development, by promoting their equal access to inheritance and property, quality education, full and productive employment, decent work, social protection and justice, as well as by ensuring equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and the equal sharing of unpaid care work.

1. Global trends

30. Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of people in developing regions living under the threshold of $1.25 a day (in terms of purchasing power parity), the international benchmark for measuring extreme poverty, fell from 47 per cent to 22 per cent, thereby meeting Millennium Development Goal target 1a. Although every developing region has seen reductions in poverty rates, changes have been led by Eastern Asia, where rates of extreme poverty have fallen from 60 per cent in 1990 to 12 per cent in 2010.[7] Over the same period, Southern Asia has also seen rapid reductions in extreme poverty, from 51 per cent to 30 per cent, but progress has been slower in sub-Saharan Africa, where the reduction in extreme poverty (from 56 per cent to 48 per cent) was not enough to offset rapid population growth, resulting in an increase in the number of people in extreme poverty by 124 million people. Changes have also been significant in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caucasus and Central Asia and Northern Africa, but these regions started with both lower poverty rates and lower numbers of people in extreme poverty (see E/CN.6/2014/3). While the majority of the world's poor continue to live in rural areas, the share of the urban poor has increased significantly over the past decade, alongside rapid rates of urbanization, and is expected to grow further in the years to come.[8]

31. There is evidence that women are more likely to live in poverty than men. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women are overrepresented in poor households, mainly because they are less likely to have paid work, and even when they do they are, on average, paid less than men.[9] Data from demographic and health surveys shows that in 29 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, women aged 15 to 49 are much less likely to earn cash income than men in the same age category. While 83 per cent of men earned cash income over the 12 months preceding the survey, this was true for only 33 per cent of women.[10] Across countries and regions, women are less likely than men to have access to decent work, assets and formal credit, although systematic global data on some of these dimensions have yet to be collected.

32. The lack of data on women's poverty continues to be a major challenge. The need for better multidimensional poverty statistics, disaggregated by sex, was highlighted in many responses, confirming that action on this front is long overdue. Most existing measures continue to be based on household survey data where aggregate household-based income or consumption data are used to calculate per

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[7] United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (New York, 2014). The categorization of all regions throughout the present report reflect the original source.

[8] International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Rural Poverty Report 2011: New Realities, New Challenges — New Opportunities for Tomorrow's Generation* (Rome, 2010).

[9] United Nations, "The Millennium Development Goals Report: Gender chart 2012" (2012).

[10] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) calculations based on data from demographic and health surveys.

capita income. Yet, the distribution of income within households is typically unequal, meaning that a large number of poor women may be living in households that are not categorized as poor.

33. In addition, income-based poverty indicators are limited from a gender perspective because they capture absolute deprivation rather than the fulfilment of the right to an adequate standard of living. Multidimensional measures of poverty can complement income-based indicators of poverty through the simultaneous consideration of overlapping deprivations. Many States recognized the multiple and interlocking determinants of women's poverty, including lack of, or limited access to, education, family planning, health care, housing, land and other assets. Some responses also emphasized the negative impact of violence against women and their lack of participation in economic decision-making. A few responses highlighted the importance of time poverty among women and girls. Recent research shows that the availability and distribution of time across and within households can be integrated into poverty assessments. Such assessments have been piloted in a few countries, showing that poverty rates increase significantly when time deficits are taken into account alongside income deficits.[11]

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

34. Unequal access to and control over resources, power, opportunities and services lie at the root of women's poverty. Discriminatory legal frameworks and customary laws restrict women's access to inheritance, land, property and credit. But even where formal restrictions are removed, women face multiple constraints on their ability to move out of poverty. Women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work limits their ability to engage in income-earning activities. Where women live with other adult earners, usually partners, the combined household income may be sufficient to pull the household above the poverty line. However, the need to pool household resources to escape poverty also makes women financially dependent on their partners and other family members. This dependency increases their vulnerability to poverty in cases of household dissolution, reduces their voice and bargaining power within the household and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to leave abusive relationships. Poverty can also increase women's and girls' exposure to violence through trafficking and exploitative forms of work (see sect. V.D).

35. Poverty and discrimination are inherently linked, each being a cause and consequence of the other. The poverty risk is particularly high for women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of gender as well as ability, age, ethnicity, location, migration and family status. In some cases, disadvantages based on geographic location, for example, are compounded by discriminatory treatment, such as in the case of rural indigenous or ethnic minority women. Migrant women and women with disabilities were also recognized as particularly vulnerable to poverty. These groups face specific challenges in accessing adequate and regular sources of income owing to restrictive immigration laws or working environments that are ill-adjusted to their needs.

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[11] Ajit Zacharias, Rania Antonopoulous and Thomas Masterson, *Why Time Deficits Matter: Implications for the Measurement of Poverty* (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College and United Nations Development Programme, 2012).

36. In many countries, families with children face a higher risk of poverty, which is associated with the costs of child-rearing and the difficulty of combining caregiving and participation in paid work. These challenges are exacerbated in single-parent households, most of which are headed by women. Similarly, the cumulative effect of a lifetime of disadvantages on employment, earnings, access to land and other assets, along with the limited availability of old-age pensions, leaves many older women highly vulnerable to poverty.

37. Women's vulnerability to poverty is particularly acute in conflict and post-conflict settings, when their immediate security and livelihood needs are often left unaddressed (see sect. V.E). Similarly, climate change has started to infringe on the livelihoods of women who rely primarily on agriculture (see sect. V.K). Rises in temperature, floods and droughts deprive women of access to food and income for themselves and their families, exacerbating the poverty of their households.

38. Member States have taken a range of measures to eradicate poverty among women. Four major trends have emerged: (a) increasing women's access to paid employment; (b) enhancing women's income security, throughout the life cycle, through social protection; (c) improving women's livelihoods through access to land, property and productive resources and (d) increasing women's economic opportunities through access to financial services.

Increasing women's access to paid employment

39. Enhancing women's access to decent paid employment can be one of the most effective ways to reduce income poverty. In order to do so, however, labour market policies and programmes have to be tailored to meet women's needs. Despite significant progress in some regions, women still face multiple barriers to participating in the labour market on an equal footing with men. Labour market segmentation and gender wage gaps remain a persistent source of economic disadvantage for women. The weak and uneven global economic recovery has done little to redress this disadvantage, particularly in developing countries. There has been limited progress, for example, in the reduction of vulnerable employment,[7] a significant driver of women's poverty (see sect. V.F).

40. In order to facilitate women's participation in paid employment, States continue to roll out childcare services, as well as specific training and job placement programmes for women. Sometimes, single mothers and female heads of households are given priority access to such schemes. Policies aimed at reconciling paid employment and unpaid care responsibilities are not restricted to developed countries. In Latin America, parental leave policies have been reformed and the reach of childcare services has been expanded. In addition, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have strengthened labour market regulations, including minimum wage legislation, which can bolster women's access to income from paid employment. This has included greater efforts to regulate paid domestic work, which constitutes the single most important source of employment for women in many countries. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, countries have also made efforts to include greater numbers of women in public works programmes or employment guarantee schemes through, inter alia, the use of gender quotas, the stipulation of on-site childcare provision, the regulation of workloads and a focus on sectors that are more likely to employ women. Many developing countries, where a large share of women work in informal urban and rural self-employment, put

consistent emphasis on supporting women's entrepreneurship through access to land, credit, training and services.

Enhancing women's income security throughout the life cycle through social protection

41. In addition to paid employment, social protection can play a major part in reducing poverty and inequality. It can be an important tool for redressing women's labour market disadvantages. Thoughtfully designed social transfer systems can not only bolster the right to an adequate standard of living, but also contribute to the realization of a range of other rights, including the rights to education, food, health care and work. While some States have seen dramatic cuts in social expenditure, others have continued to roll out or even scaled up their social protection efforts so as to feather off the poverty-inducing effects of economic crisis, food insecurity, climate change, demographic ageing and changes in family and household structures. Apart from enabling policies, such as job training and childcare services, many countries have implemented protective policies that can reduce women's poverty risk throughout the life cycle, through measures such as child benefits, conditional cash transfers and non-contributory old-age pensions, as well as a range of subsidies for education, health care and housing.

42. Cash transfers for families with school-age children have become a widespread component of poverty reduction strategies in developing countries over the past two decades and such programmes now operate in more than two dozen countries in Africa, in Asia and the Pacific and virtually everywhere in Latin America. In most countries, cash transfers target poor and vulnerable groups and are conditional on compliance with programme requirements, such as ensuring school attendance, taking children to regular health checks, or participating in parenting workshops. Mothers are the principal recipients and responsible for complying with conditions, in the knowledge that women are more likely than men to prioritize children's well-being. At the same time, there is a lack of discussion of and focus on the role of men, both in such programmes and in promoting children's well-being more generally, which hampers progress towards a more equal sharing of responsibilities.

43. Conditional cash transfers can alleviate poverty and help reduce income inequality.[12] They can also make positive contributions to the realization of children's rights, such as the right to education, food and health. In contexts where girls face significant disadvantages with regard to school attendance, cash transfers have sometimes been used successfully to redress such disadvantages.[13] Cash transfer programmes can also provide a regular and reliable source of income for women, especially in situations where they receive little support from male partners. In a number of cases, cash transfers have promoted women's economic activity, which may in turn have an impact on poverty levels.[14] The ethics and effectiveness

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12 International Labour Organization, "Effects of non-contributory social transfers in developing countries: a compendium", Working Paper (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010).

13 Agustín Escobar Latapí and Mercedes Gonzáles de la Rocha, "Girls, mothers and poverty reduction in Mexico: evaluating Progresa-Oportunidades", in *The Gendered Impacts of Liberalization: Towards "Embedded Liberalism"?*, Shahra Razavi, ed. Routledge/United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Research in Gender and Development Series (Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, 2008); see also Deepti Bhatnagar and others, "Female secondary school assistance project, Bangladesh" (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2003).

14 Naila Kabeer and others, *Paid Work, Women's Empowerment and Inclusive Growth: Transforming the Structures of Constraint* (New York, UN-Women, 2013).

of making cash transfers conditional remain contested. In addition, it is unclear whether it is the cash or the condition that leads to the positive effects on child nutrition, health and education.[15] Conditionalities can also have unintended and negative impacts on both women and children.[15] The fulfilment of conditions, for example, can place additional time and work burdens on poor women. Despite the growing focus on cash transfers as part of poverty eradication efforts, there is little recognition of the potential drawbacks of conditionalities in States' responses. States could address these drawbacks by removing conditionalities that require women to take children to health checks, particularly when services are far away, of low quality and where corresponding waiting times significant, or to attend parenting skills workshops, and by offering additional services aimed at enhancing their longer-term employment prospects, including improved access to markets, training and financial services. To date, only a few countries have adopted such measures.

44. Countries from all regions are concerned about the situation of older women and some reported specific measures for mitigating poverty among this group. Because of their less favourable employment trajectories, older women often have fewer savings, assets or access to contributory pension entitlements than men. Non-contributory (also called basic or social) pensions can play a critical role in reducing poverty among older women. There are now over 100 non-contributory old age pension schemes around the world, with varied design, scope and impact.[16] Some countries reported granting access as a universal right to all older persons, but most target benefits to poor and vulnerable populations. Generally, women are most effectively reached by universal schemes that are offered to all citizens or residents, or schemes that consider only whether the individual beneficiary is in receipt of any other pension. Means-tested pensions, in contrast, often require that no other income is received in the household. This means that they exclude women who live in households that are above the income threshold, even if those women have no access to personal income. Benefit levels also vary enormously: while some countries, even in developing regions, provide fairly generous transfers, others offer benefits that correspond to only a fraction of the household income that would be considered as placing a household on the poverty line.

Improving women's livelihoods through access to land, property and productive resources

45. Greater access for women to land, property and productive resources is a powerful tool for poverty eradication. The trend towards reforming laws concerning inheritance, property and land ownership to promote greater gender equality, over the past two decades, therefore bodes well for women, particularly those in rural areas. Secure land rights can increase the capacity of female farmers to make investments in their land. Greater agricultural productivity, in turn, can enhance household food security and nutrition directly, through increased food production. Control over land and housing can also provide an opportunity to earn additional income by renting out a property or using it as collateral for loans. Several countries reported measures to strengthen women's asset ownership through family law

[15] Debbie Budlender, "Conditional cash transfers: learning from the literature", paper prepared for UN-Women, Barbados, August 2014.

[16] HelpAge International, Pension Watch database, version published on 29 October 2013. Available from www.pension-watch.net.

reforms, the issuance of individual or joint land and property titles for rural and indigenous women, as well as housing subsidies for women from poor and marginalized groups. Progress in women's legal rights to land and housing, however, may be undermined during implementation, because so-called customary property regimes, discriminatory social norms and practices continue to favour men.

46. In most countries, access to additional resources, such as water, energy, seeds, fertilizers, training, technology and information, as well as better market access, is necessary to ensure that land and other assets can be effectively utilized by female farmers and entrepreneurs and to reduce their often heavy workloads. Many countries reported continuing efforts to make water, sanitation and energy more accessible and affordable. A few countries also reported specific programmes aimed at increasing the viability and productivity of agricultural activities through training, loans or subsidies, some of which were either directly targeted at women or reached them to a significant degree.

Increasing women's economic opportunities through access to financial services

47. Better access to financial services, such as savings, insurance, remittances and credit, can support women's ability to move out of poverty by enabling them to start and grow their own businesses, be it through small-scale farming, cooperatives or urban self-employment. However, access to formal financial services for women remains inadequate. Globally, only 47 per cent of women over the age of 15 in developing countries had an account at a formal financial institution in 2011, compared with 55 per cent of men.[17] Gender gaps were particularly marked in the Middle East and North Africa, where men were more than twice as likely as women to have a bank account in their name. Gaps were much smaller in East Asia and the Pacific, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa.[17] Women also continue to have less access to loans, particularly formal ones.[18] This can increase their reliance on informal money lenders, who often charge higher interest rates.[19]

48. Ensuring women have equal rights to enter into formal contracts is a crucial first step in overcoming barriers to financial services. The rapid growth of microcredit schemes has contributed to easing women's difficulty in accessing formal loans. A large number of States reported running or facilitating microcredit schemes to support women's economic activities, both individual and collective. In some cases, these schemes use mobile and biometric technologies that can make it easier for women to gain access to capital and retain control over money by reducing the need to travel long distances and allowing them to sidestep social constraints. Moving beyond access to microcredit and expanding women's access to a broad range of financial services, including appropriate and affordable savings and credit products, payment and money transfer services (both domestic and international), as well as insurance, remains a significant challenge.

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[17] UN-Women calculations based on data from the World Bank Financial Inclusion Index (Global Findex).

[18] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture — Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome, 2011).

[19] *2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women's Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources, including Microfinance* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.IV.7).

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

49. Tackling the root causes of women's poverty requires concerted action to further remove gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work, as well as broader efforts to extend essential social protections and access to assets. Labour market policies can bolster women's access to income, for example by guaranteeing adequate minimum wages and equal pay for work of equal value. Carefully designed social protection policies can not only increase women's income security, but also strengthen their voice and autonomy vis-à-vis other household members. Greater investments in infrastructure and basic social services, including education, energy, health care, water and sanitation, can reduce poverty and improve well-being, but also free up women's time for productive activities. In all three areas, universal and inclusive policies need to go hand in hand with targeted interventions aimed at overcoming gender-specific constraints that limit the realization of women's right to live a life free from poverty and deprivation. While cash transfers are not a panacea, their poverty-reducing effect could be enhanced, for example by liberating women from complying with burdensome conditions.

50. Macroeconomic policies shape the economic environment in which these efforts are pursued: they have a direct impact on the quality and quantity of remunerative employment opportunities available to women and men and they affect the resources available to governments to finance social policies and social protection programmes (see sect. V.F). The creation of more and better jobs for women requires an enabling macroeconomic environment with a focus on reducing inequality and realizing women's human rights through decent work generation and social investments.[20]

51. Investing in gender equality may seem particularly daunting in the current context of austerity, however, efforts in some countries show that it is possible. While some countries reported reduced funding for gender equality as a result of the global financial and economic crisis, others highlighted the implementation of special measures to contain its poverty-inducing effects on women. Many of the measures undertaken by States can prevent households from falling into poverty by buffering against sudden drops in income. But they may also pay off in the long run by averting the depletion of skills during times of widespread unemployment and by securing continued investment in child nutrition, health and schooling. In addition, countries need to integrate gender-responsive investments in environmental protection and climate change mitigation processes into their national planning. Such investments are now more urgent than ever, not only to accelerate implementation, but also to avoid retrogression in the realization of women's right to an adequate standard of living.

52. Finally, more and better data are needed to facilitate multidimensional and gender-responsive assessments of poverty and of the impact of specific policies and programmes on women, including the distribution of income and time within households. Recent research has also shown that collecting individual-level data on asset ownership is feasible and can yield significant insights.[21] As part of international efforts, some countries are in the process of testing methodologies to

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[20] Janet G. Stotsky, "Gender and its relevance to macroeconomic policy: a survey", IMF Working Paper, No. 06/233 (Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, 2006).

[21] Cheryl Doss and others, "The gender asset and wealth gaps: evidence from Ecuador, Ghana, and Karnataka, India" (Bangalore, Indian Institute of Management, 2011).

improve the collection of data, disaggregated by sex, on asset ownership and entrepreneurship. Other countries are encouraged to join these efforts.

B. Education and training of women

53. One of the most significant advances towards gender equality in the past two decades has been the increase in women and girls' educational enrolment. The Platform for Action called on Governments to eliminate disparities between women and men in access to education and educational outcomes at all levels and in all forms of education, including primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training, adult literacy and lifelong learning, in line with the outcome of the World Conference on Education for All, adopted in 1990.

54. Since then, there have been important normative advances. In 2000, gender equality featured prominently in the World Education Forum's six agreed goals, in the Dakar Framework for Action, which committed Member States to the achievement of Education For All.[22] The goals were later echoed in the Millennium Development Goals, which included a target to ensure universal primary education by 2015. In the Muscat Agreement, adopted at the Global Education for All Meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, held in Muscat from 12 to 14 May 2014, it was reiterated that education was a fundamental human right, essential for human fulfilment, peace, sustainable development, economic growth, decent work, gender equality and responsible global citizenship. In his report to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, in 2013, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education reaffirmed the core obligations of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women to promote equal access to quality education for women and girls as a fundamental human right (see A/68/294).

55. The Commission on the Status of Women has continually examined the critical aspects of education and training for women and girls in its deliberations and outcomes. At its fifty-fifth session, the Commission on the Status of Women recommended additional measures to increase women's and girls' access to quality education at all levels, with a particular focus on the transition from education to decent work opportunities. At its fifty-eighth session, the Commission called on governments to promote and protect women's and girls' right to education throughout the life cycle.[6]

1. Global trends

56. Between 1990 and 2012, there was significant progress towards closing the gender gap in primary enrolments. In 2012, developing regions as a whole had achieved gender parity in primary education, with the gender parity index increasing from 0.86 to 0.97.[23] In Southern Asia, where the corresponding index in primary education of 0.74 was lowest among all regions in 1990, progress has been

[22] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000* (Paris, 2000).

[23] Gender parity in education is reached when the gender parity index, defined as girls' gross school enrolment ratio divided by the corresponding ratio for boys, is between 0.97 and 1.03. A rating below 0.97 indicates a bias against females, while a rating higher than 1.03 indicates that males are at a disadvantage.

remarkable: by 2012, the index had reached 1.0, signifying that gender parity in primary education had been reached. Despite significant progress in sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, Western Asia and Northern Africa, girls are still disadvantaged relative to boys as regards enrolment in primary education in those regions.[7]

57. At the global level, there has been progress towards gender parity in secondary education, but girls still face significant disadvantages in many regions. For developing regions as a whole, the index for secondary education increased from 0.77 in 1990 to 0.96 in 2012. However, there are large differences between regions, with girls enjoying an advantage in Latin America and the Caribbean, but lagging significantly behind boys in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, Western Asia and Oceania. Southern Asia stands out as the region where the greatest progress has been made, with the region's index increasing from 0.59 to 0.93 between 1990 and 2012.[7]

58. Young women's share of enrolment in tertiary education has also increased. In 1995, they made up 48 per cent of tertiary students globally and the share rose to 51 per cent in 2012.[24] As of 2012, overall gender parity in tertiary education has been reached, with women outnumbering men in some regions. However, large disparities exist between regions, with women lagging behind men in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia, but enjoying an advantage in all other regions.[7] However, despite women's increasing participation in tertiary enrolment, significant differences are observed in the fields in which men and women study. In 88 out of 102 countries reporting data in the period 2005-2012, women accounted for the majority of graduates in the field of education. By contrast, in the area of engineering, manufacturing and construction, men constituted the majority of graduates in 99 out of 103 countries with data in the period 2005-2012.[25]

59. Progress in enrolment has led to reduced levels of illiteracy, particularly for young women. Between 1990 and 2012, the global youth literacy rate increased from 83 per cent to 89 per cent. Still, in 2012, 781 million adults and 126 million youths worldwide lacked basic reading and writing skills, with women accounting for more than 60 per cent of all illiterate persons.[7] While there has been considerable progress in increasing enrolments in recent years, the quality of education that girls and women receive has not necessarily improved. Of the world's 650 million children of primary school age, at least 250 million are not learning the basics in reading and mathematics. While global data are limited, several country studies show that gender, rural location and household poverty play a key role in determining learning outcomes.[26]

60. In addition to long-term benefits for children, public early childhood education and care services can also play a role in addressing gender inequalities more broadly by enabling the redistribution of unpaid care work, particularly for poor women who cannot afford to pay for care services. Since 1999, pre-primary education has expanded considerably. The global pre-primary education gross enrolment ratio increased from 33 per cent to 50 per cent. In many parts of the world, however, there is a wide gap in enrolment between the richest and poorest households. Part of

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[24] UN-Women calculations based on data from the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

[25] *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (forthcoming).

[26] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4: Teaching and Learning — Achieving Quality for All* (Paris, 2014).

the reason is that governments have yet to assume sufficient responsibility for pre-primary education: as of 2011, private providers were catering for 33 per cent of all enrolled children. The cost of private provision is one of the factors that contributes to the inequality in access at this level.[26]

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

61. Ensuring that women and girls enjoy their right to education is a cornerstone of achieving gender equality. Each additional year of post-primary education for girls has important multiplier effects, including by improving women's employment outcomes, decreasing the chance of early marriage and improving the health and well-being of future generations.[26]

62. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Three major trends have emerged (a) addressing economic barriers to girls' education; (b) increased efforts to foster a gender-responsive school environment; and (c) increasing support for the transition from school to work.

Addressing economic barriers to girls' education

63. Poverty is one of the biggest barriers to women's and girls' education, perpetuating gender disparities in enrolment and increasing dropout rates.[27] The rising costs of education, both direct and indirect, can deter households from sending a child to school, becoming another obstacle in girls' enrolment in and completion of education. Whereas for the poorest quintile, 31 per cent of girls and 28 per cent of boys of primary school age are out of school, for the richest quintile, the corresponding values are 9 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively.[28] The impact of poverty on girls' education in particular is especially stark in sub-Saharan Africa, where children from the richest 20 per cent of households reach ninth grade at 11 times the rate of those from the poorest 40 per cent of households.[29] Girls' limited access to education is particularly acute in conflict-affected settings. Removing economic barriers and reducing the substantial costs of education are both crucial to increasing access to education for women and girls, especially at the post-primary level.

64. For many countries, the inadequate public resources allocated to education also continue to constitute a significant barrier to achieving equal access to quality education for women and girls at all levels. The priority given to the education sector as a whole in national budgetary allocations has an immediate bearing on educational outcomes, as the level of resources determines the accessibility and quality of education. However, education financing, including from aid and domestic resources, remains insufficient and fragmented.[26] Donor aid for basic education, in particular, has experienced a significant decline, from $6.2 billion in 2010 to $5.8 billion in 2011, threatening educational opportunities for women and girls, particularly in low-income countries.[7]

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[27] United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized* (Paris, 2010).

[28] *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.I.9).

[29] United Nations, "Education first: an initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General" (New York, 2012).

65. Measures taken by States to address economic barriers include abolishing fees, including through the free provision of school supplies, meals, transportation, uniforms and housing. Governments have also increasingly given priority to financial support for removing economic barriers to education. States have enacted measures to provide loans, grants and scholarships, in order to incentivize female attendance and school completion at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. As a means to further incentivize participation, a few countries have awarded financial assistance specifically to girls with high academic performance. Others have also allocated funds to target specific disadvantaged groups of women, including victims of conflict, indigenous women and women with disabilities.

66. While governments in general provide funding for education, few have prioritized funding for education in a systematic manner. Free and sometimes compulsory education exists at various levels in many countries, however the growing privatization of education in many contexts presents considerable barriers to girls' education, particularly in the context of constrained resources in the household. Allocating appropriate and adequate public resources is crucial to advance the enrolment and retention rates of girls in school across all levels of education.[30]

Increased efforts to foster a gender-responsive school environment

67. Fostering a gender-responsive environment is vital for enabling girls to equally enjoy their right to education. This includes addressing social barriers to girls' education, including discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, adolescent pregnancy, child, early and forced marriage and violence against girls (see sect. V.L). Norms and stereotypes about gender-specific roles can seriously inhibit women's educational opportunities. In the Asia-Pacific region, research found that discriminatory gender norms regarding women's role in society negatively affect girls' school attendance and cultural norms inhibiting the mobility of young women are a key barrier to their access to higher education.[31] The main strategies employed by countries to create a gender-responsive school environment include the adoption of new policies, laws and action plans that mainstream a gender perspective in educational policies and training programmes. In some cases, specific methodologies have been developed to evaluate whether the implementation of policies in educational institutions has effectively responded to gender equality issues.

68. States have reported continued efforts to revise school curricula and textbooks so as to embed a more gender-responsive approach to lifelong learning and eliminate pervasive gender stereotypes. States have also introduced new courses of study, including on human rights, gender equality and comprehensive sexuality education. States have also implemented extensive advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns and have partnered with civil society organizations to promote gender-responsive learning. There has growing attention to the use of mobile technology to expand access to education and training for women and girls, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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[30] See E/2011/27-E/CN.6/2011/12.

[31] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, *School-related Gender-based Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Bangkok, UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Bureau for Education, 2014).

69. The lack of qualified teachers, particularly female teachers, remains a fundamental challenge in ensuring girls' access to high quality education. Female teacher participation has increased steadily since 1995. However, data suggest that the increase in participation of female teachers at higher levels of education slowed between 2008 and 2012.[24] The limited availability of female teachers can be detrimental to girls' enrolment rates. Cross-country data suggest a positive correlation between gender parity in enrolment and the proportion of female teachers. In some contexts, the presence of female teachers encourages girls' attendance in school and improves their learning outcomes.[26]

70. Continuing the trend from 2010, States have implemented training programmes to increase the capacity of teachers to incorporate a gender equality perspective in teaching methodologies. Initiatives include offering training to teachers and school counsellors, in such issues as gender equality and human rights, to facilitate the development of gender-responsive school curricula. States have also introduced content development initiatives for teaching literature that supports gender-responsive perspectives in the classroom. In order to address persistent gender differences in fields of study, countries have also introduced scholarships to encourage the participation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education programmes, fields in which women are traditionally underrepresented.

71. The high levels of violence that girls are often subjected to in schools, but also on the way to and from school, represent an important challenge that they face in accessing education.[31] Further, the lack of safe and hygienic sanitation or facilities and products for menstrual hygiene can also affect girls' school attendance and drop-out rates. Efforts to ensure healthy, safer learning facilities for women and girls and to address violence against girls in the school environment include the provision of infrastructure such as private changing rooms, toilets, sanitary towels and housing specifically for girls. Comprehensive sexuality education, including learning about consent and respectful and equal relationships, is also being provided by States to address violence against girls in schools.

Increased support for the transition from school to work

72. Advances in women's and girls' educational attainment have not been matched with corresponding improvements in their employment outcomes, bringing to the forefront the need to strengthen linkages between education of good quality and access to decent work. A recent project on youth school-to-work transition in several countries found that transition rates for young men and women were low across the board, but in almost all surveyed countries young women had lower transition rates[32] and earned less than young men on average.[33] Along with higher education, access to quality technical and vocational education and training can support women's transition to the labour market. However, gender disparities in participation in such training continue to constrain women's chances of accessing

[32] Transition is defined as either entering into a stable job (i.e., with a contract of at least 12 months) or into (self-assessed) satisfactory temporary work or self-employment.

[33] Makiko Matsumoto and Sara Elder, "Characterizing the school-to-work transitions of young men and women: Evidence from the ILO School-to-work transition surveys", Employment Working Paper, No. 51 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010).

quality employment. In the majority of countries with data, young men are more likely than young women to enrol in vocational education.[34]

73. While information about interventions to support women's and girls' transition from school to work remains limited in State responses, there is an increasing focus on measures to strengthen skills development of women and girls so as to increase their prospects for employment, including training programmes in fields that are traditionally dominated by men. Such measures include providing technical and vocational education and training to women and girls in order to diversify their skill set to meet the emerging demands of the job market.

74. There is a growing effort to target access to vocational training specifically to women re-entering the workforce following maternity leave and for women in rural communities, recognizing the barriers that these women face in finding employment. States have also implemented specific forms of skills training for women, including literacy training, apprenticeships and non-formal education initiatives. There has been a consistent focus on women's literacy in many developing countries, with initiatives such as adult literacy centres to improve literacy skills of women.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

75. With gender gaps in enrolment narrowing, much greater attention needs to be focused on ensuring girls' and women's access to gender-responsive education of high quality. Institutional, economic and sociocultural constraints that restrict women's and girls' access to quality education remain widespread and factors that underpin gender disparities in education must be better addressed. Efforts to address economic and financial barriers to girls' education must be strengthened, including the elimination of school fees and the provision of stipends, scholarships and non-financial support, particularly in rural and remote areas. It is also important to increase the allocation of public resources to ensure sufficient funding is allocated to schools. Addressing the causes of school dropout, such as early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, is also vital. Specific and targeted measures are especially needed for women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination and those affected by violent conflicts.

76. Greater efforts are needed to ensure that schools are safe and responsive to girls. This includes measures to address violence against girls in the school environment and when travelling to and from school, such as the provision of safe transportation and safe and hygienic sanitary facilities. Challenging norms of violence and harassment through education and awareness-raising regarding respectful and equal relationships is vital, including through the provision of comprehensive sexuality education.

77. Improving the quality of education and of girls' learning outcomes must be prioritized. Greater focus is needed on adequate financing of the education sector, providing learning and teaching materials of good quality and promoting teacher training to better equip teachers with the skills to provide gender-responsive quality education. Increasing the number of female teachers, especially at the secondary and post-secondary levels, is also important. Governments must continue to address the

[34] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education* (Paris, 2012).

factors that limit girls' options with respect to certain fields of study. Addressing gender bias and stereotypes in school curricula, providing scholarships, raising awareness and mentoring to support women's and girls' participation in non-traditional fields, such as science and technology, are all crucial actions.

78. Greater efforts are needed to equip women with the skills necessary to succeed in labour markets. Supporting women's participation in technical and vocational education and training activities and providing opportunities for lifelong learning, including a continued focus on women's literacy, are necessary. Targeted activities that provide women and girls with the skills to enter into traditionally male-dominated fields could contribute to addressing occupational segregation in the labour market, and should therefore be expanded and replicated. Supporting men and boys to enter non-traditional fields, such as the care sector, is also critical for achieving gender equality.

79. While the main focus of global efforts to increase women's and girls' educational attainment has been on primary and secondary education, there is increasing recognition of the importance of pre-primary and early childhood education and care for girls' education. The provision of early childhood education and care remains a significant challenge and a limited area of focus for many States. Given the important links between gender equality and early childhood education and care, States should prioritize investments in this area.

C. Women and health

80. The Platform for Action called for the realization of women's right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. It acknowledged that women's health is determined by the social, political and economic context of their lives, as well as by their biological characteristics. It emphasized that gender inequality and other inequalities based on ethnicity, class and geographic location were important barriers to the achievement of women's health and that gender-responsive health policy and programming required a thorough analysis of such factors. It called for greater efforts to increase women's access to appropriate and affordable health care of high quality throughout the life cycle; the strengthening of preventive programmes that promote women's health; the implementation of gender-responsive approaches to sexual and reproductive health issues, including HIV and AIDS; the promotion of research and dissemination of information on women's health; increased resources for women's health and monitoring mechanisms to ensure gender mainstreaming; and the implementation of women's health policies and programmes.

81. In the agreed conclusions adopted at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission urged governments to reiterate their commitment to improving access to timely, affordable and quality health care for women and girls and to ensuring the gender sensitivity of health policy and programming by encouraging the active participation of women and girls in its design and implementation.[35] It also emphasized the need to strengthen sexual and reproductive health services as key entry points for women and girls who are at risk of violence, especially sexual violence. At its fifty-eighth session, the

[35] See E/2013/27-E/CN.6/2013/11, chap. I, sect. A.

Commission further emphasized the continued need to promote and protect the sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights of all women and to ensure universal access to comprehensive prevention, affordable treatment, care and support services for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, free of stigma and discrimination.[6]

1. Global trends

82. Across the globe, women tend to have higher life expectancy at birth than men, for both biological and behavioural reasons. However, in some settings, gender-based discrimination reduces women's life expectancy advantage so that female life expectancy at birth is more similar to that of males.[36] Globally, between 1990 and 2012, female life expectancy increased from 67 years to 73 years, while men's life expectancy increased from 62 years to 68 years.[37] Regional differences in life expectancy remain significant. Generally, women's longevity advantage vis-à-vis men is smaller, but growing, in lower- and lower-middle-income countries, compared with higher-income countries. In some African countries, progress in life expectancy has been slower as a result of HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality.[38]

83. Globally, in 2013, there were an estimated 289,000 maternal deaths, a decline of 45 per cent since 1990, but well below the Millennium Development Goal target to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015.[7] High levels of maternal mortality persist in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, which together accounted for 86 per cent of all maternal deaths in 2013.[7] Maternal deaths, which are largely preventable, are linked to the low status of women and to inadequate health-care services, including the lack of emergency obstetric care services, low rates of skilled attendance at delivery and the persistent denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls in many countries. Recent research further shows that pre-existing medical conditions (such as diabetes, malaria, HIV and obesity), exacerbated by pregnancy, caused 28 per cent of maternal deaths.[39] Anaemia, caused by poor nutrition and deficiencies of iron and other micronutrients, affects 41.8 per cent of pregnant women worldwide.[40]

84. Low rates of skilled birth attendance at delivery remain a significant challenge for women's health in some regions. The proportion of deliveries in developing regions attended by skilled health personnel rose from 56 per cent to 68 per cent between 1990 and 2012. However, in 2012, 40 million births in developing regions were not attended by skilled health personnel, and over 32 million of those births occurred in rural areas.[41] Nevertheless, there are important differences between regions and between women from different income groups. Compared with other regions, women in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia were much less likely to receive skilled birth attendance. Almost half of deliveries in those regions took

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36 *World Mortality Report 2013* (ST/ESA/SER.A/347).

37 World Health Organization, Global Health Observatory database. Available from www.who.int/gho/en.

38 World Health Organization, *Women and Health: Today's Evidence, Tomorrow's Agenda* (Geneva, 2009).

39 Lale Say and others, "Global causes of maternal death: a WHO systematic analysis", *The Lancet Global Health*, vol. 2, No. 6 (2014).

40 Bruno de Benoist and others, eds., *Worldwide Prevalence of Anaemia 1993-2005: WHO Global Database on Anaemia* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2008).

41 United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*.

place without appropriate medical care in 2012. The situation is particularly acute for poor women and women living in rural areas. In developing regions, the rural/urban gap narrowed by only 2 percentage points (from 33 to 31) between 2000 and 2012.[7]

85. Unsafe abortions also constitute a leading cause of maternal deaths. Globally, an estimated 21.6 million unsafe abortions took place in 2008, mostly in developing countries, resulting in 47,000 deaths, about 13 per cent of all maternal deaths that year. The number of unsafe abortions will likely increase further without adequate access to safe abortion and contraception.[42]

86. In 2012, in developing regions, 63 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 who are married or in a union used a method of contraception of any type, an increase of 11 percentage points since 1990.[7] Change has been remarkable in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where contraceptive prevalence rates have increased by 13 percentage points and 18 percentage points, respectively. However, for those two regions, contraceptive prevalence rates remained relatively low in 2012, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where fewer than 1 in 3 women aged 15 to 49 use any method of contraception. Poverty and geographic location remain key determinants of unmet needs for family planning,[43] with significant differences between poor rural women and rich urban women.

87. Globally, adolescent childbearing declined between 1990 and 2011, from 34 out of every 1,000 girls to 21 out of every 1,000 girls in developed countries and from 64 to 54 out of every 1,000 girls in developing countries. The fastest progress was observed in Southern Asia, where rates declined from 88 out of every 1,000 girls in 1990 to 50 out of every 1,000 girls in 2011. Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America continued to have the highest rates in 2011, at 117 out of every 1,000 girls and 76 out of every 1,000 girls, respectively.[7] Practices such as child, early and forced marriages are powerful drivers of maternal mortality and morbidity (see sect. V.L). Childbearing at a young age constitutes a significant health risk for adolescents and their children. Young women and adolescent girls who are sexually active may have limited knowledge of and access to reproductive health information and services and are at increased risk of (unwanted) pregnancy, unsafe abortion and childbirth-related complications, such as obstetric fistulas.[44]

88. The number of women living with HIV has been increasing globally since 2001 (see E/CN.6/2014/3). Roughly 80 per cent of women living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa,[45] 9 per cent in South and South-East Asia, 3 per cent in Latin America, and 3 per cent in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. At the end of 2013, women accounted for 52 per cent of all people living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries, and up to 59 per cent of all people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. Globally, young women between 15 and 24 years of age have a 50 per cent higher risk of becoming infected with HIV, compared with their male peers. In sub-Saharan Africa, the rate of new HIV infections among young women

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42 World Health Organization, *Unsafe Abortion: Global and Regional Estimates of the Incidence of Unsafe Abortion and Associated Mortality in 2008*, 6th ed. (Geneva, 2011).

43 Defined as the percentage of married women or those in a union aged 15 to 49 who want to stop or delay childbearing but are not using a method of contraception.

44 *State of World Population 2013: Motherhood in Childhood — Facing the Challenge of Adolescent Pregnancy* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.III.H.1).

45 Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *The Gap Report* (Geneva, 2014).

remains double or greater than that among men in the same age group. Women from specific population groups, including sex workers and transgender people, are also disproportionately affected by HIV (see E/CN.6/2014/3). Violence against women and girls is recognized as a driver of HIV, yet at the same time, being diagnosed with HIV has also been found to increase women's vulnerability to violence.

89. Non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are now the leading cause of death in the world.[37] They account for a greater share of deaths in developed countries (88 per cent in 2012), but their impact is growing rapidly in developing regions as well. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, total deaths has attributable to non-communicable diseases increased from 21 per cent to 29 per cent between 2000 and 2012. Over the same period, the corresponding proportion in Southern Asia increased from 47 per cent to 59 per cent, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, from 67 per cent to 73 per cent.[37] Women and girls are disproportionately and differently affected by this increase. Non-communicable diseases are responsible for a higher share of female deaths than of male deaths, a pattern that is particularly pronounced in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the Caucasus and in Central and Western Asia. Such diseases also cause disability, which is often chronic, and the prevalence of disability is higher among women, particularly poor and older women, than among their male counterparts.[46] In developed countries, non-communicable diseases account for 90 per cent of all deaths among women and for 85 per cent of all deaths among men.[25]

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform of Action

90. Gender inequality is a key determinant of women's health. Conditions that prevent women and girls from achieving a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being include poverty, lack of literacy and education, environmental degradation, inadequate nutrition and lack of access to water and sanitation, as well as exposure to violence and armed conflict. Unequal access and control over resources, lack of decision-making power and the disproportionate responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work can lead to poor physical and mental health, reduced well-being and premature death among women and girls. Violence against women also poses a major health threat (see sect. V.D).

91. Realizing women's right to health requires multisectoral and systemic responses that respond to the health needs of women and girls over the life cycle and to the specific barriers they face in their interaction with service providers. Member States have taken a range of actions on these fronts. Four major trends have emerged (a) increasing women's access to health-care services of high quality; (b) realizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights; (c) increasing attention to non-communicable diseases; and (d) advancing the health rights of marginalized groups of women and girls.

Increasing women's access to health-care services of high quality

92. Most States reported efforts to enhance women's access to health-care services and essential drugs through different affordability measures, improvements in the health-care infrastructure and actions to broaden the range, reach and quality of

[46] World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2011).

health-care services for women and girls, who have been disproportionately affected by health-care privatization and user fees.[47] Mobilizing resources for health was mentioned as a significant challenge, especially for low-income countries. Nevertheless, reforms towards universal health coverage have been taken forward in several countries in order to improve the affordability of health care through social or community-based insurance. Despite such efforts, more than 90 per cent of the population living in low-income countries remains without any right to health coverage.[48]

93. There has been a continued focus on providing free access to sexual and reproductive health care, including maternity care, HIV testing and screening for breast and cervical cancers. States also reported investments in health-care infrastructure, including in primary health centres and maternity wards. Efforts have included bringing health care closer to women and girls, particularly those living in rural areas, through mobile and door-to-door services. The latter can be particularly important in contexts where discriminatory social norms or violent conflict impose restrictions on the mobility of women and girls.

94. Women may be reluctant to use health-care services as a result of negative experiences relating to the lack of respect, privacy, confidentiality and treatment options offered by health-care facilities. This can be attributed to a lack of understanding among health-care personnel of how gender norms and roles affect women's health and women's experiences when interacting with health-care institutions. Women and girls also sometimes face stigma, discrimination and violence when accessing services, including physical and verbal abuse, testing without consent and non-confidential care, or abandonment and detention in facilities. In addressing such challenges, States reported measures to increase awareness of gender inequalities and women's rights among current and future health-care staff through the reform of university curricula for the medical professions and the training of health-care staff, particularly in areas such as child, adolescent and sexual and reproductive health.

95. Although some States reported that the availability, accessibility and affordability of essential drugs and commodities remained a significant challenge, efforts continued to make antiretroviral medicines and medications to prevent post-partum haemorrhage and to treat pre-eclampsia and eclampsia during pregnancy, as well as contraceptives, available to women and adolescent girls. Several States provided drugs at a subsidized rate or free of charge to all those in need, while others targeted poor or pregnant women. In addition to enhancing their availability, there have been increased efforts to generate demand for maternal health-care services and contraceptive methods, for example through media campaigns, outreach through community health workers and social marketing.

Realizing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights

96. The realization of the human rights of women to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters relating to their sexuality, including sexual and

[47] World Health Organization, "Gender, women and primary health care renewal: a discussion paper" (Geneva, 2010).

[48] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development and Social Justice* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2014).

reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, and regardless of marital status, is essential for achieving gender equality. This includes having control over and deciding freely with respect to their choice of partner, whether or not to marry, as well as when to have children and the number and spacing of their children. Women have the right to live free of discrimination and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Sexual and reproductive health and rights include the right to access essential information, education and services for all on issues such as sexuality, fertility, relationships, contraceptives, pregnancies and safe childbirth.

97. The majority of States reported continued efforts to realize women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, through measures including legal reforms, the expansion of sexual and reproductive health-care services, including safe motherhood programmes, sexuality education and counselling, family planning and HIV prevention programmes. Safe motherhood programmes included continued efforts to expand access to prenatal, delivery and postnatal care and an expansion of different childbirth options. Supplementation of iron and iodine to prevent anaemia and reduce the risk of haemorrhage during childbirth were provided and steps taken to increase the proportion of births attended by skilled health-care personnel, including midwives and obstetricians. While measures relating to pregnancy and childbirth are important elements of sexual and reproductive health care, the narrow focus on pregnant women in State responses neglects the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls across the life cycle.

98. Several States, particularly in Africa, reported measures to improve the prevention and treatment of obstetric fistula, which is a severe morbidity associated with prolonged obstructed labour, and affects 2 million women in Africa and Asia.[49] States also reported further efforts to increase the supply and demand for contraceptive methods so as to prevent unwanted pregnancies. In some States, these efforts are still limited, on the basis of marital status and/or age, without coverage for unmarried women and adolescents. A small number of countries reported on efforts to involve men and boys in maternal and child health-care services, including in prenatal check-ups, parenting training and their presence during delivery, as well as in the promotion of family planning and the prevention of HIV.

99. Several States have taken measures to improve women's access to safe abortions and post-abortion care. Since 1995, important gains have been made in reducing deaths resulting from unsafe abortion, especially in States using the technical and policy guidance for safe abortion from the World Health Organization and its guidelines for post-abortion care (see E/CN.9/2014/4 and Corr.1). Changes in laws are also important, given that, according to the World Health Organization, "legal restrictions lead many women to seek services in other States, or from unskilled providers or under unhygienic conditions, exposing them to a significant risk of death or disability".[50] In many States, women have the right to an induced abortion upon request. In 2011, this was the case for 30 per cent of States for which data are available, up from 24 per cent in 1996.[51] Since 2010, a few Latin American

[49] Gwyneth Lewis and Luc de Bernis, eds., *Obstetric Fistula: Guiding Principles for Clinical Management and Programme Development* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2006).

[50] World Health Organization, *Safe Abortion: Technical and Policy Guidance for Health Systems*, 2nd ed. (Geneva, 2012).

[51] *World Abortion Policies 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XIII.4).

States have reported progress in advancing the decriminalization of abortion and/or access to emergency contraception. At the same time, a significant proportion of women continue to live in States with highly restrictive laws. Women in Europe, North America and Central and Eastern Asia generally face less restrictive abortion laws than women in other regions.

100. Most responses reflected continued concern for the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls (see also sect. V.L). Special measures to prevent early childbearing continue in most States, including through comprehensive sexuality education and access to information and contraceptive methods. States reported on the creation of youth-friendly or youth-only health centres that provide confidential legal, medical and psychological advice and support.

101. HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care also remained high on the health agenda of most States. A few States reported comprehensive gender action plans that emphasize the need to address the underlying factors that contribute to women and girls' risk and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS by strengthening their agency, participation and leadership and by addressing gender-based violence and discriminatory social norms (see sect. V.D). Preventing mother-to-child transmission during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding remained the most commonly reported priority, especially in States with high prevalence rates. Measures included free and mandatory screening for all pregnant women, as well as priority access to antiretroviral treatment.

Increasing attention to non-communicable diseases

102. States in both developed and developing regions reported increased efforts to address non-communicable diseases, including those that affect women and girls. Measures included funding for research to assess the causes, risk factors and impact of different non-communicable diseases on women and to better understand the opportunities for the prevention and control of such diseases. Efforts to improve the early detection and treatment of breast and cervical cancers also continued, including testing through mammograms, ultrasounds and pap smears. In some contexts, such services are offered free of charge to all women; in others, free screening is available for women and girls in specific age groups. In a growing number of countries, the human papillomavirus vaccine is made available to girls so as to prevent cervical cancer. The benefits of early detection of these types of cancers through information and awareness-raising campaigns were also highlighted.

103. Efforts to prevent and manage chronic and degenerative diseases such as osteoporosis, which affects women disproportionately, also continued. Several countries reported the promotion of regular bone mass screenings for women starting at age 40. Many States have also scaled up their efforts to promote healthy lifestyles in order to prevent ill health related to alcohol and tobacco use, as well as obesity. Some of these measures are targeted directly at women and girls.

104. Mental health conditions share common features with other chronic communicable and non-communicable diseases, including long duration, constant shifts in symptoms and slow progression.[52] Women predominate among individuals

[52] World Health Organization and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, *Integrating the Response to Mental Disorders and other Chronic Diseases in Health Care Systems* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2014).

with depression, anxiety and somatic complaints.[53] For women of reproductive age, mental health conditions constitute the most important source of lost years of healthy life across all regions, with the exception of Africa.[54] While some States have put in place programmes to address mental health issues, the area remains underreported, underfunded and understaffed, especially in developing countries. Less than 1 per cent of all development assistance for health is directed towards the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, and less than 3 per cent of the health budgets of low- and middle-income countries is allocated to mental health.[52] Between 76 per cent and 85 per cent of people with severe mental disorders receive no treatment in low- and middle-income countries.[55] In order to address this issue, a few developing countries have started to offer mental health-care services at the primary care level and to integrate mental health into other programmes, including maternal health-care services.

Advancing the health rights of particularly marginalized groups of women and girls

105. Many States recognize that gender inequalities in health and illness are often exacerbated for women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination The most common groups of concern were adolescent girls; women living in rural areas; women with disabilities; women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; and women from disadvantaged ethnic groups. A growing number of States also highlighted the difficulties faced by lesbian, gay and transgender people in having their health needs recognized and addressed. Yet, same-sex conduct continues to be criminalized in some countries, penalizing individuals and jeopardizing their enjoyment of the right to health and other human rights (see A/HRC/14/20).

106. In many cases, measures aimed at advancing the rights of particularly vulnerable groups of women and girls were put in place in response to the advocacy of civil society organizations and sometimes in collaboration with such organizations. Yet, most States continued to report significant challenges in guaranteeing access to adequate health-care services without discrimination. In some countries, punitive environments can create barriers for sex workers in accessing HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.[45] While there is an increasing recognition of the rights of women and girls with disabilities, States reported challenges in implementing measures to address their needs, mainly because of resource constraints.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

107. Accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action requires a comprehensive recognition of and response to the challenges that women and girls face within and beyond the health-care system. Further action is needed on the broader determinants of women's and girls' health. Cross-sectoral interventions, including legislative frameworks, gender mainstreaming across the health sector, education and economic empowerment, as well as investments in basic infrastructure, such as roads, water and sanitation, will be central to further

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53 World Health Organization, "Gender and women's mental health". Available from www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en.

54 World Health Organization, *Women and Health: Today's Evidence, Tomorrow's Agenda* (Geneva, 2009).

55 World Health Organization, *Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020* (Geneva, 2013).

progress. The adoption and implementation of laws that protect women and girls from violence and harmful practices and enable them to make informed choices about reproductive health and contraceptive methods of their choice also remain an important priority.

108. Within the health-care system, continued efforts to enhance the availability, accessibility and affordability of adequate services for women and girls are essential. This also includes the transformation of health-care service delivery, through investments and training, in order to better respond to women's needs and the multiple challenges they face in different contexts. There is evidence, for example, that women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are most effectively and comprehensively addressed through the integrated provision of an array of health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, such as testing and treatment for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, family planning and services for victims of violence (see sect. V.D).

109. Adequate funding for such services is indispensable for further progress. Overall health-care budgets are grossly inadequate in many developing countries, which translates into insufficient and inadequate health-care infrastructure, limited availability of essential medicines and severe staff shortages. Austerity measures further threaten to shift the burden of providing health care onto households.[48] This not only complicates women's access to services as health-care seekers, but also increases the burden placed on unpaid family and community caregivers, most of whom are women. Social protection mechanisms, including free services, vouchers and cash transfers could be even better harnessed to improve women's and girls' health outcomes.

110. The collection of data disaggregated by sex and gender-sensitive indicators is essential to monitoring and evaluating the effect of health-care policies and programmes on women and girls. Proper civil and vital registration systems, or, in their absence, maternal death surveillance and response systems that include maternal death identification, reporting, review and response, can provide the essential information for the measurement of maternal mortality and inform actions to prevent future maternal deaths and strengthen national civil registration and vital statistics.

111. In order to make health-care services responsive and accountable to the needs of women and girls, especially those from disadvantaged groups, greater space must be provided for their voices to be heard in health-care policy planning, implementation and monitoring. Women's health councils, service user groups and monitoring mechanisms can raise awareness, promote accountability, disseminate information and contribute to gender-responsive health-care policy and programming.

D. Violence against women

112. The Platform for Action recognized violence against women as a violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms and as an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. The Platform for Action called on States to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, to study the causes and consequences of violence against women and to eliminate trafficking in women.

113. In recent years, United Nations intergovernmental and expert bodies have continued to strengthen the global normative framework on violence against women. Notably, the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-seventh session, in 2013, adopted agreed conclusions that highlighted emerging issues, such as the role of information, communication and technology and social media, as well as particular forms of violence, such as gender-related killings/femicide and violence in public spaces.[35] The General Assembly regularly adopts resolutions on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and addresses specific forms, such as trafficking in women and girls, female genital mutilations and violence against women migrant workers (see resolutions 68/137, 69/147, 69/149 and 69/150). Violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations was addressed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its general recommendation No. 30, adopted at its fifty-sixth session, in 2013.[56]

114. The Human Rights Council also continued to address violence against women, including its particular forms, such as rape and sexual violence and child, early and forced marriages, violence against women human rights defenders and remedies for women who have been subjected to violence (see for example, Council resolutions 23/25 and 24/23). The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences has examined several topics, such as multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence against women, gender-related killings of women and State responsibility, and the use of the standard of due diligence, in eliminating such violence.[57]

1. Global trends

115. Recent global estimates show that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.[58] While there is some variation across regions, all regions have unacceptably high rates of violence against women. Among low- and middle-income regions, Africa has the highest proportion of women reporting either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, at 45.6 per cent, followed by South-East Asia (40.2 per cent), Eastern Mediterranean (36.4 per cent), the Americas (36.1 per cent), Western Pacific (27.9 per cent) and Europe (27.2 per cent).[59] In high income countries, 32.7 per cent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Owing to the limited availability of data and comparability challenges, an analysis of global and regional trends over time is not possible.

116. The most common form of violence experienced by women is intimate partner violence, which often leads to injuries and at times, results in death. As confirmed in a global study on homicide, almost half of female homicide victims are killed

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[56] See A/69/38, part two, chap. VII.

[57] See, for example, A/HRC/14/22, A/HRC/17/26, A/HRC/20/16 and A/HRC/23/49.

[58] World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2013).

[59] Ibid. The regional classifications are taken from the study in question, which covers only 81 countries in total, i.e., 23 high-income countries and 58 low- and middle-income countries. The data are for 2010.

by their intimate partner or family members, whereas the figure for men is just over 1 in 20 homicide victims.[60] Alarmingly, the majority of women who experience violence do not seek help or support. While global data are not available, a study of 42,000 women undertaken across 28 member States of the European Union found that only one third of victims of partner violence and one quarter of victims of non-partner violence contacted either the police or support services following the most serious incident of violence. Victims reported the most serious incident of partner violence to the police in only 14 per cent of cases.[61]

117. A major obstacle for ending violence against women is the persistence of discriminatory attitudes and social norms that normalize and permit violence. Victim-blaming attitudes are widespread across all countries. Data from 37 developing countries show that 21 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she argues with him.[62] Similarly, 27 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects the children.[62] While those surveys collected data from women about their attitudes, surveys of men also reveal high levels of acceptance of violence against women. A 2010 survey conducted in 15 out of 27 States members of the European Union asked whether women's behaviour was a cause of domestic violence against women. The proportion of individuals who agreed with this statement averaged 52 per cent and ranged from 33 per cent to 86 per cent across countries.[63]

118. The most recent Global Report on Trafficking in Persons provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels and is based on trafficking cases detected mainly between 2007 and 2010. Women account for between 55 per cent and 60 per cent of all trafficking victims detected globally, and women and girls together account for some 75 per cent. Moreover, the trafficking of children remains a serious problem, as 27 per cent of all victims are children and, of every three child victims, two are girls and one is a boy.[64]

119. There is limited availability of global trend data on other forms of violence experienced by women. A study of 42,000 women in the European Union found that 55 per cent of women have experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15, and one in five women (21 per cent) had experienced such harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey.[61] The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated in 2013 that more than 125 million girls and women had undergone some form of female genital mutilation/cutting in 29 countries across Africa and the Middle East. Another 30 million girls were estimated to be at risk of being cut in the next decade.[65] Trend data show that the practice is becoming less common in a little over half of the 29 countries studied.[65] However, owing to population growth, the number of women affected by female genital mutilation/cutting is actually

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60 *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.IV.1).

61 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2014).

62 UN-Women analysis of demographic and health surveys. Data from most recent survey, between 2009 and 2014.

63 Enrique Gracia, "Intimate partner violence against women and victim-blaming attitudes among Europeans", *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol. 92, No. 5 (2014).

64 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.IV.1).

65 United Nations Children's Fund, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change* (New York, 2013).

increasing. With respect to child, early and forced marriage (see sect.V.L), UNICEF estimates that more than 700 million women alive in 2014 were married before their eighteenth birthday.[66] The harmful practice is declining, but still persists at unacceptably high levels in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

120. Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls requires a comprehensive and coordinated set of actions to prevent and respond to such violence and to tackle the underlying causes of violence against women and girls. It is vital to integrate actions to eliminate violence against women within comprehensive strategies for addressing gender inequality more broadly, particularly for addressing the structural and systemic inequalities that are a cause and consequence of such violence.

121. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Four major trends have emerged (a) strengthening legal and policy frameworks to address all forms of violence against women; (b) accelerating efforts to prevent violence against women; (c) increasing the provision and integration of multisectoral support services; and (d) improving data and evidence on violence against women.

Strengthening legal and policy frameworks to address all forms of violence against women

122. A strong legal framework is vital for the elimination of violence against women. It is also important to review and reform other relevant legislation and policies, including family law and access to land and resources, as well as immigration, so as to ensure that they support women subject to violence in leaving abusive relationships, prevent further violence and address the consequences of such violence. While the majority of States continue to address violence through existing criminal laws or laws on specific forms of violence, several States, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as a growing number in other regions, have adopted comprehensive laws to guarantee women a life free from violence that include measures to criminalize and prevent violence, protect women against violence and punish perpetrators. States have also incorporated specific provisions in their national constitutions to prevent violence and protect women in that regard.

123. States across all regions have also continued to strengthen legislative frameworks on violence against women by amending laws to criminalize additional forms of violence against women, such as trafficking, sexual harassment and domestic violence or harmful practices such as female genital mutilation; expand definitions of domestic violence and rape; define violence against women as a human rights violation; increase penalties; increase protection for victims; increase efforts to prevent violence; and provide funding for the enforcement of laws. Civil protection orders have been increasingly introduced to either restrict the behaviour of perpetrators or remove them from a joint place of residence. Most civil protection orders apply to situations of domestic violence, but there has been a growing effort to extend protection against other forms of violence, such as forced marriage and stalking.

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[66] United Nations Children's Fund, "Ending child marriage: progress and prospects" (New York, 2014).

124. States have identified barriers to the implementation and enforcement of laws on violence against women, such as the lack of political will, backlash from conservative forces, a lack of knowledge about laws, poor provision of and access to legal services, the lack of capacity of courts, delays in hearing cases and the absence of qualified staff and personnel. In response, States have introduced specific actions, including awareness-raising programmes to increase knowledge of laws among the general public, particularly women, and among enforcement agencies; issuance of specific guidelines for justice agencies to improve their responsiveness to women who have experienced violence; electronic monitoring systems for cases; and training for judges and law enforcement officials. States have also continued to introduce measures to improve women's access to justice, including by providing access to free legal services, appointed specialized personnel and units within justice agencies and established specific helplines and information websites.

125. Since 2010, countries across all regions have increasingly adopted or are in the process of developing national action plans and strategies to address violence against women, although they vary greatly in their scope and coverage. Some States have introduced comprehensive national action plans that cover multiple forms of violence against women and include measures covering prevention, access to justice, support services, data and research. Several States are now implementing their second or third national action plans, indicating that they are an integral part of a long-term strategy to address violence against women. The more comprehensive national action plans have specific elements on monitoring progress and evaluating the impact the actions plans, with specific timelines and benchmarks. They also provide for the establishment of implementation mechanisms that enable a coordinated response from key government agencies. In some cases there is engagement at the ministerial level in the implementation of national action plans, with a committee of ministers involved in the review of progress and the allocation of resources. Other national action plans outline the engagement of, and coordination and dialogue with, women's civil society organizations. Women's civil society organizations play a key role in shaping and monitoring national action plans and advising governments on laws and policies to prevent and end violence against women.

126. A number of action plans respond to specific forms of violence, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, femicide, sorcery-related violence and violence against older women, as well as harmful practices, including female genital mutilation. Recognizing the need to complement national action plans with strategies adapted to the needs of specific subnational regions and territories, an important development in recent years has been the introduction of policy frameworks at the provincial, regional or local levels. In some cases, States have linked their national action plans or strategies to eliminate violence against women with national development plans. In conflict-affected contexts, States have included specific components on ending impunity and security sector reform in their national action plans. States are also taking action to respond to the specific forms of violence experienced by women with disabilities, immigrant and migrant women, indigenous women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

127. A major challenge for the effective implementation of laws, policies and frameworks to address violence against women is the lack of sufficient resources. The economic crises since 2007/2008 and subsequent austerity measures have resulted in cutbacks in social services, with potentially negative impacts on women

survivors and victims of violence seeking support services. Despite the existence of national action plans or laws to address violence against women, several States reported having allocated inadequate resources for the implementation of those laws and policies and for the provision of quality support services for survivors.

128. In many contexts, laws remain inadequate, for example by allowing for the mitigation of sentencing in cases of rape where the perpetrator marries the victim, or by not criminalizing marital rape or domestic violence. Even where strong laws are in place, there remain challenges as regards enforcement and implementation. While an increasing number of countries have introduced national action plans, many of these are limited and respond only to a few forms of violence, such as domestic violence or trafficking, and do not include actions on coordination, monitoring and evaluation. Very few States provided information on resources dedicated to the implementation of national action plans; however one country has undertaken a costing study to identify the minimum resources required to address violence and advance gender equality.

Accelerating efforts to prevent violence against women

129. It is increasingly recognized that preventing violence before it occurs or re-occurs can have a significant positive impact on the health and on the social and economic well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies. Preventing violence requires tackling the underlying causes — the unequal power relations between women and men and the persistence of attitudes, norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls. Since 2010, there has been an increasing emphasis on preventing violence against women and girls.

130. Awareness-raising regarding the causes and consequences of violence against women should be a component of a comprehensive strategy to prevent such violence. States across all regions have increasingly implemented a wide range of public awareness campaigns to address violence against women. The campaigns employ different strategies, such as promoting a zero tolerance approach to violence against women, targeting different parts of the population, involving men in efforts to end violence against women or increasing awareness among youth of stereotypes and inequalities that perpetuate violence. Campaigns have aimed to prevent specific forms of violence, such as domestic violence, rape, workplace harassment or female genital mutilation. A number of States have started to use social media as part of awareness-raising campaigns.

131. Another important area of intervention lies within the education system, which can contribute towards changing attitudes and norms that condone violence against women, which are often formed at an early age. States have reported on actions in the school environment to challenge norms and attitudes that condone violence against women and build positive norms of respect, equality and healthy relationships. Comprehensive sexuality education, school-based programmes on healthy/unhealthy and equal/unequal relationships and the training of teachers are increasingly being used to help prevent violence against women.

132. Community mobilization can also play a role in challenging norms that perpetuate violence against women and in creating positive norms and attitudes based on gender equality and respect for women. There are increasing efforts across all regions to mobilize communities in combating violence against women, through strategies such as developing sensitization activities in communities and schools,

establishing local committees against harmful practices and conducting national and local consultations on combating discriminatory social norms and stereotypes. The engagement of traditional and cultural leaders in dialogues on ending violence against women and harmful practices has been implemented as a strategy to change attitudes and norms in some States. There are growing efforts to engage men and boys in preventing violence against women through community mobilization programmes, training and capacity-building activities. These initiatives create spaces for men to talk about violence against women and masculinity and they contribute to making violence against women an acceptable topic for public discourse and media.[67]

133. Although States are increasingly recognizing the importance of prevention, very few have introduced long-term, coordinated and cross-cutting prevention strategies, with the vast majority reporting on short-term piecemeal activities. There is very little information provided about the impact or effectiveness of interventions, indicating the need for greater focus on monitoring, knowledge management and evaluation.

Increasing the provision and integration of multisectoral support services

134. Victims and survivors of violence require timely access to quality, integrated and coordinated services that respond to injuries and other health and sexual and reproductive health concerns, protect them from further violence, provide them with support, including legal advice, counselling and access to safe accommodation, and address long-term needs, such as finding accommodation and accessing social protection and decent work. States' responses confirm consistent attention to the provision of support services for survivors of violence against women, although there is significant variation in the type, quality and coverage of services. The most common type of services include helplines, health-care services, police, shelters and safe accommodation, psychological support, free legal services, justice services and childcare support services. Women's civil society organizations play a critical role in providing services and setting standards for the quality of services for women who experience violence.

135. An important development in recent years, across all regions, is the establishment of coordinated and integrated services to support women who experience violence. This includes integrating referral mechanisms by creating networks of existing services and bringing together relevant sectors to respond to violence against women. Typically, integrated services include health care, legal aid, police, shelters and psychological support, however some States have also integrated social protection, education and employment services. Integrated services are often provided as a one-stop centre, or through comprehensive services, or in some cases, through the provision of mobile clinics in the community. Specialized courts and police services for dealing with violence against women have also emerged in a number of countries. Specialized police services are a growing trend in Latin America in particular. Some States have appointed focal points in such key services as the police and courts. Services for addressing violence against women are also increasingly integrated within sexual and reproductive health-care services, which can include HIV services.

[67] UN-Women, "Thematic evaluation: the contribution of UN-Women to prevent violence against women and expand access to services" (New York, 2013).

136. There is a growing focus on training to increase the capacity of professionals to respond effectively to violence against women and increase the quality of services. States reported on implementing training for teachers and the police, as well as justice system and health-care service professionals. In some cases, training is delivered in collaboration with non-government organizations with specialist knowledge of violence against women, but there is very little information overall on the sustainability, quality or impact of training. Some States have also introduced standard operating procedures, quality standards and issued guidance and regulations to improve the quality of services.

137. While many countries noted the limited availability of services, particularly in rural and remote areas, as a key challenge, only a few countries have taken specific steps to increase access to services in rural areas. Little attention has been focused on targeted services for marginalized groups of women, including women with disabilities, indigenous women and migrant women. Very few countries reported on the participation of survivors in shaping the quality or delivery of services, although some States have introduced specific programmes to strengthen State accountability in ending violence against women, with a focus on the accountability of service providers.

Improving data and evidence on violence against women

138. Internationally agreed measurements about the scope and prevalence of violence against women are essential, as they allow for global comparability and the monitoring of trends over time. There has been important progress in improving data on violence against women in recent years. As of 2014, around 100 countries had nationally representative data on the prevalence of violence against women, although there is great variation in how the data are collected. Many States have collected data through dedicated surveys on violence against women or through crime surveys. Surveys and research on violence against women have addressed the causes of violence against women, prevalence, attitudes and consequences. Some countries have undertaken qualitative studies to understand violence against specific groups of women, such as indigenous women. Several countries also reported on efforts to collect administrative data on violence against women, including registers of reported cases and access to services.

139. Despite progress, knowledge and evidence gaps remain a significant challenge, both in terms of data on the nature and extent of different forms of violence in private and public spaces, but also in terms of effective policies and programmes for eliminating violence against women. Knowledge must be strengthened to better understand what works, and why, as well as how multifaceted efforts sustained over time can address the complex sets of factors underpinning gender inequality and the acceptance of violence against women. Much greater efforts and long-term investments are needed to enhance monitoring, knowledge management and the evaluation of the impact of measures taken and results achieved.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

140. Violence against women and girls remains at unacceptably high levels for several reasons. First, the implementation of national legal and policy frameworks has been slow and uneven and there are many inadequacies, with insufficient

enforcement of legislation, poor implementation and the lack of adequate resources. Second, despite increasing efforts, insufficient attention has been focused on preventing the occurrence of violence against women and girls. Finally, persistent discrimination, gender inequality, discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes remain major obstacles to eliminating violence against women.

141. Ensuring the implementation of strong and comprehensive legal and policy frameworks, which address all forms of violence against women in all countries, remains an urgent priority, along with adequate resourcing for implementation. There is a need to strengthen responses by integrating the prevention and response to such violence within broader policy frameworks, such as national development plans, as well as health, education, security and justice policies.

142. In their responses to violence against women, governments have focused mainly on the provision of such immediate services as shelters and helplines, with limited focus on long-term support for enabling women to exercise agency and escape violence, particularly around income generation, education and training. Most services still remain insufficient to meet the demand and there is a need for much greater attention to the accessibility and the quality of services, including through the training of providers and better integration and coordination. States have recognized the underlying causes of violence against women. Accelerating implementation will require comprehensive and long-term strategies for preventing violence against women that address unequal power relations, change attitudes and realize women's human rights in all areas.

143. The lack of attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination often means that policies and programmes for combating violence against women are not responsive to the needs and experiences of women. Laws, policies and programmes to address violence against women should specifically address the factors that place marginalized women and girls at particular risk of violence and should create an enabling environment for those groups of women to find support in addressing violence.

144. In recent years there has been increasing attention to such newly emerging forms of violence as cyberbullying and sexual harassment and violence perpetrated by means of information and communications technologies. Other forms of violence are increasingly attracting the attention of governments. These include dating violence, violence against older women, in the workplace, against women in politics, against women in public spaces, against women human rights defenders and against women in the armed forces. The multiple and growing forms of violence against women and the various contexts in which violence occurs underscores the need for comprehensive strategies.

145. The collection and use of data on violence against women is another area requiring urgent attention and States should increase their efforts to collect and report data in accordance with the nine violence against women indicators endorsed by the Statistical Commission. Research on different forms of violence, or on violence experienced by marginalized groups of women, who are difficult to reach with national surveys, is also needed in order to increase the understanding of their experiences and of the effects of violence, as well as to improve policy responses.

E. Women and armed conflict

146. The Platform for Action called for an increase in women's participation in decision-making in conflict resolution processes and the promotion of non-violent forms of conflict resolution, and recognized women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace. It also prioritized the protection of women in situations of armed conflict, as well as assistance to refugees, internally displaced people and women in colonies and non-self-governing territories. More broadly, it situated the issue of women and armed conflict within a global context of insecurity and called for a reduction in excessive military spending.

147. Since 2010, remarkable achievements have been made at the normative level to promote women's equal participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, address sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, end impunity and ensure women's and girls' equal access to justice and services, including access to reproductive health-care services. Notably, in 2015, the Security Council will commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, which has been further strengthened and operationalized through six additional resolutions[68] calling for accelerated action across all pillars of the agenda: prevention, participation, protection and relief, recovery and peacebuilding. In April 2013, the Group of Eight adopted a declaration on preventing sexual violence, and as of June 2014 over 150 Member States had signed up to the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict (see S/2014/693), signalling a stronger determination to address gross human rights violations and protect civilians. In 2013, the Peacebuilding Commission adopted a declaration on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding (see PBC/7/OC/3), recognizing that women must be empowered both politically and economically. The adoption and entering into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (see General Assembly resolution 67/234 B), and its inclusion of a criterion on gender-based violence (see art. 7 (4) of the Treaty), marked an important step in supporting the Platform for Action's objective of controlling the availability of armaments.

148. The adoption by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of its general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations[56] was another key achievement that has provided further guidance to States parties to the Convention on the protection of women's human rights before, during and after conflict.

1. Global trends

149. Despite normative advances in the agenda concerning women, peace and security, the broader global context of insecurity, protracted crises, poverty and growing inequalities, as well as such emerging threats as the rise of violent extremism, have served to limit and even derail progress in practice. Commitments to gender equality and women's human rights are currently being tested in conflict settings characterized by mass violence, related humanitarian catastrophes and an unprecedented scale of forced displacement. By the end of 2013, 51.2 million individuals were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict and

[68] Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013).

violence,[69] the highest number in the post-Second World War era. Women and girls continue to face countless risks and challenges, both prior to and during the displacement process, as well as in the context of repatriation, local integration or resettlement. Existing patterns of gender-based discrimination are often exacerbated, in all phases of displacement, and these risks and challenges may be further aggravated by the intersection of gender with other factors such as age, group affiliation (e.g., membership of minority groups), disability or civil and socioeconomic status.

150. The illicit flow of arms and money within and across borders facilitates the outbreak of conflict and perpetuates cycles of violence. The role of militarism in holding back progress on gender equality has received little attention from governments in their implementation of the Platform. Global military expenditure in 2013 reached $1,709 billion dollars, although this represented a 1.9 per cent decline in expenditure compared with 2012.[70] Such excessive global military spending contributes to a cycle of instability, a context that creates challenges for the achievement of gender equality, especially when investment in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and development lags far behind.[71]

151. The international community has recognized that the participation of women is vital to achieving and sustaining peace, yet progress in this regard has remained slow. As of July 2014, the share of parliamentary seats occupied by women in conflict-affected countries was four points below the global average of 22 per cent and they occupied only 13 per cent of ministerial positions (see S/2014/693). Since 2010, a growing number of women form part of formal negotiating delegations in peace processes and occupy some prominent leadership positions in the United Nations. Additionally, as of October 2014, 40 per cent of ambassadors to the Security Council were women, the highest percentage yet. Still, progress remains limited, with women's share of senior positions (from P-5 to D-2) in United Nations peacekeeping missions decreasing from 21 per cent to 19 per cent between 2011 and 2013 (see S/2014/693).

152. Conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence remains a serious concern, including the continuing occurrence of rape, harassment, sexual slavery and forced marriage. All forms of violence against women increase during and immediately after conflict, as part of a continuum of violence. As of March 2014, there were 34 parties to conflict, including armed groups, militia and Government security forces, that were credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of violence (see S/2014/181). Sexual violence remains underreported because of the fear and trauma faced by survivors and witnesses, including severe stigmatization, and the limited availability of services. Additionally, in 2013, 96 allegations of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse were made across all United Nations entities that reported information (see A/68/756) and allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by soldiers deployed by the African Union surfaced in 2014.

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69 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Global Trends 2013: War's Human Cost* (Geneva, 2014).

70 Sam Perlo-Freeman and Carina Solmirano, "Trends in world military expenditure 2013", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Fact Sheet (April 2014).

71 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, "You get what you pay for" (Geneva, 2014).

153. The negative impact of conflict and crises on gender equality is also apparent when reviewing progress against common development indicators, including those relating to education and health. The latest available data show that about half of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas, with girls disproportionately affected. The maternal mortality ratio for the aggregate of conflict and post-conflict countries in 2013 (531 per 100,000 live births) was 2.5 times higher than the global ratio of 210 per 100,000 live births (see S/2014/693). As a result of discrimination in law and in practice, female-headed households face particular challenges in providing for and protecting themselves and their families. Yet alarmingly low levels of peacebuilding and recovery spending targeted women's economic empowerment and livelihoods (see S/2014/693). Investment in infrastructure, including water and sanitation, but also in electricity, roads and transportation, structures which are often decimated in times of conflict, is also a priority in the post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery period.

154. The implementation of the women, peace and security agenda remains severely underresourced. Available data from entities using gender markers within the United Nations show that allocations to peacebuilding projects with the principal objective of addressing women's specific needs, advancing gender equality or empowering women remain far from the 15 per cent target set in the Secretary-General's seven-point action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding (see A/65/354-S/2010/466). Similar patterns are reflected by the data from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) regarding sector-allocable official development assistance (ODA) allocations, which show that only 5 per cent of funds allocated to conflict and post-conflict countries in 2012 had gender equality as a principal objective (see S/2014/693).

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

155. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern since the last review. Three major trends in implementation have emerged: (a) the expansion of national and regional policies and strategies on women, peace and security; (b) growing support for women's participation in peacebuilding and security sector institutions; and (c) enhanced emphasis on the linkages between peace and security and the broader development agenda.

Expansion of national and regional policies and strategies on women, peace and security

156. As of July 2014, over 145 countries had a gender equality policy in place that includes implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and over 80 countries have shown commitment to the women, peace and security agenda through either regional or national action plans (see S/2014/693). Of the latter, 46 countries had dedicated national action plans and over 20 countries were in the process of developing such plans (see S/2014/693). Where national actions plans were being developed, countries reported that the process had included inputs from and collaboration between a broad array of stakeholders, including Government agencies and civil society organizations. A growing number of regional and subregional organizations have launched dedicated regional action plans or policies on women, peace and security and some have appointed special envoys or representatives to cover this area.

157. While there is variation in the content of women, peace and security action plans, as well as in the resources allocated to them, many countries reported that the focus of their national action plan was on a whole-of-government approach, adopting an inter-agency approach to their implementation efforts. The national action plans prioritized the achievement of greater active participation of women in peacebuilding at the international, national and local levels; preventing and addressing violations of women and girls' human rights, including protection from violence and ending impunity for gender-based crimes; and providing gender-responsive humanitarian and development assistance and recovery efforts in post-conflict contexts and in the aftermath of natural disasters. Many countries aimed to strengthen the coordination and coherence of gender mainstreaming activities through their plans. Two key challenges were the lack of a comprehensive, measurable and realistic implementation framework, including indicators for monitoring progress, and a lack of adequate and gender-responsive financing explicitly attached to the implementation of the plans.

158. Notably, several countries are developing or have developed their second- or third-generation national action plans, by updating their plans to meet new strategic and normative priorities within the women, peace and security agenda. Some countries underwent a review of their existing implementation efforts regarding Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and their new plans integrated those revisions. Other States highlighted their reporting mechanisms, including annual reports submitted to Governments on implementation efforts. The second and third-generation plans highlighted a more comprehensive approach to the topic of women, peace and security, often setting concrete targets, goals and indicators for improved implementation, as well as increased funding. Moreover, they particularly emphasized the importance of women's political participation and leadership.

Growing support for women's participation in peacebuilding and security sector institutions

159. Women's participation and their full involvement in all efforts concerning the prevention and resolution of conflicts is a key component of the Platform for Action. Women remain underrepresented in the structures of the security sector overall and particularly in decision-making and leadership positions. Women are often excluded from these processes in practice, which can negatively affect their safety and security, their livelihoods and their ability to shape institutions and laws in post-conflict contexts.

160. Governments reported on measures to improve this situation through gender mainstreaming and the integration of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in particular, into their security sector institutions. Concern for gender equality has been reflected in security policies, guidelines and standard operating procedures. New institutional mechanisms have been created, such as gender equality focal points within police, army and defence institutions, as well as gender units within relevant Ministries to assist in mainstreaming a gender perspective into their operational work. Some of these new mechanisms are also responsible for ensuring the production of statistics disaggregated by sex. Many countries reported on basic training and education on gender equality and on Council resolution 1325 (2000) within their peace and security institutions. Thematic training modules are being developed in many contexts, which focus on such issues as sexual

exploitation and abuse, codes of conduct, crisis management and gender equality in peace support operations.

161. Many States have made efforts to increase women's participation in national institutions relating to peace and security, such as the armed forces, the police and international peace support missions. Some governments, for example, are implementing policies including gender quotas in the armed forces; removing barriers to the entry of women into certain security-related career paths; and putting in place equal opportunity action plans and guidelines. The implementation of policies that support women's increased participation at all levels in the military and police forces includes policies around the recruitment, retention and deliberate promotion of women in the armed forces, as well as establishing non-discriminatory working conditions, including improved maternity and paternity benefits, equal pay for work of equal value, enhanced policies for responding to sexual harassment, and access for women to equal employment benefits.

162. Women have increasingly participated in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and other forms of conflict resolution through mediation and reconciliation efforts at the local level, although the majority of seats at peace negotiating tables are still occupied by men. In some countries, women have been involved in mediation processes, participated in negotiation structures through working groups, committees and traditional community-based conflict resolution structures and have participated in regional women's forums and task forces for peace. Several post-conflict countries highlighted the important role women can play in reconciliation, local peace initiatives and national truth and reconciliation processes.

163. Women's organizations and networks continued to make critical contributions to peace and security efforts at the national and regional levels, including by lobbying their governments and sharing knowledge through conferences and trainings. States reported that women's organizations and networks have been created, with a focus on incorporating women's human rights into a variety of peace and security practices, including policing, peacebuilding and reconciliation. For example, such organizations promote conflict prevention initiatives, such as early warning and early response programmes, engage in peace campaigns and ensure that women at the grass-roots level are fully involved in national peacebuilding and conflict prevention programmes. Women's organizations play a critical role in contributing to fostering the conditions necessary for women to exercise agency and voice and to influence decision-making processes.[72] Several countries have also instituted national commissions for women or women's congresses in order to facilitate women's access to political power and decision-making.

Linkages between peace and security and the broader development agenda

164. The women, peace and security agenda is strongly linked to post-conflict reconstruction and economic recovery, as well as to development planning overall. Economic and social policies that uphold women's rights and create inclusive societies can prevent the conditions that trigger violent conflict. Gender-responsive peacebuilding and recovery initiatives, as well as women's engagement in programme planning and delivery, increase the effectiveness of those initiatives and

[72] UN-Women, "Thematic evaluation: the contribution of UN-Women to increase women's leadership and participation in peace and security and in humanitarian response" (New York, 2013).

contribute to more durable and just peace, as well as to progress across all other priority areas of the Platform for Action. Both international interventions and national development strategies are increasingly addressing issues relating to women, peace and security, as evidenced by slightly increased funding for policies and programmes relating to women, peace and security in conflict and non-conflict countries.

165. Examples of development projects implemented by international development actors in conflict and post-conflict settings include projects to: improve women's access to legal institutions; transform gender roles and chronic food insecurity; promote education for women and the economic empowerment of women through employment generation; and improve the reproductive health of rural women through the training of midwives. Collaboration among national governments, civil society organizations, international development agencies and humanitarian aid institutions is essential in the formulation of programmes that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in conflict and post-conflict settings.

166. Programmes focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment have also provided support to internally displaced persons and refugee women and girls, including through legal clinics that provide legal aid in relation to property and housing rights; programmes that provide internally displaced people with housing; programmes that provide education, training and awareness-raising; and programmes that address the protection of girls and women from harassment and violence in internally displaced persons camps. A number of countries have enacted or amended laws concerning refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly by recognizing that refugee women and girls may be especially vulnerable to violence and exploitation during prolonged periods of displacement. Some programmes included, for example, the creation of special initiatives to promote the safety and security of female refugees and raise their awareness of legal measures as regards gender-based violence.

167. In post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding contexts, national governments have implemented programmes to: ensure women's access to justice through informal dispute mechanisms; set up rehabilitation projects and governance committees to address the needs of women affected by land mines; and promote women's economic empowerment through literacy projects and vocational programmes, among other examples. In order to address conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence issues, some countries have set up mechanisms to improve protection and to increase access to psychological and health-care services. Some programmes support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former women combatants and child soldiers, as well as public awareness and communication campaigns.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

168. Many concerns and priorities raised in the Platform for Action 20 years ago remain relevant today. Militarism and war inhibit women's empowerment and the fulfilment of the full range of women's and girls' rights. Women's full and equal participation in all matters relating to peace and security is imperative for ensuring women's protection, their empowerment and the promotion of their rights during and after war and for fostering a culture of peace.

169. While a strong normative framework is in place, significant gaps remain in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. There is an urgent need to translate commitments into improved outcomes for women and girls. This includes improving the collection and use of data disaggregated by sex for gender analysis and policymaking in conflict-affected settings, establishing monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure adequate implementation of gender-responsive policies, strengthening coordination, establishing temporary special measures to improve the gender balance in decision-making bodies, ensuring women's equal participation and representation in peace processes, promoting women's leadership roles in national security institutions, guaranteeing equal access to truth commissions, reparations and benefits from disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and recovery programmes, holding perpetrators accountable for gender-based war crimes, ensuring access to essential services, including reproductive health care, for men and women in conflict areas and displacement settings and providing greater financial support and capacity-building to women's organizations.

170. A continuing challenge is the lack of prioritization and insufficient resource allocation for gender equality and women's empowerment across the women, peace and security agenda, including the implementation of national action plans on this issue. Dedicated funding for women, peace and security projects, within international development aid, in national budgets and as part of United Nations programming, is imperative to ensure that this issue effectively translates from norms into practice. Economic and social policies that are gender-responsive and that stem the tide of rising inequalities, militarism and the construction of violent masculinities are urgently needed to prevent violent conflict and the violation of human rights, especially women's rights, that inevitably follow.

F. Women and the economy

171. The terms and conditions under which women are able to participate in, contribute to and benefit from the economic sphere are closely interconnected with their well-being and the power they are able to exercise both in their private lives and more broadly. The Platform for Action called for the promotion of women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment under appropriate working conditions, control over resources, the elimination of occupational discrimination and segregation and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

172. The right to work is a fundamental human right. The international human rights framework is complemented by labour standards, in particular International Labour Organization conventions such as Convention No. 111 on discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, Convention No. 156 on workers with family responsibilities, Convention No. 183 on maternity protection and Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers, among others. The recognition of women's and men's right to work therefore goes hand in hand with a set of rights at work, which includes the right to enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work.

173. In recent years, important normative advances have also been made in recognizing the contribution of unpaid work, including unpaid care work, to human

well-being and economic prosperity and the need for its redistribution between women and men, as well as between households and the State.[73] An important step in this direction was taken at the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which in its agreed conclusions recognized that the costs of unequal sharing of responsibilities include weaker labour market attachment for women, weaker access to social security benefits, and less time for education/training, leisure and self-care and political activities (see E/2009/27). In the agreed conclusions of its fifty-eighth session, the Commission underscored the need to value, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work by prioritizing social protection policies, including accessible and affordable social services and care services; the need for the development of infrastructure, including time- and energy-saving technologies; employment policies, including family-friendly policies; and for the promotion of the equal sharing of responsibilities and chores between women and men.[6] Adding to the momentum, under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted a resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization, on 11 October 2013, which redefines "work activities" to include all forms of work, including the unpaid domestic and care work performed by women and girls in households. That resolution, along with efforts at the international level to revise the classification of activities for time use statistics by the Statistics Division, should give further impetus to data collection in this area.

1. Global trends

174. Globally, over the past two decades, there has been a slight decline in the labour force participation rates of both women and men. Between 1992 and 2012, the rate of female labour force participation fell from 52 per cent to 51 per cent while the rate for male labour force participation declined from 80 per cent to 77 per cent. The result has been a marginal narrowing of the gender gap, from about 28 to 26 percentage points.[74] One of the main reasons for the decline in labour force participation rates has been the increased opportunities for secondary and higher education for young people, which has led to lower labour force participation among those aged 15 to 24. If the analysis is restricted to adults of prime working age (aged 25 to 54), the labour force participation rate of women has declined from 65 per cent to 64 per cent and for men, from 96 per cent to 94 per cent.[74] This means a marginal narrowing of the gender gap from 31 to 30 percentage points over a 20-year period, which still leaves a substantial gender gap in place.

175. These global trends hide divergent patterns across regions. At the regional level, female labour force participation rates vary significantly, ranging from a high of 62 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific to a low of 22 per cent in Middle East and North Africa. Between 1992 and 2012, the largest increase took place in Latin

[73] The production of non-market services in the household, such as meal preparation, cleaning clothes and care of children or older persons, broadly referred to as unpaid care work, is not included in the gross domestic product (GDP) (see Debbie Budlender, ed., *Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care Work*, Routledge/UNRISD Research in Gender and Development Series (New York, Routledge, 2010)). The collection of water and fuel should be counted as an economic activity, but it rarely is.

[74] Based on UN-Women calculations using the Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) database of the International Labour Organization. Available from www.ilo.org/kilm (accessed 2 October 2014).

America and the Caribbean, where the female labour force participation rate increased by 10 percentage points (from 44 to 54 per cent). In contrast, in East Asia and the Pacific and in South Asia, it declined by 6 percentage points and 4 percentage points, from 68 per cent to 62 per cent, and from 35 per cent to 31 per cent, respectively.[74]

176. The widest gender gaps in labour force participation rates in 1992 were in the Middle East and North Africa region and in South Asia, at 56 and 50 percentage points, respectively. In 2012, the two regions continued to display the biggest gaps (53 and 50 percentage points), even though the gender gap in the former region had slightly narrowed. In sub-Saharan Africa, where agriculture employs nearly two-thirds of women and men, the female and male labour force participation rates were high across the board and the gender gap was the lowest of all regions (13 percentage points in 2012). In developed regions, meanwhile, the combination of an increase in the female labour force participation rate from 50 per cent to 53 per cent and a decline in the male participation rate from 72 per cent to 68 per cent, between 1992 and 2012, has led to a narrowing of the gender gap from 22 per cent to 15 per cent.[74]

177. Despite being more educated, on average, young people, at present, are in a much worse position than earlier generations in terms of their access to paid work, a situation which has been exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2007/2008. In 2013, the global youth unemployment rate, at 12.6 per cent, was close to its crisis peak.[75] The situation is particularly dire in developing regions, where 90 per cent of the global youth population lives; with weak social protection, large numbers of young people are stuck in irregular and informal employment. While gender differentials in youth unemployment are small at the global level, youth unemployment rates are significantly higher for young women, compared with young men, in the Middle East and North Africa, and to a lesser extent, in Latin America and the Caribbean.[75]

178. Motherhood acts as a significant constraint on women's labour force participation rates, but not everywhere. Affordable care services, paid leave provisions and financial support to families with children make a big difference in how motherhood affects women's labour force participation. Comparative evidence across countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development suggests that the better the provision of support to working women, the higher the female labour force participation rate and the lower the incidence of family responsibilities being cited as a reason for being out of the labour market.[76]

179. In general, where women have increased their labour force participation rates, this has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in men's participation in unpaid domestic and care work.[77] In all regions, women spend far more time than men doing such work. Once paid and unpaid work are combined, women's average total work hours are greater than men's in 87 per cent of countries for which data are available, which means that women have less time for rest and leisure, compared with men.[77]

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[75] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013: A Generation at Risk* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2013).

[76] Olivier Thévenon, "Family policies in OECD countries: a comparative analysis", *Population and Development Review*, vol. 37, No. 1 (March 2011); own classification using Eurostat data (2014) and Thévenon's classification.

[77] *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XVII.11); see also Gøsta Esping-Anderson, *The Incomplete Revolution: Adapting to Women's New Roles* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009).

180. The fact that more women are now in the labour force does not mean that they are on a level playing field with men. Nor does it mean that paid work provides a secure pathway out of poverty (see sect. V.A). For large numbers of women, much of the work they do is subsistence-based, insecure and lacking in basic social protections. Female-dominated occupations, on the whole, tend to offer lower earnings, in both formal labour markets and in the informal economy.

181. Gender-based occupational segregation is a key factor contributing to women's labour market disadvantages.[78] Occupational segregation is prevalent in all regions and its general patterns are broadly similar across countries, irrespective of the level of development and the social and cultural context.[79] In Europe, there has been little change in horizontal segregation by gender since the mid-1990s.[80] At the global level, the latest available data show that women are overrepresented in clerical support positions and only moderately represented in managerial occupations.[74]

182. A variety of factors are known to influence gender-based occupational segregation, including social norms and gender stereotypes regarding what is considered appropriate work for women and men. Gender differences in fields of study are another contributing factor, with women generally more likely to be in humanistic fields and men are more likely to specialize in technical and scientific subjects (see sect. V.B). Women are also under pressure to "choose" occupations that offer more flexibility, in terms of working hours, in order to facilitate the reconciliation of work with family responsibilities, even if those occupations are generally less well paid.

183. Looking more specifically at the quality and conditions of employment, gender inequality continues to be an important source of stratification, along with other inequalities such as geography, ethnicity and race or caste, with which it intersects. At the global level, women are clustered into the more vulnerable and informal types of work, as own-account and contributing family workers (someone who works in a market-oriented enterprise owned by someone else in the household), while men are more likely to have jobs as wage and salaried employees and as employers. Between 1991 and 2012, the rate of "paid employment", as defined by ILO (i.e., the employment of those who are wage and salaried employees or employers), increased significantly around the world for both women and men. However, at the same time a high proportion of women and men went into "vulnerable work" (i.e., in own-account work and as contributing family workers).[74] The latter group constitutes the overwhelming majority of the world's 375 million workers who live in extreme poverty. In 2012, the share of women among contributing family workers was 65 per cent, up from 60 per cent in 1995. However, in 1995, 33 per cent of women workers worldwide were contributing family workers, compared with 24 per cent in 2012. For men, the corresponding values are 14 per cent in 1995 and 8 per cent in 2012. Those jobs generally provide limited income and job security, poor working conditions and little or no social protection. Even the category of "paid employees", which is considered to offer a better quality of work, includes informal workers, that is workers without a proper contract,

[78] Helina Melkas and Richard Anker, "Gender Equality and Occupational Segregation in Nordic Labour Markets" (ILO, Geneva, 1998).

[79] Richard Anker, "Theories of occupational segregation by sex: an overview", *International Labour Review*, vol. 136, No. 3 (1997).

[80] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2012).

working under unsafe conditions and with little or no social security benefits.[81] A significant and growing group of informal wage workers are domestic workers, 83 per cent of whom are women and are subject to multiple discriminations, on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, migration status and geography.[82]

184. Gender gaps in wages and earnings are a feature of labour markets worldwide. Yet timely, reliable and comparable data are hard to come by, especially for developing countries, given the prevalence of self-employment, which complicates monitoring. At the global level, the most recently available data indicate that in a majority of countries, women's wages are between 70 per cent and 90 per cent of men's wages.[83] Trend data that are available for only a limited number of countries suggest that wage gaps have narrowed only slightly over the past two decades. At the current pace of progress, it would take more than 75 years to reach equal remuneration for work of equal value.[2]

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

185. The World Economic Forum estimates that at the current rate of progress it will take another 81 years to close the gender gap in economic participation.[84] Redressing gender inequalities within the economic sphere, which intersect with other inequalities, is a necessary condition for the realization of women's rights to an adequate standard of living and their greater autonomy and power within both private and public arenas. Addressing women's exclusion in the economy also has multiplier effects. For example, increasing women's education and economic participation can contribute to the better health and well-being of future generations.[85]

186. A comprehensive approach is needed to tackle discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes and power inequalities that shape the segregation of work, both paid and unpaid, by gender and other intersecting inequalities, and its unequal status and valuation, as well as other constraints that hamper women's equal access to a wide range of resources. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Four major trends have emerged: (a) increasing gender equality in employment through law and practice; (b) supporting women farmers and other women living in rural areas; (c) addressing the needs of self-employed women and women entrepreneurs; and (d) enhancing women's voice in economic governance.

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[81] International Labour Organization, *Measuring Informality: A Statistical Manual on the Informal Sector and Informal Employment* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2013).

[82] International Labour Organization, "Promoting decent work for domestic workers: ILO in action" (Geneva, 2014).

[83] International Labour Organization, *Global Wage Report 2008/09: Minimum Wages and Collective Bargaining — Towards Policy Coherence* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2008).

[84] World Economic Forum, "2095: the year of gender equality in the workplace, maybe", press release, Geneva, 28 October 2014. Available from http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/press-releases/.

[85] Naila Kabeer and Luisa Natali, *Gender Equality and Economic Growth: Is There a Win-Win?*, IDS Working Paper, No. 417 (Brighton, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Institute of Development Studies, February 2013).

Increasing gender equality in employment through law and practice

187. Continuing the trend in implementation reported in 2010, Member States across regions have taken steps to improve women's access to the labour market by removing discriminatory legal provisions and putting in place positive measures to help women overcome the structural barriers that hamper their access to the labour market. States are putting in place measures to improve the terms and conditions of women's work, especially for groups that are marginalized, such as ethnic and racial minorities, migrant women, women with disabilities and pregnant women. Some of the constraints States are recognizing and addressing relate to the unequal division of unpaid care work within the home.

188. A significant number of States reported on continued legal reforms to remove discriminatory provisions from national labour laws and to update and revise labour legislation with a view to enhancing equal opportunities for women and men. These range from the removal of legal barriers to women's participation in certain occupations and industries (deemed "hazardous" or "dangerous") and doing night shifts, to changes in maternity leave legislation. In some countries, measures have been put in place to prevent discrimination by employers against pregnant women, to extend the duration of maternity leave (in line with International Labour Organization recommendations) and to improve maternity leave benefits. Several States report that they have enacted paternity leave and parental leave measures in order to facilitate greater sharing of care responsibilities between mothers and fathers.

189. Going beyond legal reforms, several States have enacted programmes that help women re-enter or gain better access to the workplace, through technical and vocational training and other supports. At the same time, many States report on policies to ensure better work/life balance, through measures such as family-conscious working hours and breaks for breastfeeding in the workplace. Several States reported on the provision of childcare facilities, seeing this as an important enabler of women's labour market access. Limited information was provided on the type of care (child, disability or elder) services provided and on their accessibility to low-income households and other marginalized groups.

190. The gender pay gap and the occupational segregation by gender, to which it is closely linked, continue to be recognized as a source of discrimination against women by many States, which is being addressed by a large number of countries, both developing and developed, through measures such as vocational training and efforts to encourage women and men to work in sectors where they are currently underrepresented. Several States drew attention to the ways in which women are clustered into the lowest paid jobs, often based on gender stereotypes that underscore men's breadwinning roles. Many States have put in place minimum wage legislation to set a standard for the wages of workers at the bottom of the job hierarchy, among whom women predominate. As a related measure, 16 States have ratified ILO Convention No. 189.[86] Strategies have also been put in place in several countries to address the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace.

[86] International Labour Organization, Information System on International Labour Standards, NORMLEX database. Available from www.ilo.org/normlex (accessed 14 November 2014).

Supporting women farmers and women living in rural areas

191. In some developing regions, as smallholder agriculture has come under stress as a result of environmental degradation and inadequate public support for agriculture, it is often women who are left to work on increasingly unproductive lands to which they may not even have a secure title, while men diversify out of agriculture into non-farm occupations.[87] The combination of growing land shortages, soil degradation and volatility in world food prices since 2007/2008 have increased food insecurity. The price increases have disproportionately hit poor households in foodgrain importing countries and have increased the burden that is placed on women as household food managers.[88] The food crisis has also galvanized greater policy attention to the agricultural sector, including to women's work in that sector.

192. One significant area of Member State activity has been support for smallholder agriculture in general and for women farmers in particular, with a view to empowering them and enhancing their food and nutrition security. Many countries have mainstreamed a gender perspective within national agricultural or development plans and strategies. There has been a consistent focus on providing support and assistance to rural women who experience compounding discrimination through a range of measures, including land legislation that recognizes women's equal rights to land and land-based resources during marriage, upon dissolution of marriage and after spousal death, and by issuing landholding certificates to women, often as joint titles with their spouses; and through the reform of family laws to provide for equal co-ownership of matrimonial property, equal rights to property (land and housing) upon divorce and protection of the rights of widows.

193. Beyond important legal reforms, several States reported improving women's access to agricultural extension services, machinery, technology and seeds; reducing taxes on fertilizers and other inputs, which were hypothesized to have particular benefits for poor women farmers; providing credit and microcredit programmes; providing training programmes for women engaged in farming, aquaculture and the rearing of livestock; putting in place projects to invest in water management and irrigation; and efforts to support rural women's entrepreneurship. There were also efforts to support rural women's cooperatives and alliances and to assist them in marketing their products on preferential terms.

Addressing the needs of self-employed women and women entrepreneurs

194. For the significant number of workers, especially women workers, who are self-employed, contributing family workers or home-based workers producing on subcontract, rights at work cannot be claimed and enforced through an employer, thereby demanding a different set of solutions. Support for women who are self-employed featured strongly in the responses, as did support for women

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[87] Carmine Diane Deere, *The Feminization of Agriculture? Economic Restructuring in Rural Latin America*, Occasional Paper, No. 1 (Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, May 2005); see also Bina Agarwal, "Food sovereignty, food security and democratic choice: critical contradictions, difficult conciliations", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 41, No. 6 (2014).

[88] Agnes R. Quisumbing and others, "Helping women respond to the global food price crisis", IFPRI Policy Brief, No. 7 (Washington, D.C., International Food Policy Research Institute, 2008); see also UN-Women, *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality* (New York, 2014).

entrepreneurs. States reported on improving the legislative environment for women business owners or entrepreneurs, and even more priority was placed on the needs of women who are entrepreneurs or self-employed. The measures undertaken include facilitating financial support through access to credit, grants and loans; microcredit programmes; skills training and knowledge for business development; and extending support to entrepreneur business associations. The number of women workers being reached through these interventions was not always made clear, nor the location (urban/rural) or sectors where they worked. Despite the strong focus on women's entrepreneurship in responses, there was limited attention to women's employment in the private sector.

Enhancing women's voice in economic governance

195. For women's rights and gender equality to be reflected in economic policies, including macroeconomic policies, it is essential that women are able to participate in economic policy decision-making at multiple levels. Several States drew attention to women's low levels of participation in such decision-making and the need for stronger association and collective action by women at multiple levels, including through trade unions. Several States highlighted their efforts to support women's business and professional associations, research and advocacy groups working on gender equality in the economy and non-governmental organizations and community-based groups supporting gender equality in the economy at the grassroots level.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

196. The overall picture with respect to gender equality in the economy over the past two decades is one of limited progress, if not stagnation. Gender gaps in labour force participation rates remain substantial and have only marginally declined, if at all. While more women in their prime working age are now in the workforce, responsibility for unpaid care work continues to constrain women's access to decent work, while the division of unpaid domestic and care work between women and men remains highly unequal. There also needs to be a more equal sharing of responsibilities for unpaid domestic and care work between households and other stakeholders through social protection measures, including accessible care services of good quality and improved infrastructure. Gender-based occupational segregation and gender pay gaps have narrowed only slightly over the past 20 years. A major task for States in moving forward is to address the low quality of work that is available to both women and men, but especially women, who remain confined to the least remunerative and least protected segments of the informal economy.

197. States are, however, taking important proactive measures to regulate labour markets and put in place laws and policies to enhance women's economic and social rights. Such measures as minimum wage legislation, paid maternity and parental leaves and the extension of social protection to informal workers, such as domestic workers, are useful interventions that many States have adopted, as is the provision of early childhood education and care services, as well as credit and infrastructure, for self-employed women. Such efforts need to be expanded.

198. The way in which macroeconomic policies are designed and implemented has a direct impact on the likelihood of gender equality being achieved. Despite its importance in a range of economic and social outcomes, macroeconomic

management typically focuses on a narrow set of goals, such as attempting to raise gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates or to lower inflation to extremely low levels. Questions of inequality and distribution are absent or poorly addressed.[89] Economic growth is often assumed to automatically take care of persistent problems, such as gender inequality, yet evidence clearly shows that faster growth in itself will not achieve this.[90] Only a handful of States drew attention to the critical role of macroeconomic policies and economic reform agendas, including monetary policies, trade policies and investment strategies, in enhancing women's economic rights; the majority of States did not report on this area. Macroeconomic policies need to make gender equality an explicit concern. This would mean a shift to macroeconomic policies that enable the creation of more and better jobs. It would also mean macroeconomic policies that encourage increased mobilization of resources to finance investments in infrastructure, social services and social protection measures.

199. An increasing number of countries, especially developing countries, are undertaking surveys on time use, and these efforts should be strengthened.[91] Having comparable time use data is necessary to track how time spent on unpaid work by women and men across income groups, location and other axes of inequality changes in response to specific policies (e.g., improved infrastructure or accessible health-care services) and broader developments (e.g., an economic or ecological crisis).

G. Women in power and decision-making

200. The Platform for Action affirmed the importance of women's equal participation in decision-making as a means of achieving "transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life". The Platform called on governments to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making and to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

201. Further normative commitments have been made in relation to women in power and decision-making in recent years, in particular on women's political participation. In its resolution 66/130, the General Assembly called upon Member States to enhance the political participation of women and accelerate the achievement of equality between men and women. It urged all States to take action to ensure women's equal participation, including in times of political transition, by reviewing electoral systems and their impact on the participation of women, encouraging political parties to remove barriers that discriminate against the participation of women, developing training to support women's participation in the electoral process and investigating allegations of violence against women elected officials and candidates.

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[89] Jeffrey D. Sachs, "Rethinking macroeconomics", *Capitalism and Society*, vol. 4, No. 3 (2009).

[90] Esther Duflo, "Women empowerment and economic development", *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 50, No. 4 (2012); see also Kabeer and Natali, *Gender Equality and Economic Growth*.

[91] While in 1995, 56 countries (20 in developed regions) had carried out at least one time use survey, by 2005 the number had increased to 87 (23 in developed regions). In 2014, 94 countries (23 in developed regions) had carried out at least one time use survey. Based on UN-Women calculations using data from the Centre for Time Use Research University of Oxford.

202. In the agreed conclusions adopted at its fifty-eighth session, the Commission on the Status of Women called on governments and other actors to take measures to ensure women's full, equal and effective participation in all fields and in leadership at all levels of decision-making in the public and private sectors through policies and actions such as temporary special measures and by setting and working to achieve concrete goals, targets and benchmarks.[6]

1. Global trends

203. Women's representation in national parliaments has been steadily increasing over the past 20 years. Globally, in 2014, women occupied 23 per cent of the seats in single or lower houses of parliament, up from 12 per cent in 1995.[92] While acknowledging this important progress, it is nevertheless striking that 8 out of every 10 parliamentarians in the world are men. In 2014, Latin America and the Caribbean had the highest proportion of women in parliament, at 26.4 per cent (compared with 12.5 per cent in 1995), while Oceania had the lowest, at only 3 per cent. The most substantial progress between 1995 and 2014 was made in sub-Saharan Africa, where women's representation increased from 9.7 per cent to 24 per cent. Over the same time period, women's representation in parliaments in the Middle East and North Africa increased from 3.6 per cent to 16.8 per cent. South Asia saw the least progress, from 6.5 per cent in 1995 to 10.6 per cent in 2014.[92]

204. Women are significantly underrepresented at the highest levels of political participation, as speakers of parliament, heads of government and heads of State and as government ministers. Women holding the most senior parliamentary position continue to be quite rare: in 2014, 40 women (14.8 per cent) were speakers of parliament, an increase from 24 women (10.5 per cent) in 1995. Fewer still are in the most senior position of government: in 2014, 18 countries (9.3 per cent) had women heads of State or government, up from 12 countries (6.4 per cent) in 1995. In 2014, women held 17 per cent of ministerial positions, an increase from 15 per cent in 2000. In general, women ministers tend to be in charge of social sectors and are less likely to hold portfolios on the economy or foreign affairs, which likely reflects such challenges as the lack of political will to promote women, women's lack of access to power and pervasive gender stereotypes. Of the 1,096 ministerial posts held by women in 2014, 187 of those portfolios were related to social affairs and services for the family, children, youth, the elderly and disabled persons, compared to 45 in foreign affairs and 24 in budget/finance.[92]

205. The lack of women in senior decision-making roles spans both the public and private sectors. The proportion of women working as legislators, senior officials or managers is significantly lower than for men.[93] Out of the 94 countries for which data is available, in only two countries does the proportion of women exceed that of men. The disparities are largest in the Middle East and North Africa, where the gender gap is over 80 percentage points, in all countries. Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the developed countries and Latin America and the Caribbean have smaller gender gaps in this respect, with between a quarter and a half of such positions being held by women.

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[92] UN-Women calculations based on data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

[93] This includes three International Labour Organization occupational categories: legislators and senior officials, corporate managers and general managers.

206. Data have not been systematically collected on a range of other indicators, including women's participation in local government, in public administration, in the judiciary, as leaders of political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations, as community leaders or in leadership positions in the private sector. However, some limited snapshots are available, all of which indicate that women are rarely well represented. A study on women's representation in local government in the Asia-Pacific region in 2010 found very wide variations between countries: women made up between 1.6 per cent and 37 per cent of representatives on rural councils and between 0 per cent and 48.2 per cent of representatives on urban councils.[94] A 2014 study on gender and public administration, based on 13 country case studies, found that women held less than 30 per cent of decision-making positions in public administration. In seven of those countries, women held less than 15 per cent of decision-making positions. In justice systems in 2011, women accounted for 27 per cent of judges, 26 per cent of prosecutors and 9 per cent of police officers.[95]

207. Women over 18 years of age are less likely than men in the same age group to be members of political parties: on the basis of data from 51 countries, 11 per cent of women are members of political parties, compared to 15 per cent of men.[96] Even where women are active as members of political parties, they very rarely progress to leadership positions.

208. Women make up a growing proportion of trade union members in some contexts, but are underrepresented in leadership positions. A recent survey of trade unions in the European Union indicated that women made up 44.2 per cent of members but only 10 per cent of presidents and about 25 per cent of vice-presidents and general secretaries.[97]

209. Inequality in the public sphere often starts with unequal power relations within the private sphere. Household surveys show that, globally, 37 per cent of married or co-habiting women have no say in household decisions on large purchases. Only 15 per cent are able to make such decisions on their own, with 44 per cent making those decisions jointly with their partners.[10] There are many factors that affect women's decision-making in the household, including age at marriage and age gaps between partners, women's access to income and resources and engagement with community-based organizations.

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

210. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Three major trends have emerged: (a) implementing temporary special measures to increase women's participation; (b) addressing gender bias in political institutions and supporting women's political participation; and (c) supporting women's participation and leadership more broadly.

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94 United Nations Development Programme, *Women's Representation in Local Government in Asia-Pacific: Status Report 2010* (New York, 2010).

95 UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012: In Pursuit of Justice* (New York, 2011).

96 UN-Women calculations based on the World Values Survey.

97 Arnaud Bouaffre and Cinzia Sechi, "ETUC 8th March survey, 7th edition" (Brussels, European Trade Union Institute, May 2014).

Implementing temporary special measures to increase women's participation

211. Where women's political representation and participation in parliaments has increased significantly over the past 20 years, it has frequently been because temporary special measures, notably quotas, have been implemented and properly adapted to the specific electoral and political system (see A/HRC/23/50). As of 2013, 64 countries across all regions have adopted legislation on electoral quotas. On average, countries with quotas elected 25 per cent female members of parliament, compared with 19 per cent in countries without quotas (see A/68/184). Electoral quotas, such as reserved seats and legislated candidate quotas, have particularly boosted women's representation in Latin America, Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States. In each of those regions, the magnitude of change is around 10 percentage points since 1995. Much slower progress has been evident in Asia and the Pacific, where the use of quotas has been less prevalent. In some countries, post-conflict reform of constitutional and legal frameworks, including the introduction of quotas, has boosted women's representation.

212. States have introduced different types of quotas to increase women's political participation. Some are mandatory (enacted in legislation and accompanied by an enforcement mechanism) and aimed at reaching a certain numerical target, either in terms of nominations (known as candidate quotas) or in terms of results (such as reserved seats). Some States have initiated constitutional and legal reforms, implementing explicit provisions to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in political institutions and decision-making bodies. In addition to legislated or mandatory quotas, in many States political parties voluntarily implement quotas in preparing their candidate lists and in their internal structures.

213. Various factors have contributed to the successful implementation of quotas, including clear rules for enforcement, political will on the part of leaders to implement them, sustained support from political parties and pressure from and monitoring by women's organizations. Experience across regions demonstrates that it is more difficult to sustain progress without such factors. Electoral quotas are best implemented when they suit the electoral system to which they are applied. The most substantial increases in women's representation have usually occurred when electoral quotas are applied to a system involving proportional representation (see A/68/184). Despite the positive trend in implementing quotas, challenges remain, notably the lack, in many countries, of accountability mechanisms and sanctions for non-compliance.

214. The Platform for Action called for gender balance in decision-making bodies. While many countries are working towards a 50-50 composition for decision-making bodies, some countries are reluctant to set this kind of target, or set their bar much lower, aiming at between 10 per cent and 30 per cent for women's representation. The prevalence of low target-setting was evident in many responses, indicating that achieving a gender balance in decision-making bodies remains a significant challenge.

Addressing gender bias in political institutions and supporting women's political participation

215. The experience of women, once elected, can also be seen as a contributing factor to women's low levels of political participation. Women have historically been viewed as unsuitable for political office and their voices judged to be less

authoritative and legitimate in public forums, as a result of discrimination and stereotyping. Women from minority groups who seek political office sometimes face discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity or race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and/or age, in addition to their gender. Some countries reported that such attitudes are changing, and several States have made efforts to bring about this change, through such measures as government-run campaigns to promote women's participation in decision-making and programmes led by civil society organizations which aim to increase access and promote equal opportunities for men and women in political institutions.

216. Countries have recognized the gender bias inherent in political institutions that adds to women's underrepresentation in political decision-making. Incumbency, old boys' networks, long working hours and the lack of family-friendly provisions, such as childcare, often dissuade women from entering politics or cause them to stand down. Several countries identified a lack of education and professional training as factors restricting leadership opportunities for women. This in turn means women have less political experience than men, which further dampens their electoral prospects.

217. A number of countries highlighted the local level as an important arena for women's decision-making. Running for election in local government can provide women with an entry point to political careers, since there are usually more seats to contest and election campaigns are relatively less expensive at this level. Women's greater use of and engagement with spaces and services in the local community, such as water, electricity, waste disposal, health clinics and other social services, can constitute important experience and leverage for local level office. For women who have multiple caring responsibilities, local government can also be easier to access, requiring less travel time and more flexible working hours, for example. However, resistance to women's political presence can be particularly strong at this level, because informal patriarchal networks and powerful local elites can often be hostile to or exclusionary of women, both in everyday life as well as through their influence on institutions of local governance.[98]

218. In order to address the barriers faced by women, many countries have continued to implement capacity-building initiatives to support women's political participation at the local and national levels, including through providing peer support and training for new office holders, promoting networking for women politicians and candidates and providing training for political parties to mainstream a gender perspective more effectively into their activities. Training and capacity development opportunities, which are often government-led and/or supported by civil society organizations, have enhanced women's leadership skills in such areas as campaign management and public speaking and increased their knowledge as regards serving in political institutions and participating in electoral processes. Leadership programmes aimed at strengthening women's participation in decision-making have also been introduced. Increasing access to training and leadership training programmes can, in turn, provide women with the opportunities to advance in their political careers.

219. Dedicated gender equality structures, such as cross-party women's caucuses, which are a feature in the legislatures of several States, have been effective in

[98] *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.III.Y.1).

enabling women politicians to support each other and allowing parliamentarians to work together on issues of common concern, to develop strategies for change and create better links with civil society organizations. Some States have introduced cross-party mentoring programmes to equip women entering the political realm with the skills necessary to perform their roles. Very few States reported on efforts to establish relationships between women's organizations and women representatives, for example through community outreach mechanisms.

220. In most countries, seeking political office is costly. With fewer business and political connections, women often have less access to the financial and social capital needed to win elections and be politically active. Reforms to political financing have been adopted in 117 States, where political parties are provided with public funding for campaign expenditures, training and party activities. Of this total, in 27 States, public financing is dependent on fulfilling gender equality requirements (see A/68/184). Some States report that they have taken a step further and allocated additional funding to women candidates, while others have stipulated that a proportion of the funding must go to activities that encourage women's representation.

221. Another barrier to women's political participation is the threat of violence and intimidation. Some countries are taking important steps to address the multiple forms of violence that women face both during the electoral period and once they are elected to parliament. Initiatives in countries to prevent violence against women in elections include awareness-raising campaigns before elections, creating women's situation rooms and bringing together women and youth groups from civil society, the media and the private and public sectors to work together to ensure peaceful electoral processes through advocacy, mediation, coordination, analysis, observation and documentation. Only a few States have enacted laws to combat harassment and political violence against women, indicating that greater efforts are needed on this front at different levels, both national and subnational.

222. Several countries have also introduced annual national reports and monitoring to effectively measure progress made in women's participation in decision-making at all levels. A few States have strengthened data collection to effectively analyse trends in women's political representation, in order to formulate appropriate measures for addressing gender gaps. The collection and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex is a pressing challenge in measuring women's political representation.

Supporting women's participation and leadership more broadly

223. In recent years, demand has grown for women to be better represented at the senior levels of private, for-profit enterprises. Vertical occupational segregation means that women tend to be clustered at the bottom and middle rungs of company hierarchies. Quotas have been used in a select number of countries to address deficits in women's representation at senior levels of private companies. In addition, the use of quotas to address women's underrepresentation on corporate boards has gained ground, especially in developed countries, and where they have been implemented, they have quickly shown results. Countries have used quotas to increase the percentage of women on supervisory boards, executive boards and at high levels of management for companies, as well as introducing new diversity rules whereby companies are required to report on the composition of their staff and

boards. Beyond the private sector, similar initiatives exist to encourage women to work in the civil service, including the diplomatic service, in the judiciary, public services, local government and in management positions.

224. Despite the positive trend as regards supporting women's participation and leadership more broadly, there are a number of gaps. For example, there has been very little attention to women's participation and influence in trade unions, indicating that more efforts are needed in this area. Ensuring women's participation and voice in trade unions is important for prioritizing issues concerning gender equality, such as maternity/parental leave, equal pay and sexual harassment in the workplace, in order to ensure that such issues, among others, are well represented in collective bargaining agreements and other negotiations with employers. Similarly, very few States reported on women's participation in women's organizations. Women's organizations are important for women's power and decision-making for a number of reasons: such organizations can help foster women's agency, through training and education, by providing services and by creating a space for women's participation and leadership. Women's organizations have played a pivotal role in articulating key issues for women's rights and gender equality and in mobilizing constituencies to demand change.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

225. A comprehensive approach is needed to increase women's participation in power and decision-making. Efforts are needed to increase women's agency and voice, starting from the household level, to community and local levels and to national, regional and global levels. In the context of entrenched institutional barriers, temporary special measures provide a proven strategy for increasing women's representation in national and local politics, as well as on corporate boards. However, weak institutional capacity to enforce quotas, as well as a lack of political consensus and discriminatory attitudes regarding women's role in decision-making, are some challenges that continue to impede the use of temporary special measures. Political will on the part of leaders in public and private institutions, including political parties, is needed to ensure the effective implementation of such measures and bring about further and faster progress. Other measures, such as public financing of political parties, including incentives to advance gender equality and increase women's representation, can also make a difference.

226. Greater efforts are needed to support women's political participation through capacity-building, training and dedicated gender equality structures. Violence against women in politics must be addressed as an urgent priority, through the implementation and enforcement of appropriate legislation. Of great importance is that mechanisms be promoted to facilitate relationships between women's organizations and women representatives in order to advance gender equality policies.

227. At every level, women's civil society organizations have a critical part to play, whether as community-based organizations that provide support and training for women to raise their voices in the household and put themselves forward as community leaders; as organizers of women workers to highlight the particular challenges concerning workplace equality; as gender equality advocates to lobby politicians and hold them to account on their policies and promises; or as supporters of women's electoral campaigns.

228. In order to galvanize progress on women's representation beyond national parliaments, more data, of better quality, are needed. There are significant gaps in the collection and analysis of data with respect to women's participation in local governments, their leadership in trade unions and collective movements, their representation in the judiciary, women's decision-making in the private sphere, women's participation in corporate boards and private sector leadership positions and the prevalence of political violence against women, among other issues. Additional efforts are needed to support expanded data collection.

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

229. The Platform for Action articulated three components to advance the critical area of concern relating to institutional mechanisms: the creation or strengthening of national machineries and other governmental bodies; the integration of gender perspectives into legislation, public policies, programmes and projects; and the generation and dissemination of data and information disaggregated by sex for planning and evaluation.

230. A major global development since 2010 was the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolution 64/289, in which it established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The creation of UN-Women has contributed to system-wide coherence by merging and building on the work of four previous United Nations bodies dealing with gender equality issues: the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. The resolution provides that the Platform for Action is among the normative instruments that constitute the framework for the work of UN-Women.

231. In recent years, normative advances have highlighted the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies and programmes and improving the collection and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex. The Commission on the Status of Women, with regard to priority themes, has regularly highlighted in its agreed conclusions the strategic and coordinating role of national machineries for the advancement of women and the need for strengthening the evidence base for gender equality. The Economic and Social Council provides detailed guidance to the United Nations system, on an annual basis, on the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all policies and programmes (see Council resolutions 2010/7, 2011/6, 2012/24, 2013/16 and 2014/2).

232. Significant normative advances have also taken place in the area of gender statistics. Of greatest importance is the core set of indicators on violence against women, in order to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women, agreed upon by the Statistical Commission.. The Commission, in February 2013, also agreed on a minimum set of 52 quantitative and 11 norms indicators as a guide for the national production and international compilation of gender statistics (see E/CN.3/2014/18).

1. Global trends

233. Several sources, including the national responses submitted for the present review and previous reviews on the implementation of the Platform for Action and the results of the global survey carried out in 2012 on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, indicate that most countries report on the existence of institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality (see A/69/62). UN-Women maintains a directory of national mechanisms for gender equality, which indicates that 193 countries have a dedicated gender equality mechanism or focal point in place.

234. Beyond the widespread existence of institutions, several regional studies look at mandates and capacity. A 2014 study in the European Union found that, as of 2012, all 28 member States had established governmental gender equality bodies, but no substantial progress has been observed in relation to their mandate, the allocation of human resources and their capacity to promote gender equality.[99] The study found that, since 2005, the human resources allocated to government gender equality bodies had decreased in 14 member States.[99] Another study on 13 countries with available data found that government spending on national machineries was less than 0.4 per cent of GDP. It also found that spending levels had either remained unchanged or had declined since the financial crisis, as a result of austerity measures implemented by governments worldwide.[100] Similarly, a study of 53 African countries found that financial constraints topped the list of challenges confronting these mechanisms.[101] Studies of national mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean, South-East and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and in Asia and the Pacific and Western Asia also revealed that the lack of adequate financial resources and, in some contexts, an increased dependency on donor funding to sustain activities, low levels of technical capacity, decision-making power and visibility within the government and the lack of political will to prioritize gender mainstreaming in all government policies and programmes are key challenges experienced across all regions.[102]

235. On gender statistics, a review of 126 countries conducted in 2012 shed some light on global trends in building capacity for collecting and using gender statistics (see E/CN.3/2013/10). The review found that focal points or desks for gender statistics in national statistical offices existed in over two thirds of countries.

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99 European Institute for Gender Equality, "Gender equality and institutional mechanisms: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU" (Luxembourg, 2014).

100 Development Finance International and Oxfam International, *Putting Progress at Risk — MDG Spending in Developing Countries*, Government Spending Watch report (Oxford, Oxfam, 2013).

101 Economic Commission for Africa, *Recent Trends in National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in Africa* (Addis Ababa, 2011).

102 Economic Commission for Europe, *National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in South-East and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia: Regional Study* (Geneva, 2010); *National Mechanism for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Region* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.G.18); Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Regional Study — Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 2010); Islah Jad, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in the ESCWA Region* (Beirut, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2010); and Economic Commission for Africa, *Recent Trends in National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in Africa* (Addis Ababa, 2011).

However, a dedicated office for gender statistics within the national statistical office existed in only 31 per cent of countries, indicating that insufficient priority is given to this area. Furthermore, only 12.7 per cent of countries had a dedicated gender statistics budget, while 48 per cent depended on ad hoc funds and budgets (see E/CN.3/2013/10). While the production of gender statistics has increased in recent years, the focus is predominantly on areas such as mortality, education and labour force participation and less on such areas such violence against women and girls or the measurement of unpaid care work through time use surveys.

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

236. Institutional mechanisms remain critical drivers for the promotion of gender equality. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Three major trends have emerged: (a) strengthening of national machineries for gender equality; (b) improving policies for gender mainstreaming and advancing gender equality; and (c) increasing efforts to collect, disseminate and use gender statistics.

Strengthening of national machineries for gender equality

237. The mandates of national machineries vary, but as the core component of the institutional framework to advance gender equality, they facilitate and oversee the formulation, implementation and monitoring of government policies and programmes on equality between women and men; promote and establish collaborative relationships with relevant branches of government, the private sector, the media and non-governmental organizations, especially women's organizations; and undertake activities to catalyse legal reform on a wide range of issues. National machineries are often responsible for reporting to parliaments on compliance with gender equality laws and policies, as well as for reporting on State compliance with a given treaty, as required under the provisions of international human rights treaties, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Adherence to such requirements has enhanced the accountability of States for the promotion of gender equality.

238. To be effective, national machineries require leadership at the level of a cabinet minister; institutionalized processes to facilitate planning, implementation and monitoring, involving non-governmental organizations and other grass-roots organizations; sufficient budgetary resources and staff capacity; and the opportunity to influence policy in all government departments. Many States reported on the continued existence of ministries, commissions and departments within the national government to oversee gender equality policies and initiatives. There is significant diversity in the structure of such institutional mechanisms, which can be stand-alone ministries, or part of a ministry; a department or division under a ministry; a unit in the office of the head of government; or an autonomous body.[103]

239. Other gender equality mechanisms reported by States included focal points, or working groups in sectoral ministries; interdepartmental, ministerial or multisectoral bodies; decentralized mechanisms in state, municipal and local governments; accountability institutions; and advisory and/or consultative councils. There has

[103] Rounaq Jahan, "Strengthening national mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women: a global synthesis study", study prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women (New York, 2010).

been a continuation of two trends noted in 2010. First, some countries reported the further decentralization of institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality, to include the lowest administrative level, with the result that all tiers of government share responsibility for promoting gender equality. Second, a continuing trend has been reported for establishing institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality in the legislative branch. For example, gender equality caucuses or standing committees worked in parliaments to assess the impact on gender equality of proposed legislation and initiated and lobbied for legislation to eliminate discrimination against women. Such structures contribute to enhanced accountability by holding the various sectors within the executive to account for the implementation of the gender equality objectives set within national policy frameworks.

240. Strong working relationships between national machineries and civil society can enhance knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and accountability. Many countries recognized women's organizations as a particularly important constituency, noting that engagement with them enabled women to influence policies and monitor their implementation. In some countries, the national machinery brings together representatives from women's organizations, non-governmental organizations and research institutes to draft legislation, prepare national action plans and monitor implementation. Examples also exist of the sharing of experiences and good practices between countries to provide governments with political and technical support for gender-responsive reform.

241. Insufficient resourcing presents a major challenge for national machineries in fulfilling their mandate: the financial and human resources allocated to them are rarely commensurate with their ambitious remits and assigned functions. Two national responses reported that financial resources for women's ministries had increased, but many more countries reported either a decrease in funding or insufficient financial resources available for their work. In some cases, national machineries in developing countries had to rely on donor contributions to support their activities, which could have implications for the sustainability of such activities or the level of commitment generated at the national level for work in this area.

242. Some States reported a failure to embed national machineries at the highest level of government, while others noted the reorganization of key institutions on gender equality, merging stand-alone national machineries within other ministries, thereby narrowing the scope of their activities and diminishing their overall status within the government. Some countries reported that national machineries and/or women's ministries had recently been abolished altogether.

243. Ensuring adequate staff capacity in national machineries remained a challenge for a number of countries. Staffing national machineries with qualified technical experts, who are committed to advancing gender equality and are able to operate strategically and identify opportunities for change, is essential to their success. Some countries have developed training to build the capacity and strengthen the skills of staff in gender analysis.

` *Improving policies for gender mainstreaming and advancing gender equality*

244. Since the adoption of the Platform for Action, gender mainstreaming has been embedded in government policy as a critical strategy for the promotion of gender equality across all sectors and in all areas of public policy. As emphasized in many

country responses, mainstreaming gender perspectives into policies requires concrete measures to advance knowledge, coordination, cooperation and monitoring and accountability at all levels of government. Under the leadership of national machineries for gender equality, a number of countries have put in place national action plans, policies and strategies on gender mainstreaming as well as introduced measures to increase the implementation of gender equality policies. Several countries mentioned specific sectors where they have focused their mainstreaming efforts, including public administration, poverty reduction and economic growth. Some countries have made it mandatory for all public entities to include gender equality goals, strategies and actions in their plans and budgets. Others have developed monitoring and evaluation plans to track the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies.

245. Countries reported efforts to strengthen the working relationship between women's ministries and other parts of government, in order to improve gender mainstreaming across policy areas. Some countries have appointed gender focal points in senior management positions across various levels of government, who come together in interministerial working groups to spearhead and coordinate gender mainstreaming in ministries, departments and agencies.

246. Continuing the trend reported over the past decade, gender-responsive budgeting has been used by governments to promote change in budget policies, allocation and outcomes so as to ensure that resources are provided for the implementation of commitments on gender equality. The majority of countries reported on initiatives to track budgets from a gender perspective, marking progress towards greater recognition of the gender-specific implications of fiscal policies.[104] The success of initiatives to finance policy measures for gender equality is reliant on the active involvement and collaboration of a broad range of actors, including ministries of finance and planning, national mechanisms for gender equality, parliamentarians and other stakeholders, such as research bodies and women's organizations.

247. Activities to implement gender-responsive budgeting have included reviews of budgeting processes and analysis of government policies and plans at the national, sectoral and local levels to assess existing gaps. This provides critical evidence and data for making informed decisions and policies to address gender inequalities. Several countries undertake regular reporting to monitor public expenditure and have established special units dedicated to the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting. Some States reported improvements in the quality of public finance systems through the use of gender-responsive budgeting. Greater capacity-building and refinement of monitoring and tracking systems are needed to ensure accurate data are being used in gender-responsive budgeting programmes and initiatives. To date, gender-responsive budgeting has mainly focused on an analysis of particular sectors of expenditure. Some of the areas that can benefit from gender-responsive budgeting experiences and learning include aggregate macroeconomic policy decisions about the overall size of budgeted expenditure, revenue and borrowing, and decisions about what combination of spending cuts and tax raises are used to reduce a budget deficit.

[104] UN-Women calculates that gender-responsive budgeting initiatives are in place in 65 countries worldwide (see www.gender-budgets.org).

Increasing efforts to collect, disseminate and use gender statistics

248. The past two decades have seen important advances on the generation and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics. The availability of adequate gender statistics is essential for evidence-based policymaking at all levels. As the Platform for Action made clear, the responsibility for collecting, analysing and making statistics available lies with national statistical offices and governments more broadly, as well as with international organizations, including United Nations entities.

249. Approximately 105 countries indicated that they are monitoring and collecting national gender statistics. Around 60 countries reported using the minimum set of 52 gender indicators, with a further 10 countries planning to do so. Several countries reported on additional initiatives relating to gender statistics, including developing protocols for particular ministries to produce gender statistics, the regular production of publications on gender statistics, including gender scorecards, and the development of national statistical plans. Some countries have established national gender equality observatories and gender teams at the local and national levels that lead the collection of statistics disaggregated by sex and develop national gender indicators. National data collection has also focused on collecting information about specific groups, such as rural women, women with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDS. Some States have collaborated to establish regional statistical databases that measure gender equality. For example, a number of African countries have worked with the Economic Commission for Africa to develop the Africa Gender and Development Index, designed to provide policymakers with an appropriate tool for monitoring national progress towards gender equality.

250. In spite of such advances, many countries noted the challenges they face in the availability of adequate gender statistics, which are in some cases partial, contradictory or missing altogether. National statistical offices often lack adequate human and financial resources to be able to collect, analyse and disseminate data. As a result of capacity limitations, many of the indicators included in the minimum set of 52 gender indicators suffer from significant statistical gaps in terms of international comparability and/or data availability. Moreover, the minimum set does not address all issues relating to gender equality and women's rights, including the measurement of poverty by sex and ways to capture the unequal intrahousehold distribution of power and resources. Statistics on women's access to social protection and social services are often lacking.

251. At the international level, in recent years, the Global Gender Statistics Programme[105] which is mandated by the Statistical Commission, implemented by the Statistics Division and coordinated by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, has provided significant impetus to the work on gender statistics. The programme encompasses improving coherence among existing initiatives on gender statistics through international coordination; developing and promoting methodological guidelines in existing domains and in emerging areas of concern; strengthening national statistical and technical capacity for the production, dissemination and use of gender-relevant data; and facilitating access to relevant data and metadata through a newly developed portal launched in March 2014.[105]

[105] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/default.html.

252. Important methodological work is taking place at the global level on selected gender indicators for which internationally agreed concepts and comparable data are not currently available. For example, work to finalize the international classification of activities for time use statistics is under way. Another recent initiative, the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality programme brings together United Nations agencies and the Secretariat, feminist researchers and national statistical offices to develop new methodologies and approaches to measure asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective.[106]

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

253. There has been some progress in strengthening institutional mechanisms to advance gender equality, however, many challenges remain. The requirements for institutional mechanisms to be vested with adequate authority, to have a clear mandate and sufficient human and financial resources, as well as to be accountable for delivering the mission, but also to be able to hold other government bodies to account, are essential for achieving gender equality commitments and effective gender mainstreaming. Ensuring that national women's ministries or other mechanisms are located at the highest possible level of government helps to mobilize political will and obtain support from the rest of government.

254. Continuous capacity strengthening and technical support for national machineries for gender equality are required to support them in fulfilling their mandates. Cross-sectoral collaboration, across government and involving other stakeholders, especially women's organizations, is needed to strengthen coordinated action on gender equality. National action plans and policies for gender equality, as well as strategies for gender mainstreaming, play an important role and should be prioritized. In order to properly assess the challenges facing national machineries and other institutional mechanisms in advancing gender equality and to learn from successful strategies, there is a need for systematic, comparative research across countries on their performance and effectiveness over time.

255. There is significant momentum in support of improving gender statistics, which should be harnessed to further accelerate progress. Although many countries show significant political will as regards strengthening the national collection and use of gender statistics, significant additional resources will be needed to fill gaps in the availability of existing indicators and to collect data on new and emerging issues. Another significant challenge relates to the production of statistics that can capture gender equality and women's rights for different demographic and social groups. The collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated statistics should be promoted and a renewed effort made to fully analyse existing survey data and invest in other sources of data, including administrative records. The development of ethical and sound methodologies to analyse large data sets (i.e., big data), that take gender equality into account, should also be prioritized.

I. Human rights of women

256. The Platform for Action makes clear that the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is essential for

[106] See http://genderstats.org/EDGE.

achieving gender equality. The Platform called on Governments to promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice and to achieve legal literacy.

257. There have been several important normative advances in the global framework in recent years to strengthen efforts to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has continued to expand and clarify the normative content of the Convention through its general recommendations. The six general recommendations adopted most recently, between 2010 and 2014, concern older women and the protection of their human rights; the core obligations of States Parties under article 2; the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution; women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations; harmful practices; and the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women.

258. From 2010 to 2014, at its thirteenth to twenty-sixth sessions, the Human Rights Council adopted 419 resolutions on a wide range of topics. Of those resolutions, 21 are on women's human rights and/or gender equality issues, including violence against women, maternal mortality, child and forced marriages and eliminating discrimination against women. Some 211 of the resolutions address other topics but include some reference to women's human rights and/or gender equality issues. Under the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, a total of 35,469 recommendations have been issued to States under review since 2008. Approximately 20 per cent of those recommendations refer to women's human rights and gender equality issues.[107] From 1995 to 2014, 96 thematic reports of the special procedures mechanisms had an explicit focus on women's and/or girls' rights, and/or on gender equality, and 119 reports on other topics integrated women's rights and gender concerns.

1. Global trends

259. Since 2009, Nauru and the State of Palestine have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, bringing the total number of parties to 188 in 2014, but, the goal of universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000, set in the Platform for Action, has not been achieved. Further, many countries have maintained their reservations on core provisions of the Convention. Sixteen States parties maintain reservations on article 2 (on policy measures) and 25 maintain reservations on article 16 (on marriage and family life). The Committee considers articles 2 and 16 to be core provisions of the Convention and has expressed concern at the number and extent of reservations registered to those articles. The large number of reservations on article 16 is particularly concerning, as it signals the reluctance of those States to regulate the private sphere, where women and girls continue to experience deeply entrenched discrimination. Eleven States parties have withdrawn reservations, in full or in part, between 2010 and 2014.

[107] Universal periodic review UPR Info database. Available from www.upr-info.org/database/.

260. The Optional Protocol to the Convention, on its individual complaints and inquiry procedures, offers international redress against violations of human rights for women who have been denied justice at the national level. The number of States parties to the Optional Protocol has steadily increased, from 99 in 2009 to 105 in 2014. Under the individual complaints procedure, as at the end of September 2014, the Committee had found violations of the rights under the Convention in 16 cases, which deal with a wide range of issues.

261. Legal reforms continue to promote gender equality. In 2014, at least 143 countries have provisions on equality between women and men in their constitutions.[108] The World Bank database of women's property rights and legal capacity, which covers 100 countries over 50 years (1960-2010), shows that there has been significant progress in reducing gender gaps in the ability to access and own assets and sign legal documents in one's own name, as well as in having equality or non-discrimination enshrined as a guiding principle in national constitutions.[109] Between 2011 and 2013 alone, the World Bank's Women, Business and Law database recorded 48 legal changes in 44 countries[110] to increase gender equality. The Social Institutions and Gender Index of OECD shows that 132 countries (out of 162 with available data) have passed legislation to prohibit domestic violence, and 134 (out of 162 with available data) have passed laws to make workplaces and public spaces safer for women by putting in place laws to prohibit sexual harassment.[111]

262. Despite progress in reforming laws, discrimination against women in the law remains pervasive in several areas, particularly in the area of family law. In 26 of 143 countries, statutory inheritance laws differentiate between women and men.[112] There are 27 countries with legislation that discriminates against women insofar as they cannot confer their nationality to their children and/or foreign spouses on an equal basis with men.[113] Discrimination under the law in the area of family law remains a particular challenge in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa and in South Asia. The coexistence of multiple legal systems, with discriminatory customary and religious laws and practice prevailing, remains an obstacle in several countries.

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

263. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Three major trends have emerged: (a) policy measures to achieve gender equality and continued legal reforms to remove discrimination; (b) strengthening

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108 UN-Women, Constitutional Database. Available from http://constitutions.unwomen.org (accessed 13 October 2014).

109 Mary Hallward-Driemeier, Tazeen Hasan and Anca Bogdana Rusu, "Women's legal rights over 50 years: progress, stagnation or regression?", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6616 (Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, 2013).

110 Note: total number of economies is 143 (World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2014: Removing Restrictions to Enhance Gender Equality — Key Findings* (London, Bloomsbury, 2014)).

111 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gender, Institutions and Development Database. Available from http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=GIDDB2012.

112 UN-Women calculations using data from World Bank, Women, Business and Law database. Available from http://wbl.worldbank.org/data (accessed 2 October 2014).

113 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Background note on gender equality, nationality laws and statelessness 2014" (Geneva, 2014).

accountability mechanisms, institutions and support for the human rights of women and (c) accelerating efforts to realize the human rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Policy measures to achieve gender equality and continued legal reforms to remove discrimination

264. A strong legal framework that promotes and protects women's human rights is the foundation for women's enjoyment of their rights. States reported on their efforts to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through the reform of national laws, however only a few States specifically addressed the implementation of concluding observations and general recommendations of the Committee. States also reported on the ratification of regional instruments, such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Human Rights Declaration and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

265. Since 2010, a number of States have introduced reforms to their constitutions so as to enshrine the principle of equality between women and men and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex. Building on the prohibition of discrimination, some States have introduced provisions in constitutions to promote specific areas of gender equality, including representation in national parliaments, economic and social rights, access to justice, equality in the family and marriage and the creation of gender equality mechanisms. Countries have continued to introduce broader equality or anti-discrimination legislation, at the national and subnational levels, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in many areas including employment, education and access to public services and provides for positive duties or temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of gender equality.

266. The trend of law reforms that had been previously observed has continued, especially with regard to civil, family and personal status laws that aim to eliminate discrimination against women in the private sphere. Reforms have provided women with equal rights to use, own and inherit property and to enter into contracts, institute legal proceedings and obtain a passport. States have continued to repeal discriminatory provisions relating to the minimum age of marriage for women and men, or report that they are reviewing such discriminatory provisions. Laws providing for same-sex marriages and civil partnerships have also been introduced in a growing number of countries.

267. Legal reforms to remove discrimination and promote gender equality have also focused on changes to penal codes, for example, to remove loopholes that allow rapists to escape prosecution, as well as the introduction of specific legislation to criminalize different forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, gender-related killings, trafficking and female genital mutilation. Some States reported on reviews that are under way to reform discriminatory penal codes, for example, in addressing limited definitions of rape, which make it easier for perpetrators to escape justice. A few States have reformed penal codes to decriminalize same-sex conduct.

268. Guaranteeing women's rights to work and rights at work has been another area of law reform (see sect. V.F). Several States have strengthened labour laws or equal opportunity employment acts that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex and provide for equal opportunities for women and men in employment. New provisions address equal access to decent work, equal pay for work of equal value, equal rights to pension and other benefits and the participation of women in trade union negotiations. Countries in different regions have continued to strengthen laws to protect the rights of women domestic workers. Provisions to protect women against discrimination in the workplace, including against sexual harassment, have also been included in the laws of some countries. Reforms to either introduce or expand maternity and paternity leave benefits and flexible working arrangements remain a positive trend.

269. States have introduced temporary special measures with a particular focus on women's full and equal participation in the political and public sphere. Such measures have included laws and policies on quotas and targets to support women's representation as political candidates, at different levels of government, in the public services and on private sector boards and management. Some countries have adopted laws to enhance women's representation in the judiciary and in the diplomatic service (see sect. V.G).

270. Although ensuring equality before the law and removing discrimination is a significant priority and achievement, it is only the first step towards achieving substantive equality where women are able to enjoy their human rights in practice and have equality of results and outcomes. Although some countries have introduced temporary special measures, laws often provide for "equal treatment" or "equal opportunity" without redressing women's historical and structural socioeconomic disadvantages, their lack of access to resources, institutional barriers and the persistence of discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes and women's lack of voice in decision-making at all levels.

271. A promising development since 2010 is the increased focus on reforms and measures to close the gap between de jure and de facto equality, so as to enable women's practical enjoyment of human rights. Such reforms included specific laws and programmes on substantive equality, national gender equality policies and programmes, efforts to overcome socioeconomic disadvantage, gender stereotypes, support to assist women in claiming rights and increasing women's access to justice and legal literacy, as well as training of professional service providers and community leaders on gender equality and the human rights of women. Initiatives such as mandatory gender impact assessments of laws and policies, in collaboration with cross-government monitoring mechanisms, have enhanced those efforts.

272. States also increasingly recognize the limitations of legal reform in achieving gender equality, particularly in translating equal treatment under the law into the women's practical enjoyment of their rights. Some countries noted the gaps between their ratification of international treaties and national laws and practice, recognizing that the national implementation of international treaties remains a challenge. The persistence of discriminatory provisions remains a major obstacle in several countries, particularly in relation to family and marriage. Even where legal reforms have taken place, sociocultural barriers, stereotypes and discriminatory practices, the weak implementation and monitoring of laws and the insufficient allocation of resources for gender equality remain significant challenges for women's enjoyment

of human rights. Many countries have informal, dual or multiple legal and justice systems, with statutory, customary and/or religious law, which often do not work together to uphold the human rights of women.

Strengthening accountability mechanisms, institutional structures and support for the human rights of women

273. National human rights institutions exist in many countries and such institutions are increasingly focusing on gender equality and the human rights of women. National human rights institutions can often deal with individual complaints of discrimination, including on the basis of sex, and can conduct investigations in individual cases, as well as inquiries. They can also prepare thematic reports to raise awareness about specific issues. Since 2010, national human rights institutions have carried out reviews, national inquiries, awareness-raising campaigns and programmes on topics including women's rights in the workplace, violence against women and violence and discrimination against women in the military. Several countries have commissioners who are appointed as generalist human rights champions or with a specific mandate on gender equality and women's human rights.

274. In addition to national human rights institutions, States have continued to strengthen a range of mechanisms and institutions to promote gender equality and realize the human rights of women and girls. These include national human rights committees, parliamentary committees and commissions of inquiry on human rights, expert councils, offices for human rights within government and cross-government human rights coordination mechanisms. Some countries have specific commissions on eliminating violence against women and observatories on gender equality issues in place. Special units, gender focal points and specialized courts dealing with family law or violence against women have also been introduced in order to ensure that dedicated personnel are available to support women in the justice system and improve case outcomes. Several States have also introduced training for the judiciary, police and justice system personnel.

275. Legal support, free legal services and legal aid programmes are an important means to ensure access to justice for women and redress for violations of their rights. Several States have introduced or expanded legal aid programmes, reaching out to specific groups of women, including migrant and indigenous women and women with disabilities. In some cases, legal literacy campaigns have been part of broader efforts towards capacity-building on human rights. Women's civil society organizations play a key role in capacity-building, the provision of legal advice and support.

276. Education and public awareness about women's and girls' human rights is central to changing discriminatory social norms and attitudes and creating positive norms based on equality and respect. States have continued to include education on human rights in school curricula and teacher training programmes. In a few countries, communication activities have been implemented to improve women's legal literacy. Several States have carried out public awareness-raising campaigns to increase knowledge of and support for women's human rights. The increased use of social media for such campaigns is a new trend, however most communication efforts continue to use print, television, radio and other media. Some countries have undertaken specific awareness-raising about the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the concluding observations of the Committee. Some countries have also reported on measures to raise awareness and on protecting human rights, including engagement with civil society actors.

277. Despite efforts to strengthen accountability mechanisms, several challenges persist. Many women continue to lack awareness of their rights and of the procedures by which they may claim their rights. National human rights institutions and other mechanisms often lack the capacity and funding to fulfil their mandates and the lack of specific expertise on women's human rights or lack of prioritization of gender equality issues often means that institutions are not responsive to women and girls. Harmful gender stereotypes continue to promote a culture of discrimination within state institutions, often resulting in impunity for violence against women.

278. In the context of the economic crisis and the adverse impacts of austerity measures on marginalized groups, there is increasing recognition of the need to apply human rights standards and principles to areas such as economic policies, in order to reduce vulnerabilities and inequalities and facilitate the realization of human rights. Yet, the national implementation of the Platform for Action most often does not recognize or apply human rights standards in a cross-cutting manner across all policy areas. Only a few countries reported on the application of human rights standards to policy areas such as education, health (including sexual and reproductive health), migration, political participation, maternity/parental leave and property rights.

279. Another challenge is the weak protection for women human rights defenders and the shrinking space for civil society, which affects women in public and political life. All around the world, women human rights defenders, including both female human rights defenders and any other human rights defenders who work to advance women's rights, continue to face violence, discrimination and even death because of their work to promote and protect women's human rights. They are subjected to stigmatization and ostracism by extremist and conservative groups, community leaders, families and communities who consider them to be challenging traditional notions of family and gender roles in the society and threatening religion, honour or culture through their work. States have a responsibility to protect women human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work. However, only a few States reported on measures to protect women human rights defenders.

Accelerating efforts to realize the human rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination

280. A promising trend since 2010 is the increasing recognition of the need for a more refined approach to the protection of human rights, including recognition of the fact that women are not a homogeneous group. Responses from many States noted concern about the impact of multiple forms of discrimination experienced by women and girls across all critical areas of concern, including in relation to poverty, labour markets, health, violence and education, and reported some efforts to respond to this assessment, thereby indicating the need for comprehensive policy action beyond legal equality.

281. The adoption of laws and policies aimed at eliminating discrimination against different groups of women who suffer multiple forms of discrimination is emerging

as a promising trend. Some countries have introduced specific provisions in equality and anti-discrimination legislation to address multiple and compounding forms of discrimination. These laws often include judicial mechanisms to provide remedy for victims of multiple forms of discrimination and human rights violations. Specific legal protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, people with disabilities and migrants have been introduced in some countries. Others now provide targeted services, such as culturally accessible indigenous legal services, services for Roma women, gender-responsive immigration services, support for indigenous women's land rights, services for women with disabilities, community support services for older women and widows and services for asylum seekers. Some States have set up specific procedures for handling complaints, to protect the rights of marginalized groups of women, including sex workers and domestic workers.

282. While an increasing number of States are recognizing the need to address multiple forms of discrimination, more systematic efforts are needed. Particular groups of women, such as migrant or indigenous women and women with disabilities, remain especially marginalized as regards the formal legal system and access to services. In addition to laws and policies, efforts are needed to ensure that the needs, interests and perspectives of marginalized groups of women and girls are integrated systematically across all policy areas and that such groups of women and girls participate in the shaping and monitoring of policies.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

283. Despite progress in the promotion and protection of women's and girls' human rights, significant gaps and obstacles remain. Discrimination and violence against women and girls remain at unacceptably high levels across all countries. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women remains central to the realization of women's and girls' human rights. Efforts need to be strengthened to ensure universal ratification and full implementation of the Convention worldwide, including through the withdrawal of reservations, as called for by the Committee, incorporating the Convention into laws and policies, ratifying the Optional Protocol and implementing the Committee's concluding observations, general recommendations and views under the Optional Protocol into national planning and legal and policy reforms.

284. Human rights must be viewed holistically and the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of rights must be upheld. The realization of women's human rights is critical to achieving progress in all critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. Human rights standards and principles should be consistently applied in implementation across all areas.

285. Recent decades have seen increasing efforts to remove discrimination in law, however the target set at the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, of removing discriminatory provisions against women by 2005, has not been achieved and is long overdue. Discriminatory constitutional and legislative provisions should be removed as an urgent priority, including in family, divorce and personal laws, penal codes, laws concerning nationality and laws relating to inheritance, ownership and control over land and other resources. All justice mechanisms, including informal, religious and customary mechanisms, must

respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights and ensure non-discrimination and equality. Building on legal reforms, priority must be given to implementing laws with adequate resources and capacity-building.

286. While accountability mechanisms for women's human rights are in place in most countries, accountability systems and mechanisms need to be strengthened and better resourced to ensure that women are empowered to claim their rights and have access to redress and remedies. These efforts should include increased legal support for women, human rights education, awareness-raising regarding women's human rights, training for all relevant officials and community mobilization. Efforts must be made to challenge the culture of acceptability and impunity around discrimination and violence against women.

287. States are increasingly recognizing the need to close the gap between laws and policies and women's practical enjoyment of human rights. The promising efforts to achieve substantive equality for women through specific laws, policies and programmes should be expanded and strengthened. Efforts should address the barriers to substantive equality by addressing women's accumulated socioeconomic disadvantages, transforming institutions to make them responsive to women, challenging discriminatory social norms and stereotypes and ensuring women's voice and participation at all levels of decision-making.

288. The need to address multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination is increasingly recognized, however it needs to be more effectively addressed. This requires a closer examination of the differential impact of discrimination on different groups of women and girls across all policy areas and the application of appropriate responses in laws and policies. Among other measures, such as strengthening legal protection and improving the responsiveness of public services, data must also be disaggregated by all relevant factors so as to enable effective monitoring of progress.

J. Women and the media

289. The Beijing Platform for Action recognized the potential that exists for the media to make a contribution to gender equality. The Platform on States to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication and to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

290. The role of the media in promoting gender equality has been consistently recognized across global normative frameworks. There have also been significant advances in international frameworks recognizing the importance of gender equality in information and communications technologies. In the outcome document of its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly called for further actions and initiatives to promote equal access for women and men as users and producers of such technologies and to encourage the media and the information industry, consistent with freedom of expression, to adopt, or develop further, codes of conduct, professional and other self-regulatory guidelines to remove gender stereotypes. It also called for capacity-building programmes that support women's networking and for improving global information-sharing on gender equality, development and peace through information and communications technologies.

291. Since the previous reporting period, the General Assembly has reaffirmed commitments to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through the media and information and communications technologies, in relation to the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, women and political participation, information and communications technologies for development, agricultural technology for development, science and technology for development, women in development and science, technology and innovation for development.[114]

292. The importance of gender equality, information and communications technologies and new media, was further emphasized in 2014 in the World Summit Information Society (WSIS) "WSIS+10 Statement on Implementation of WSIS Outcomes" and the "WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015".[115] In 2013, the Broadband Commission endorsed an advocacy target, calling for gender equality in access to broadband by 2020.[116]

1. Global trends

293. Data for monitoring global and regional trends in gender dimensions of media remain limited. Only 35 per cent of countries produce gender statistics on media and a little over half produce gender statistics on information and communications technologies (see E/CN.3/2013/10). Despite the limitations, the data that exist provide a snapshot of women's participation, access and representation in media and such technologies.[117]

294. Women's participation in the media has improved considerably across the sector, though numbers are still far from equal, especially at senior levels. A global report that contains data on women in the news media, spanning 59 countries and 522 news media organizations, found that women make up 35 per cent of the total media workforce across the world, but only hold roughly a quarter of the jobs in top management (27 per cent) and governance (26 per cent).[118] In the past 16 years, the rate of employment of women in news media has more than doubled.[118] Reporting by women on all major topics, except science and health, has also increased over time.[119]

295. In the information and communications technologies sector, women's participation has increased, although gender gaps remain stark. For example, according to diversity figures published by major firms, women hold less than 20 per cent of the technology jobs at any level.[120] In decision-making positions,

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114 See General Assembly resolutions 65/141, 66/129, 66/130, 66/184, 66/195, 66/211, 66/216, 66/227, 67/195, 68/139, 68/198, 68/209 and 68/220.

115 International Telecommunication Union, *WSIS + 10 High-Level Event 2014: Outcome Document — Forum Track* (Geneva, 2014).

116 International Telecommunication Union, "UN Broadband Commission sets new gender target: getting more women connected to ICTs 'critical' to post-2015 development agenda", press release, 17 March 2013.

117 Information and communications technologies include the Internet, social media, radio and devices such as tablets, phones and computers. Such technologies also encompass applications and online content and services.

118 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* (Paris, 2014).

119 Global Media Monitoring Project, *2010 Global Report: Who Makes the News?* (London, World Association for Christian Communication, 2010).

120 For figures reported by Apple, Facebook, Google and Twitter compiled by Bloomberg, see Mark Milian, "The Silicon Valley diversity numbers nobody is proud of", *Bloomberg*, 12 August 2014.

women's representation drops to between 10 per cent and 15 per cent. Only 6 per cent of venture capital funding goes to information and communications technologies start-ups headed by women.[121]

296. Women's access to technology also lags behind that of men. Research on mobile phone ownership, for example, shows that despite sharp overall increases across low- and middle-income countries, a woman is still 21 per cent less likely than a man to own a mobile phone.[122] With respect to Internet use, estimates by the International Telecommunication Union demonstrate that, globally, 36 per cent of women and 41 per cent of men go online, however while rates have reached near parity across developed countries,[123] an estimated 16 per cent fewer women than men use the Internet in developing countries. Women represent about half of social media users worldwide and constitute roughly three fifths of the bloggers.[118] Such platforms enable women to create and disseminate their knowledge, share ideas, enter the public debate on various topics and build solidarity around women's issues and gender equality. Despite some positive trends, however, recent research shows that technology is also being used for harmful purposes, for example, to perpetrate online harassment and abuse, especially towards young women.[124]

297. Representations of women and girls within the media as a whole (in television, film, advertising and music videos and online), on the other hand, have made limited progress. Though the proportion of female news subjects identified, represented or portrayed as workers or professionals has risen in some occupational categories,[119] women and girls, overall, continue to be portrayed in traditional and stereotypical manners that do not reflect their diversity and capacities, nor the roles that they actually maintain in life. Total representation of women in news coverage remains very low compared to that of men, with women constituting 24 per cent of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television and only 23 per cent of those heard or read about on the Internet.[119] In entertainment programming, a research study across 11 countries found that only 23 per cent of films had female protagonists and only 8 per cent of films had female directors.[125]

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

298. Responses from all regions highlighted the potential of the media and information and communications technologies to contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women, including some specific references to their role in economic empowerment, poverty eradication, good governance and human rights.

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121 International Telecommunication Union, *A Bright Future in ICT Opportunities for a New Generation of Women* (Geneva, 2012); see also Candida G. Brush and others, *Women Entrepreneurs 2014: Bridging the Gender Gap in Venture Capital* (Wellesley, Babson College, 2014).

122 Based on a market sizing model using mobile phone subscription data and United Nations statistics for 149 low- and middle-income countries (see GSMA Development Fund and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, *Women & Mobile: A Global Opportunity — a study on the mobile phone gender gap in low and middle-income countries* (London, 2013)).

123 International Telecommunication Union, "The world in 2013: ICT facts and figures" (Geneva, 2013).

124 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women*; see also Pew Research Center, *Online Harassment* (Washington, D.C., 2014).

125 Stacy L. Smith and others, "Gender bias without borders: an investigation of female characters in popular films across 11 countries" (Los Angeles, University of Southern California, Media, Diversity and Social Change Initiative, 2014).

Despite such recognition, overall reporting on these issues was limited in most cases. Four major trends have emerged: (a) increasing women's participation in the media and the information and communications technology sectors; (b) addressing negative and stereotypical portrayals of women in the media and online threats and abuse; (c) increasing women's access to and use of information and communications technologies; and (d) using media as a tool to raise awareness of gender equality issues.

Increasing women's participation in the media and the information and communications technology sectors

299. Women's participation in the communications sector remains low, but has increased. Governments reported that in addition to continued legal reform and policies to address this gap, other measures have been taken, such as direct collaboration with employers in the media to improve their internal policies and hiring practices; partnering with women's media networks and organizations that build women's capacities and advocate for their greater inclusion; engaging universities and media training institutions to encourage greater participation of women and include gender equality within their programmes; and by administering creative incentives, such as providing public recognition to more gender-responsive media houses, the designation of centres of excellence, gender equality seals, contests and awards and through other large-scale public events. The potential of quotas to increase women's participation was also noted by a few States.

300. Despite progress, barriers persist in recruitment, retention and career advancement. Traditional approaches to increasing women's representation, especially at decision-making levels, have not been adequate and have not fully accounted for the factors affecting women's participation, such as their disproportionate share of unpaid care work. Another critical issue affecting women's participation is the lack of safety of women communications professionals and the abuses that they face at work. A global report in 2014 found that nearly two thirds of women reporters had experienced some form of intimidation, threat or abuse in relation to their work, most often perpetrated by male bosses, supervisors and co-workers.[126] Women writers were also found to be disproportionately likely to be harassed, insulted and stalked on the Internet.

Addressing negative and stereotypical portrayals of women in the media and online threats and abuse

301. The persistence of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the media remains one of the major overall challenges to women's empowerment and gender equality. Of particular concern to a broad range of governments are the persistent, degrading, discriminatory, objectified and hypersexualized representations of women and girls within the media, with a growing trend of misogynistic and violent images, including in social media, gaming and pornography. Easier access to these images through the Internet and mobile phones affects healthy social and emotional development, especially for youth, who are forming perceptions around sexuality, intimacy and relationships.

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[126] Based on a global survey of 977 female respondents (Alana Barton and Hannah Storm, *Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media: A Global Picture* (Washington, D.C., International Women's Media Foundation; London, International News Safety Institute, 2014)).

302. Several measures have been introduced to address such concerns, including support for research into and analysis of portrayals of women (and men) to highlight the issue and better understand what interventions are needed; improved legal, regulatory and policy frameworks, standard-setting and codes of conduct to ensure media institutions are guided in their content and integrate issues reflecting gender equality and women's rights; gender equality training, workshops and the development of tools for media students and media personnel; and monitoring for compliance with laws through government bodies, such as communication commissions or dedicated agencies to receive and investigate complaints made. Governments also reported on the integration of media-related components in national gender equality plans, national development plans and national action plans on violence against women.

303. Gaps in the policies and regulations that govern media and information and communications technologies with respect to ethics, privacy, security and safety create significant risks for women and girls, where harmful gender norms and discrimination have been shown to replicate themselves, creating new forms of inequality and providing new avenues for objectification, exploitation and abuse. For example, mobile phones and the Internet have been used to facilitate sex and bride trafficking, online harassment, cyberstalking, violations of privacy, censorship and the hacking of e-mail accounts, phones and other electronic devices, or the use of such means to incite further violations and abuses against women and girls, with increased targeting of women human rights defenders. Moreover, evidence shows that offline discrimination is merely replicated online, rather than the Internet providing a platform to transform such dynamics. State responses provided limited information on the governance of such technologies in addressing the risks and harms to women and girls, despite raising the issue as a concern. However, governance of those technologies is transnational in nature, requiring intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

304. As the battle against stereotyping and discrimination in media and information and communications technologies has seen slow progress, the challenge remains to uphold freedom of expression while managing detrimental content and uses of media and technology, so as to minimally ensure principles of "do no harm". Incentives are needed to promote fair and multidimensional portrayals of women and girls in all mediums and across the spectrum of subject areas and content.

Increasing women's access to and use of information and communications technologies

305. Information and communications technologies have brought important benefits to women over the past decade, with the increase in the use of mobile phones and of social media; the development of beneficial applications and services; programmes that promote digital literacy; and women's involvement as innovators in the use of such technologies to build networks, tell their stories, advocate for their human rights, mobilize for change, generate economic opportunities, increase flows of information and knowledge and for learning, among other positive benefits.

306. Many States recognized the need to close the gender gap in access to and use of information and communications technologies, as well as to address the absence of women's perspectives in the creation of content for those technologies. Governments reported efforts to increase the use and application of such technologies for women's empowerment, which included the use of multimedia tools to conduct training and

distance learning and the integration of such technologies in schools and in technical vocational education and training for enhancing education; the use of handheld devices and databases to improve data collection, including from low literacy populations; employing mobile technologies to improve health-related services; the promotion of women's economic empowerment through market engagement facilitated by technology and e-business and entrepreneurial opportunities for women; and training in such technologies to enhance labour market participation. Governments reported efforts to increase access to those technologies, including through the creation of free wifi hubs, Internet clubs and community technology centres, to expand the reach of technology to poorer and more remote locations, as well as through initiatives to build digital literacy and skills, including within schools. Some Member States noted the harmful use of information and communications technologies to perpetrate abuse, with a number reporting the introduction of legal provisions and other measures to deal with cybercrimes and online threats.

307. A number of governments are integrating gender equality in strategies and plans relating to information and communications technologies and the integration of such issues within national gender strategies and action plans. Some governments reported on data collection on gender equality and those technologies, including on women's and girls' use of such technologies through surveying telecentres and households. In order to increase girls' access and effective use of the technologies for learning and career progression, various countries highlighted special measures, specific legislation, campaigns and mentoring schemes.

308. Despite such gains, there remain gender gaps in access to and the quality of use of media and information and communications technologies. In addition, there is limited availability of relevant content and opportunities for women as creators, and not just consumers, of technology.

Using media as a tool to raise awareness of gender equality issues

309. Print, television, radio, the Internet and social media have increasingly been used as vehicles by governments and non-governmental organizations to promote gender equality and bring mass awareness regarding such issues as violence against women and harmful practices. Government efforts are limited, however, as regards addressing the fundamental changes that are necessary to hold media outlets, offline and online, accountable for reducing and eliminating the stereotypical portrayals of women and girls and discriminatory content that pervade news and entertainment programming.

310. A large number of States reported on their own use of media and information and communications technologies for the purpose of implementing the Platform for Action, for example through the establishment or expansion of websites to disseminate information, increase transparency and raise awareness of gender equality, human rights and women's issues. Some described the use of online platforms to survey women and girls and solicit input on government initiatives. Governments also reported using mass media channels to run awareness-raising campaigns and educational programming on women's rights, with a large number focusing on zero tolerance for violence against women. A number of countries, particularly in developing regions, emphasized continued engagement with radio outlets, recognizing their importance in reaching low literacy and remote populations with messages promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

311. Media and information and communications technologies are fundamental to women's and girls' full and effective participation in civil, political, economic, social and cultural life. The perspectives, needs, rights and leadership of women in the media and such technologies is therefore critical, including within decision- and policymaking bodies and systems and at the ownership level. Increasing women's participation in media and those technologies at all levels of decision-making requires continued provision of formal and technical vocational education and training, including in the areas of management and leadership. To strengthen the retention and advancement of women within the media and information and communications technologies fields, governments should ensure equal pay and decent work conditions and policies that enable the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, in addition to ensuring safe and harassment-free environments. Collaboration among media and technology unions, associations, clubs, organizations, professionals and women's media networks is also critical to promote women's leadership and decision-making in media and such technologies.

312. Advancing gender equality through media and information and communications technologies and preventing and addressing stereotypes and discrimination requires further development of national and global legislative, regulatory and voluntary mechanisms, including professional guidelines and codes of conduct; continued capacity-building for all media and communications personnel through media studies and training; enhanced awareness of the general public around gender equality in communications and information, including through social media; and strengthened monitoring mechanisms, including through support to women's media watch groups.

313. Greater efforts are needed to ensure women's and girls' equal access to and use of media and information and communications technologies, especially in rural areas and among marginalized groups. This should include the formulation of gender-responsive information and communications technologies and media strategies and related policies, which seek to improve the relevance or representativeness of content and services; increased investment and financial incentives from government for investment in gender equality measures in the sectors of the media and such technologies; and the establishment of monitoring mechanisms that integrate gender perspectives for increased accountability around the implementation of commitments. The opportunities and threats presented by those technologies and media should also be reflected through gender mainstreaming in corresponding national action plans and strategies. In order to ensure that women are not just consuming but also producing information and communications technologies and media and to ensure that they can benefit more meaningfully from such technologies, investments in building the technological capabilities and digital and media literacies of women and girls are necessary and should include efforts within formal educational systems.

314. Tracking progress in the above-mentioned areas requires improved sex-disaggregated data, research and analysis of participation, access, use and representation of women and girls across all forms of media and information and communications technologies and their impact on women and girls. The exchange of good practices and lessons learned regarding women, media and such technologies should also be encouraged within and across nations.

K. Women and the environment

315. The Platform for Action called for building on the progress made at the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, and for the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of sustainable development. It called on States to actively involve women in environmental decision-making at all levels; integrate gender concerns and perspectives in sustainable development policies and programmes; and improve the assessment of development and environmental policies on women, including compliance with international obligations.

316. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-fifth session, adopted resolution 55/1 on mainstreaming gender equality and promoting the empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies.[30] At its fifty-sixth session, the Commission adopted resolution 56/2 on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters (see E/2012/27) and at its fifty-seventh session it agreed to incorporate the specific needs of women and girls in risk reduction and humanitarian assistance to address climate-related natural disasters and to promote women's full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and natural resources.[35] At its fifty-eighth session, the Commission noted that women and girls are often disproportionally affected by desertification, deforestation, climate change and natural disasters as a result of gender inequalities and the dependence of many women on natural resources for their livelihoods.[6]

317. The emphasis on gender equality and sustainable development in the Platform for Action was reaffirmed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (see General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex), which integrated the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — and launched a process for formulating the sustainable development goals.

1. Global trends

318. The meetings of the Conference of the Parties of each of the three Rio Conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which were adopted as a result of the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development, have addressed gender concerns in a more targeted fashion within the past five years. In 2012, in Doha, the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted a decision to promote the goal of gender balance in the bodies of and delegations to the Conference of the Parties and to include gender and climate change as a standing item in the agenda of the Conference of the Parties.[127] Regarding the gender composition of delegations to recent sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Conference of the Parties serving as the

[127] FCCC/CP/2012/8/Add.3, decision 23/CP.18; see also UN-Women and Mary Robinson Foundation-Climate Justice, "The full view: advancing the goal of gender balance in multilateral and intergovernmental processes" (May 2013).

meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, the representation of women in delegations was between 29 per cent and 37 per cent, and that of constituted bodies between 11 per cent and 52 per cent (see FCCC/CP/2013/4). The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, at its tenth meeting, committed to gender mainstreaming and to integrating gender equality into the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (see UNEP/CBD/COP/10/27, decisions X/2 and X/19). The national action programmes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification provide for the effective participation of both women and men, particularly resource users, farmers, pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, implementation and reviews at the local and national levels. The advocacy policy framework on gender, in the context of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, reaffirmed such commitments.[128]

319. The Environment and Gender Index[129] of the International Union for Conservation of Nature compared the percentage of women delegates registered by governments for the most recent meetings of the Conference of the Parties of each of the Rio Conventions, for which data were available, with a corresponding meeting held between four and six years earlier. The representation of women among the various delegations were, for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 29 per cent in 2008 and 33 per cent in 2012; for the Convention on Biological Diversity, 33 per cent in 2006 and 36 per cent in 2012; and for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 25 per cent in 2005 and 21 per cent in 2011. Despite improvements in some cases, gender parity is far from being achieved in these government delegations.

320. The triple crisis (financial, food and fuel), which began in 2007/2008, and its aftermath, made the precariousness of livelihoods globally, and especially those of women, given the additional time and labour demands of unpaid care work, more visible. Insecure livelihoods were exacerbated by the limitations on women's rights and on their access to land and natural resources. The consequences of climate change, biodiversity loss and desertification, as well as the growth of extractive industries and large-scale land investments for the production of biofuels and crops for export (rather than local consumption), added to these obstacles (see A/HRC/13/33/Add.2 and A/HRC/26/39). Yet women farmers, pastoralists and forest-users are central to the production, collection and preparation of food and in generating incomes for their households and communities, as well as in conserving local environments and productive landscapes and them making more resilient.

321. Women comprised an average of 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries in 2010, slightly more than figures recorded for 1980 (40 per cent) and for 1995 (42 per cent).[130] While global data are limited, there is evidence that women farmers control less land than do men and that they have limited access to inputs, seeds, credits and extension services.[130] A comparison by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of international agricultural census data showed that less than 20 per cent of landholders were

[128] See United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480; see also ICCD/CRIC(10)/20 and Corr.1.

[129] International Union for Conservation of Nature, *The Environment and Gender Index (EGI) 2013 Pilot* (Washington, D.C., 2013).

[130] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women and Agriculture — Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome, 2011).

women.[131] The Social Institutions and Gender Index for 2012 of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development analysed women's legal and de facto rights to own and/or access agricultural land in 121 countries. In 28 countries, women had the same legal rights as men to own and access land; in 79 countries, women had equal legal rights as men to own and access land, but discriminatory practices restricted women's access to and ownership of land in practice; in 11 countries, women had no or few legal rights to access or own land or access was severely restricted by discriminatory practices; and there was no score available for 3 countries.[132] While equal rights to own land are important, recent research on women and sustainability has indicated that security of tenure was critical.[133]

322. In 2012, although 89 per cent of the world's population had access to improved drinking water sources, compared with 76 per cent in 1990, 748 million people, most of whom lived in rural areas, still lacked access to clean drinking water.[134] Similarly, while the global electrification rate increased from 76 per cent in 1990 to 83 per cent in 2010, an estimated 1.2 billion people still did not have access to electricity.[135] More than 95 per cent of people without access to modern energy services lived either in sub-Saharan Africa or Asia, and 84 per cent of those people were in rural areas.[136] Nearly 3 billion people used solid biomass or animal waste to cook their meals and heat their homes, including the majority of the 850 million urban slum dwellers.[137] Critically, data disaggregated by sex do not exist for tracking and assessing women's access to and use of water and energy services. Indoor air pollution, primarily produced by inefficient and dirty cookstoves and fuels, causes some 4.3 million premature deaths worldwide,[138] above all among women and children, which represents more deaths than those caused by HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and malnutrition combined.[139] Women and girls are also the most exposed to waterborne diseases.[140]

323. Gender inequalities are also worsened by the lack of universal access to improved water sources and modern energy services in terms of the time and labour burden of unpaid work, which poses a significant obstacle to the ability of women and girls to access education, training and decent employment opportunities.

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131 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Gender and land rights: understanding complexities; adjusting policies", Economic and Social Perspectives Policy Brief, No. 8 (Rome, 2010).

132 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Social Institutions and Gender Index. Available from http://genderindex.org.

133 Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Chiara Kovarik and Agnes R. Quisumbing, "Gender and sustainability", *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, vol. 39, October 2014.

134 World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation: 2014 Update* (Geneva, 2014).

135 See www.se4all.org.

136 International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2011: Energy for All* (Paris, 2011).

137 United Nations Technical Support Team, "TST issues brief: energy", No. 14, 16 October 2013. Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org.

138 World Health Organization, *WHO Guidelines for Indoor Air Quality: Household Fuel Combustion* (Geneva, 2014). Figures are for 2012.

139 Stephen S. Lim and others, "A comparative risk assessment of burden of disease and injury attributable to 67 risk factors and risk factor clusters in 21 regions, 1990-2010: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010", *The Lancet*, vol. 380, No. 9859 (15 December 2010).

140 World Water Assessment Programme, *United Nations World Water Development Report 4: Managing Water Under Uncertainty and Risk, vol. 1* (Paris, UNESCO, 2012).

Women and children bear the main negative impacts of collecting and transporting fuel and water, with women in many developing countries spending between one and four hours a day collecting biomass for fuel.[141] A study of time and water poverty in 25 sub-Saharan African countries estimated that women spend at least 16 million hours a day collecting drinking water; men spend 6 million hours on the activity; and children, 4 million hours.[134] Rural women spend more time than urban women and men on domestic and household work, including time spent obtaining water and fuel and processing food. Such work is intensified in contexts of economic crisis, environmental degradation, natural disasters and inadequate infrastructure and services. Thus, interventions that target women alone, on the assumption that they are the primary environmental managers rather than sharing the responsibility with men, could well increase women's and girls' unpaid work and its attendant risks.[133]

324. Women's dependence on and unequal access to land, water and other resources and productive assets, which are compounded by limited mobility and decision-making power in many contexts, also mean that they are disproportionately affected by climate change.[142] Natural disasters, including those related to climate change, have more impact on poor women. An analysis of 141 countries found that natural disasters lower the life expectancy of women more than that of men.[143] Given the prevailing circumstances, including severe climate variability, large-scale land and water grabs and pervasive food and nutrition insecurity, the costs of gender inequality in terms of sustainability are high. But in a recent assessment of women's economic empowerment in relation to access to natural resources such as land and water, it was argued that "more equitable access to assets and services — land, water, technology, innovation and credit, banking and financial services — will strengthen women's rights, increase agricultural productivity, reduce hunger and promote economic growth."[144] Moreover, women's participation in local institutions for governing natural resources is critical for sustainable land, forest and water management.[145]

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

325. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Five major trends have emerged: (a) increasing women's access to land and other resources; (b) supporting women in responding to environmental degradation; (c) supporting women's participation and collective action; (d) mainstreaming gender perspectives in sustainable development policies; and (e) increasing attention to changing patterns of consumption and production.

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141 World Bank, *Household Cookstoves, Environment, Health and Climate Change: A New Look at an Old Problem* (Washington, D.C., 2011).

142 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and Equity — A Better Future for All* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

143 Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper, "The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981-2002", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 97, No. 3 (2007).

144 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Poverty Reduction and Pro-Poor Growth: The Role of Empowerment* (Paris, 2012).

145 Bina Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women's Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010); see also Isha Ray, "Women, water, and development", *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, vol. 32, November 2007.

Increasing women's access to land and other resources

326. Women's access to land and other natural resources has remained high on national agendas, particularly as the link between environmental sustainability and poverty eradication has become clearer. States noted that women are disadvantaged in terms of their rights to land, property and land ownership, including through discriminatory customary practices that favour men. Some countries counted women's access to land as one of their greatest achievements, enabled through land reform and laws on gender equality in rural areas, in farming and in access to land and credit. Equally, a number of countries considered women's access to land and productive resources, including water, energy and credit, to be an important emerging priority. A few countries have undertaken legal reforms to support women's rights to own land, regardless of marital status. In some countries, women, and particularly indigenous women, have benefited from government-sponsored land redistribution programmes. Other countries focused on the protection and restoration of arable land and access to land and credit for rural women, which, along with access to markets, was considered essential for food security. Some States have conducted institutional reforms, such as establishing a "land desk" in the national gender machinery. Despite such efforts, little information was provided on women's enjoyment of rights to land and resources in practice.

327. In recognition of women's frequent reliance on natural resources for their livelihoods, States have enacted laws to support women's equal access to and management of natural resources. National policies promoted gender equality in the ownership, management and use of land and natural resources and created opportunities for both women and men to access environmental infrastructure (e.g., water and energy supply, waste disposal and pollution control). States also recognized that obstacles to women's access to and management of water and energy resources could exacerbate already precarious situations. Thus, women's access to water, particularly drinking water, and to sanitation was a high priority concern in many countries, with a few seeking to guarantee the participation of poor women in the planning and management of water and sanitation services. Efforts to promote women's access to energy, especially renewable energy and charcoal, were also reported, to a lesser degree. Finally, some countries evaluated their environmental policies and programmes with regard to equal access for women to natural resources.

Supporting women to respond to environmental degradation

328. Many States considered women to be at the frontlines of redressing environmental degradation and coping with pollution, natural disasters and climate change. In response, national plans and policies increasingly addressed the impact of environmental degradation on women and children and incorporated preventative measures for women and children to protect themselves against environmental risks. Programmes promoted the importance of women's participation in the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, particularly the role of rural women. Governments increasingly recognized that rural women, as users of natural resources, are directly affected by environmental degradation and thus well placed to use new techniques and practices related to environmental rehabilitation, land restoration, reforestation and the establishment of community forests. Countries also supported indigenous women in protecting endangered species. The certification of indigenous lands, in conjunction with payment for environmental services, served to

protect forests and to benefit indigenous women, who obtained medicinal plants, food and water from the forest.

329. Several States' national disaster management and climate change plans reflected the disproportionate impact of natural disasters and climate change on women. Gender perspectives influenced environmental risk management programmes and policies and prepared women to cope with emergency situations in a number of countries. In others, States empowered women's organizations in acquiring the competencies to deal more effectively with climate change through pilot programmes for climate resilience that assist women and their communities in identifying and putting into practice climate change adaptation options. For example, the African Adaptation Programme conducted awareness-raising workshops on climate change and its gender-differentiated implications. Women were also trained in technologies for climate change adaptation, such as the production, installation and maintenance of solar energy equipment.

Supporting women's participation and collective action

330. A few countries reported that among their greatest achievements was the participation of women participation in environmental activities and in sustainable development policies, while others considered the limited involvement of women in environmental policy, management, decision-making and governance to be among their greatest challenges. Most countries encouraged women's environmental participation, with some passing laws that promoted the active participation of women in environmental and conservation decisions and others reporting that women's participation in decision-making concerning the environment has increased at all levels. A number of governments emphasized the high level of participation of women in ministries of the environment, and that women and men have equal shares in decision-making in those ministries. Women's organizations engaged with environmental protection at the local level, and some countries provided training for women to build their capacities for the management of environmental projects and natural resources and to exercise their rights to collective action, participation and decision-making on environmental and sustainability issues.

331. Some national environmental and gender action plans and related strategies mandated that women must play an active role in order to strengthen gender equality and women's participation in the environmental domain. Government ministries and agencies of the environment, energy and sustainable development promoted women's involvement in scientific and research programmes. Women's organizations and indigenous women's groups were active in the design and approval of innovative legislation for protecting the environment. Women participated in consultations on climate strategies and in formulating and implementing the national adaptation programme of action. States reported that women participated in national advisory boards on climate change and disaster risk reduction, water management boards, rural water user committees and provincial and village committees and other local institutions for the management of natural resources. Some countries had specific gender indicators for the participation of women in water resources management. National forest acts and forestry policies actively involved women and men in community forest user groups, reforestation, the restoration of mangroves, soil protection and conservation and the management of natural reserves. A few States noted policies that aim to mainstream gender and

promote women's participation in extractive industries. Finally, women and women's organizations were seen to contribute to the green economy and to green energy initiatives.

Mainstreaming gender perspectives in sustainable development policies

332. The extent of gender mainstreaming in sustainable development policies varied across countries, ranging from gender considerations barely being taken into account in environmental policies to gender perspectives being mainstreamed in laws on sustainable development and national environmental policies and programmes. One government acknowledged that gender aspects were missing in discussions of climate change, while others studied the impact of climate change on gender equality, prepared gender and climate change strategies and action plans and included women in responses to natural disasters and climate change. Several countries mainstreamed gender perspectives in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate drought, as well as in national environment, water and sanitation, and biogas policies and programmes. In a number of donor countries, gender dimensions were integrated into international development, climate and forestry programmes, as well as into environment and natural resource research strategies. Only one government reported having gender mainstreamed comprehensively across relevant ministries (i.e., public security, public health, agriculture, forestry, fishing and justice).

Increasing attention to changing patterns of consumption and production

333. Several States recognized the need to change production and consumption patterns and invest in sustainability through women's enterprises that reconciled the economic, social and environmental aspects and made provisions for socially vulnerable groups. In some countries, seminars on responsible consumption and production included gender equality considerations in discussions of new and renewable energy sources and technologies. Many countries reported on the introduction of improved cookstoves, in some cases built by women, the production of salt using solar power, the collection of non-timber forest products and community-based initiatives that empowered women economically as technicians, marketers and distributors of clean energy products. Improved stoves were said to reduce carbon emissions, use less wood and provide health benefits from reduced smoke and ash. National indoor air quality guidelines were adopted, with priority placed on women's participation in shaping such guidelines.

334. Integrated water resource management and rural water and sanitation projects were intended to build women's capacity and to upgrade water quality. Programmes for women that promoted the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources built women's skills so that they could seek employment in the forestry sector, for example, and contribute to long-term forest protection and regeneration. Women were empowered to adopt environmentally sound practices in fisheries, agriculture and other sectors. Particularly in small island developing States, toxic waste and sea pollution highlight the urgent need to manage production and consumption in a sustainable fashion. States invested in transport policies designed with both environmental and gender considerations in mind, along with sustainable solutions for waste management, sustainable tourism and water-related climate adaptation projects. Low interest rates were provided to entrepreneurs for fishing, aquaculture, agriculture and ecotourism projects, along with a small grants programme for food security. Sustainability was also promoted through renewed

interest in the traditional and ancestral knowledge of indigenous communities and indigenous women.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

335. Addressing the interlinkages between gender equality and environmental sustainability requires an approach that integrates the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability while advancing women's human rights and empowerment. This includes transforming patterns of consumption and production in a manner that promotes gender equality and, in particular, women's livelihoods that are based on the sustainable use and management of natural resources, including land, water and energy. Ensuring women's access to and control over land and productive resources and their voice and agency in environmental and sustainable development decision-making and action at all levels is critical.

336. As the impact of climate change, natural disasters, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss is increasingly felt, mitigating that impact on women and their families and making communities and landscapes more resilient and women and men better able to adapt are urgent priorities for present and future action. Gender-responsive planning, programming and implementation are necessary, from negotiations at the global level relating to the Rio Conventions, to national climate, biodiversity, desertification and disaster action plans, to grass-roots action by community-based and women's organizations on climate-smart agriculture, resilient production landscapes, habitat restoration and indigenous and community conservation areas, among other concerns.

337. The challenges and opportunities for women's empowerment presented by provisioning drinking water and clean energy and decent work in the green economy entail significant investment in women's capacity-building and training, particularly in the science, technology and engineering fields, where women tend to be underrepresented in most countries. Investing in jobs at the intersection of the care and green economies and recruiting women for such jobs will help to rectify the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and girls, while promoting decent work and environmental sustainability (see A/69/156).

338. Data gaps with respect to women and environmental sustainability should be addressed, for example, as concerns women's access to and control over land and natural resources, time and energy poverty and participation in the environmental sector, as well as the impact of environmental policy on women and the extent of gender mainstreaming in national and international environmental plans and programmes.

339. Women's collective action, combined with the attention being focused by national governments and international bodies, are central for understanding and redressing the gender-differentiated impact of the boom in extractive industries and of land and water grabbing on local and indigenous communities. There are key opportunities for legal and policy reforms that protect rights to land and resources and for creating decent work for women and men. In these and other environmental sectors, financing sustainable development policies and investments that promote gender equality is paramount.

L. The girl child

340. While issues of concern to girls cut across all 12 critical areas of concern, the Platform for Action gave specific attention to the persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child. The Platform identified nine strategic objectives, on eliminating all forms of discrimination; eliminating negative cultural attitudes and practices; promoting and protecting girls' rights; increasing awareness of girls' needs and potential; health and nutrition; eliminating economic exploitation; education, skills development and training; eradicating violence; promoting awareness and participation in social, economic and political life; and strengthening the role of the family.

341. The international policy framework as regards protecting and promoting girls' rights has further advanced since 2010. General Assembly resolution 66/140 on the girl child called for action in many areas and focused attention on particularly vulnerable girls. The international community has declared an international day for the girl child (Assembly resolution 66/170) and adopted resolutions on women in development, highlighting education and violence against girls (resolution 66/216), as well as on policies and programmes involving youth, urging States to address gender stereotypes (resolution 66/121). The latest Assembly resolutions on the rights of the child reiterated concerns regarding violence and the exploitation of girls, the rights of girls with disabilities and education for indigenous girls (resolutions 66/141, 67/152 and 68/147). In addition, the Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (resolution 66/138).

342. The Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a general comment on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence (see A/67/41, annex V, general comment No. 13), documenting gender dimensions and the particular risks facing girls in vulnerable situations. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 27/11 on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights, highlighted concerns regarding adolescent girls and States' obligations to address the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls (see A/69/53/Add.1 and Corr.1, chap. IV). In its agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, adopted at its fifty-seventh session, the Commission on the Status of Women emphasized the links between violence against girls and their well-being and rights in several other areas.[35]

1. Global trends

343. Despite significant advances in the normative framework, girls around the world continue to experience various forms of discrimination, disadvantage and violence. Where mortality rates for children under 5 years of age are higher among girls, in South and East Asia and the Pacific, this partly reflects discriminatory practices related to son preference.[146] Gender inequalities in health outcomes become more pronounced in adolescence, as girls are prematurely married and forced into sex, increasing the risks associated with early childbearing and exposure to sexually transmitted infections. Adolescent girls also have higher rates of anaemia.[146] Worldwide, in 2012, girls comprised two thirds of new HIV infections

[146] United Nations Children's Fund, *Boys and Girls in the Life Cycle: Sex-Disaggregated Data on a Selection of Well-being Indicators, from Early Childhood to Young Adulthood* (New York, 2011).

among youths aged between 15 and 19 years of age.[147] In sub-Saharan African countries, women aged between 15 and 24 are between 2 and 4 times more likely to be infected with HIV than men of the same age, reflecting gender differences in literacy levels, media exposure, access to condoms and greater vulnerability to sexual violence (see sect. V.C).[147]

344. Despite significant progress in girls' education in recent decades (see sect. V.B), an estimated 58 million children of primary school age and 63 million adolescents of lower secondary school age are not in school, the majority of these being girls.[148] Many institutional and cultural factors affect girls' educational access and outcomes, including various forms of violence, such as sexual harassment and bullying, and safety issues in and around school, exploitation and conflict (see sect. V.E), poverty and the demands of work, as well as insufficient school infrastructure and resources. Girls who marry early and young mothers are discriminated against in schools and communities and they face particular health concerns, financial constraints and pressures from within their communities and families, all of which contributes to high dropout rates (see sect. V.A).

345. Violence against girls continues to take many forms (see sect. V.D) and has significant consequences on their physical, sexual and mental health and on their education, economic and employment outcomes. Approximately one quarter of girls aged between 15 and 19 are victims of physical violence from the age of 15,[149] and 120 million girls under 20, about 1 in 10, are subjected to sexual violence.[150] Vulnerabilities vary across and within countries, with girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination being at greater risk, namely indigenous, impoverished, internally displaced and refugee girls, girls with disabilities, girls in natural disasters and in humanitarian and conflict and/or post-conflict settings, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender girls. Violence is perpetrated by adults and peers, at home, in and around schools and workplaces, and through new forms of technology and media (see sect. V.J).

346. Approximately 125 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, according to data for 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East, where the practice is concentrated.[65] Annually, at least a further 3 million girls, mostly under the age of 15, are at risk. Among women and girls aged between 15 and 49, 44 per cent in Eastern and Southern Africa and 40 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting.[151] The rates are over 75 per cent, and even higher among those in the poorest households, in 10 of the 27 African countries for which data are available.[151] The prevalence has declined from an estimated 53 per cent of women aged between 45 and 49, to an

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147 United Nations Children's Fund, *HIV/AIDS and Children: Thematic Report 2013* (New York, 2014).

148 United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization, Institute for Statistics (UIS) database. Available from www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/default.aspx (accessed 17 October 2014).

149 United Nations Children's Fund, *Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children* (New York, 2014).

150 Based on a sub-set of countries with available data covering over 50 per cent of the global population of people within the respective age ranges (see United Nations Children's Fund, Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women database, available from http://data.unicef.org/ (2014)).

151 United Nations Children's Fund, Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women database.

average of 36 per cent of adolescents and young women aged between 15 and 19, being cut.[152] Despite possible proportional decreases, the total number of cases may still be increasing as a result of population growth.[152] Female genital mutilation/cutting and other harmful practices occur as a result of gender inequality and discriminatory social, cultural and religious norms relating to girls' and women's positions in their family, community and society, and are barriers to girls' enjoyment of their human rights (see A/69/211).

347. Between 1995 and 2010, the rate of child, early and forced marriage consistently declined among girls under the age of 15, to 8 per cent, and those aged under 18, to 26 per cent.[66] However, in 2014, 700 million, more than 1 in 3 women worldwide, were married before the age of 18,[153] with 250 million married before the age of 15.[66] The rate is highest in South Asia, where nearly half of all girls were married before the age of 18, and 1 in 5 before the age of 15. This is followed by West and Central Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa.[151] If current trends continue, the number of girls marrying early each year will grow, from 15 million in 2014, to 16.5 million in 2030, to over 18 million in 2050.[66] Child, early and forced marriage compounds poverty and gender inequality by depriving girls of educational and economic opportunities and negotiating powers regarding sex, family planning and resource allocation, contributing to early pregnancy, as well as exposure to violence.

348. Early childbearing is commonly linked to non-consensual sex in contexts of sexual violence, exploitation and child, early and forced marriage. More than 16 million girls aged between 15 and 19 and some 1 million girls under the age of 15 give birth annually, mostly in low- and middle-income countries, the highest rate being in sub-Saharan Africa.[154] Global adolescent birth rates have decreased since 1990, albeit unevenly, but some 11 per cent of all births are still among 15 to 19 year olds. Adolescents are more likely to die from complications in pregnancy and childbirth than women in their 20s, and their infants are more likely to be stillborn or die in the first month of life.

349. Worldwide, approximately 14 per cent of girls aged between 5 and 14 are engaged in child labour, the majority of whom are unpaid.[151] Most child labourers are found in the informal economy in the agricultural sector (98 million, 59 per cent), in services including domestic work (54 million) and in industry (12 million).[155] While the number of children recruited for child labour is decreasing in all sectors, the proportion of children in domestic work is

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152 United Nations Children's Fund and others, *Breaking the Silence on Violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women* (New York, United Nations Children's Fund, 2013).

153 Child and early marriage is defined as a formal or informal union where one or both parties are under 18 (see United Nations Children's Fund, Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women database). Forced marriage, including child marriage, is a union that lacks the free and full consent of both parties (UN-Women, Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls, 2012 (see www.endvawnow.org)).

154 World Health Organization, "Adolescent pregnancy", Fact sheet, No. 364 (September 2014). Available from www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en.

155 The International Labour Organization defines child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and that is harmful to their physical and mental development (see International Labour Organization, *Marking progress against child labour: global estimates and trends 2000-2012* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2013)).

increasing.[156] In West and Central Africa, more girls than boys work as child labourers.[151] Girls comprise over two thirds of the approximately 17.2 million children aged between 5 and 17 in paid and unpaid domestic work in households other than their own, with 11.5 million working under coercion in unacceptable and hazardous conditions.[157] A study of 65 developing countries found that gender is an important determinant of children's involvement in unpaid chores in their own households and that there is a positive correlation between involvement in household chores and child, early and forced marriage.[158] Many more girls than boys, often like their mothers, are disproportionately engaged in unpaid work, including care work, in their own and in other homes, which is overlooked in child labour counts. The limited data on forced labour indicate that many girls are in debt bondage, trafficking and servitude.[159] Child labour impedes girls' rights to education, training and decent work, health and safety and to protection from exploitation (see A/68/293).

2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

350. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Four major trends have emerged that largely build on developments identified in 2010 (a) eliminating harmful practices; (b) implementing gender-responsive child protection legislation, policies and services; (c) improving access to a gender-responsive educational environment; and (d) promoting girls' activism and participation.

Eliminating harmful practices

351. A growing number of States across regions reported on enhanced judicial responses and punitive measures designed to eliminate harmful practices. Many report that challenges remain regarding law enforcement and ineffective implementation of policies and programmes, discriminatory cultural attitudes and strong taboos. To address discriminatory attitudes, States have implemented education programmes, mass mobilization and media campaigns. Several States reported that health and well-being frameworks, including sexual and reproductive health-care services for girls, included efforts to directly address the related impacts of harmful practices. In countries where son preference persists, efforts are being made to counter discrimination against girls through mass campaigns on eliminating gender-biased sex selection.

352. States have shown an increasing commitment since 2010 to eliminating female genital mutilation/cutting by aligning national policy frameworks with international conventions and collaborating with different stakeholders to initiate efforts that foster change. Efforts include the enactment of laws and comprehensive policies and

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156 Domestic work is a sub-sector of the services sector (see International Labour Organization, *Marking progress against child labour*).

157 International Labour Organization and Global March against Child Labour, *Tackling Child Labour and Protecting Young Workers in Domestic Work: A Resource Manual* (Geneva, International Labour Office; New Delhi, Global March against Child Labour, 2014).

158 Scott Lyon, Marco Ranzani and Furio C. Rosati, "Unpaid household services and child labour", Working paper prepared for the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 2013.

159 International Labour Organization, "Child domestic work: global estimates 2012" (Geneva, 2013).

prevention measures, community education and media engagement and the collection and analysis of data. In their responses, States report on context-specific strategies, such a Latin American programme to end such practices in indigenous communities. Some African States have adopted comprehensive national strategies that include working with community and religious leaders to implement strengthened laws and to undertake social mobilization, public education and attitudinal change programmes. Some European States have focused on eliminating female genital mutilation/cutting in their immigrant communities through awareness-raising and behaviour change programmes, as well as on the provision of free medical care for victims and on strengthening judicial responses. High income countries in different regions are also supporting international strategies to eliminate the practice and undertaking to improve domestic responses by conducting research at the national level on the scale of female genital mutilation/cutting and trends within their own borders.

353. Some States, notably African States, are implementing national strategies that address child, early and forced marriage holistically and in relation to other harmful practices. Others have adopted more piecemeal approaches, for example by focusing only on legal reform, without awareness-raising, prevention efforts and the provision of services. Indicating a positive trend since 2010, numerous States across regions continue to reform laws to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 and to adopt punitive measures for violations of the law. States are implementing prevention programmes that empower girls at high risk and address root causes, including through community, family and school environments and by working with religious leaders. However, only some States highlight increased and ongoing commitments to fund such measures. Greater allocation of sustained and sufficient funding is still needed overall to ensure that laws, policies and programmes are all effectively implemented and reach those most at risk.

354. Many States acknowledge the need to prevent early childbearing, in principle, to ensure that girls' rights are upheld and their full potential and future opportunities and earnings are not limited. This indicates a positive trend since 2010, but even so, only some highlighted holistic strategies that protect rights and eliminate the discrimination that frequently causes early pregnancy. States in Central America and Africa, in particular, have delivered public education campaigns, some have reformed laws to make abortion services available to pregnant adolescents in certain circumstances and are adopting policies to prevent the expulsion of young mothers from school, as well as schemes at the village level aimed at removing social stigma. Countries across regions are addressing adolescent pregnancy by improving sexual and reproductive health-care education and services and through prevention and other efforts targeted at lower socioeconomic and marginalized communities.

Implementing gender-responsive child protection legislation, policies and services

355. Gender-responsive child protection legislation, policy and programming must be designed and based on an analysis of differences in gender roles and norms and ensure that girls' and boys' concerns across the life cycle are addressed equally, in law and in practice. Continuing the trend from 2010, States have made advances towards addressing the specific needs and experiences of girls within child protection laws, policies and services, but the large majority remain gender-blind.

356. States are at various stages of reforming child protection legislation and policies, implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ratifying its optional protocols, as well as aligning national priorities with international obligations. States across regions have amended child protection legislation to incorporate specific protections for girls at different stages of life, including through efforts to address trafficking, economic and sexual exploitation and harmful practices by increasing the minimum age of marriage and employment, and related penalties, for example. However, there is limited information on implementation and strategies for reaching those most at risk. Gaps remain in services for adolescent girls in particular. Various States have introduced gender-responsive child protection services and have established gender-responsive committees and councils to oversee legislative, policy and service developments to ensure proper implementation and government coordination. However, there is little attention given to sustained funding commitments for such measures and for monitoring and evaluation.

357. Various States acknowledge that unregistered and migrant girls face barriers to accessing child protection and other legal, social and health-care services and that they are particularly vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation. States from Western, Central and Eastern Europe and Central and Latin America, for example, are reforming welfare and adoption policies to ensure girls' rights to an identity and citizenship are upheld. Others are investing in workshops and awareness-raising programmes regarding rights in ethnic and migrant communities, in order to improve access to legal and other services. Many States have addressed child protection in national action plans as a component of ensuring girls' well-being, with some highlighting particular efforts to assist girls in vulnerable circumstances, including homeless and orphaned children and those displaced by conflict. Others have focused on efforts to combat child, early and forced marriage and trafficking as part of broader child protection frameworks that incorporate strategies on access to education, improving health and well-being and ending child labour.

Improving access to a gender-responsive educational environment

358. States across regions have expanded their agendas beyond narrowing gender gaps in enrolment by addressing financial barriers to improving girls' access to gender-responsive education of high quality and increasing safety in and around schools. States have made schools safer and more accessible for girls in recent years, recognizing the value of situating schools close to home, with community involvement and flexible schedules that better accommodate girls' needs, and by providing separate sanitation facilities. States support girls from marginalized and more vulnerable backgrounds in accessing school in context-specific ways, for example, by abolishing school fees for poorer, ethnic or migrant girls or by linking school attendance with social benefits; removing physical and learning barriers for girls with disabilities; establishing boarding schools for rural girls; supporting schools run by non-governmental organizations in refugee camps; and by addressing racial disparities in school discipline policies. The level of commitment and resource capacity varies across regions, thus many are yet to commit funding and develop holistic strategies. For instance, while various States acknowledge the interrelated challenges girls face, including poverty, health and malnutrition, care responsibilities, social pressures and stigmas, early pregnancy and child, early and

forced marriage, many fail to address the need for a gender-responsive educational environment as part of an integrated and comprehensive action plan for girls.

359. States are taking various approaches to addressing discrimination, violence, bullying and sexual harassment in and around schools, in order to improve safety and access. Since 2010, responses indicate a positive trend in the implementation of measures to address gender stereotyping in and through educational systems. Some are tackling gender stereotyping through reforms to curricula and teaching methods.

360. States in different regions have integrated sexual and reproductive health education in school curricula so as to reduce the rate of adolescent pregnancy, support young mothers and promote healthy, respectful and equal relationships. Some States, for example, are funding school-based services and hotlines to support survivors of violence and trauma. States have also increased media regulation in the light of new forms of harassment in school environments, such as cyberbullying. Some States are prioritizing attention to child labour and sexual exploitation, including child pornography, in the development of laws, policies and programmes in recognition of their effect on educational outcomes, among other negative effects. States have introduced public campaigns on bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and non-conforming sexual and gender identities. Some African States are promoting girls' education at the village level, including for young mothers.

Promoting girls' activism and participation

361. Girls' activism in civic and political spheres is essential for developing solutions to achieving gender equality and empowerment and combating discrimination. Numerous barriers still compound low public participation rates among girls, including discrimination, poverty and a lack of access to education and health care. However, indicating a positive trend since 2010, an increasing number of States across regions are establishing youth parliaments, councils, clubs and associations and are collaborating with private and non-governmental sectors on inclusive media strategies and on implementing "empowerment frameworks" that include training and leadership programmes at the local, national and sometimes regional and global levels to encourage girl's activism. Some States have national child and youth advisory boards to facilitate exchanges between girls about issues affecting them. Others, across regions, support educational youth theatre programmes with the aim of increasing girls' awareness about the risks of violence and available services, among other issues.

362. Many States recognize the importance of girls' participation but report that long-standing practices and attitudes in families, schools, communities and institutions create political and economic barriers to girls' views being heard and respected. Some States note ongoing challenges in promoting girls' leadership potential and involvement in traditionally male-dominated sports and media-based activities. In recognition of how emerging new media and technologies can generate new ways for girls to participate politically, some States support initiatives focused on information and communications technologies, including free Internet clubs and computer skills workshops. However, many other States have overlooked the specific need for efforts to ensure the provision of opportunities and resources for girls to create their own spaces, express their concerns, develop political ideas and encourage a more diverse political language in their societies.

3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

363. While States are increasingly working to realize girls' rights, efforts are often fragmented and inconsistent and fail to recognize girls' specific experiences across policy areas. Addressing girls' well-being requires a comprehensive approach, including gender-responsive legislation and policies across areas. This interrelated focus involves health, including sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, educational and economic outcomes across different stages through early childhood, adolescence and young adulthood, and addressing issues of fundamental safety and integrity of the person, including prevention of and protection from violence, harmful practices and discrimination.

364. Concrete measures are still needed to prevent and eliminate violence, harmful practices and child labour, in order to mitigate their impact on girls' health, well-being, education and future opportunities and earnings. Context-specific responses are necessary, as the long-standing clout of political and religious power structures in local communities continues to contribute to government inaction, even in countries that are party to human rights treaties that condemn harmful practices. Overarching measures, including legislative and policy reform, building institutional capacity, enhancing education for all, social mobilization and social norm change, as well as the ratification and effective implementation of international conventions, must be integrated into comprehensive, integrated and multisectoral national frameworks.

365. As girls cannot be isolated from the immediate contexts within which they live, from problems of child labour, to violence and abuse in the family, strategies are needed at the family and/or household level. The disproportionate allocation of domestic work and care responsibilities falling on girls is yet to be systematically addressed by States. Also, few governments directly address the specific needs of marginalized girls, despite recognizing the impact of marginalization.

366. Creating a more enabling environment for girls requires addressing all strategic objectives relating to girls and linking them with the other critical areas. In order to transform discriminatory social norms and strengthen understanding of and support for girls' rights over the long term, girls must be seen as rights holders by policymakers, families and communities, and governments and other principal duty bearers must enhance institutional support for girls' rights. To ensure the media is a tool for empowerment and not a source of harm, sexualized and discriminatory portrayals of girls must be regulated and measures adopted to improve girls' media literacy.

VI. Lessons learned and priorities for accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls in the post-2015 context

367. At present, the world is very far from the vision set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The global review of national implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern shows unacceptably slow and uneven progress. The increasing recognition of gender equality as a global priority by a broad range of

actors has not translated into real change in the lives of women and girls. The sweeping changes of the past 20 years in the social, economic, political, environmental and technological landscape have given rise to new challenges for achieving gender equality. Grave violations of women's and girls' human rights remain widespread. Women and girls who speak out and challenge such violations risk being subjected to routine violence, harassment and intimidation.

368. Creating a world where women and girls enjoy their human rights is one of the most defining and urgent challenges of this century. Such a daunting, yet achievable, task demands a change from business as usual to real transformation. The unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities that perpetuate gender inequalities, poverty and vulnerability must be changed and peaceful and sustainable societies created. This requires renewed political will and greater commitment from Member States to take action to ensure women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights in practice. A concerted effort is needed to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action so as to fulfil the commitments made in 1995.

369. In 2014, the Commission on the Status of Women called on States to tackle critical remaining challenges in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls through a transformative and comprehensive approach. The Commission called for gender equality, the empowerment of women and for the human rights of women and girls to be reflected as a stand-alone goal, as well as being integrated through targets and indicators into all other goals of the new development framework.

370. The 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action takes place at an opportune moment, at the end of the implementation period for the Millennium Development Goals and of Member States' deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals. This confluence provides a once in a generation opportunity to draw on the lessons learned and ensure the future framework delivers transformative change in the lives of women and girls. The lessons should also inform other global processes, such as the third International Conference on Financing for Development, the preparations for a new climate agreement and the strategic reviews taking place in 2015 in the area of peace and security, including the high-level reviews of United Nations peace operations and peacebuilding architecture and of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

371. The conclusions and recommendations below are informed by lessons from the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern as well as the findings of the expert group meeting on "Envisioning women's rights in the post-2015 context", organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and held from 3 to 5 November 2014 in New York.[160] The section also draws on research and analysis from United Nations entities and other sources as indicated.

[160] See www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations/expert-group-meeting.

A. Lessons learned and challenges in the current context for the implementation of the Platform for Action

Persistent gaps between norms and implementation and between commitment and action

372. Despite the expanded normative commitments to women's and girls' human rights in the past 20 years, there remains a stark gap between the global normative framework and its implementation on the ground, signalling a collective failure of leadership which has allowed the situation to persist. Gender inequality remains a universal challenge. There is not a single country that has reached gender equality. Even where States have made important advances in introducing laws and policies to promote gender equality, many of these developments are yet to be translated into women's and girls' equal enjoyment and exercise of their rights in practice. For example, while an increasing number of laws to address violence against women have been enacted across all regions, poor implementation and the persistence of stigma and shame around violence often prevent women from claiming their rights and being able to live a life that is free from violence. While laws have been introduced in most countries to promote equal pay for work of equal value, the persistence of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the education system and in labour markets more broadly mean that women continue to be concentrated in lower paid jobs. Too often, equality under the law is undermined in practice by the lack of implementation, discriminatory social norms and attitudes, institutional barriers and women's relative lack of power and resources.

373. Countries have given uneven attention across the critical areas of concern, with greater emphasis on some areas than others. For example, there has been an increasing focus on realizing women's and girls' right to education, yet relatively less attention to the policies needed to increase women's access to decent work. The focus on a narrow set of issues in the implementation of some critical areas of concern is another challenge. For instance, while there has been a focus on women's right to participate in decision-making in some arenas, such as national parliaments, the status of women and their decision-making power in other domains, such as households, market-based enterprises and local governments, have received less attention. Efforts to address sexual and reproductive health and rights are often narrowly focused on maternal health rather than on a comprehensive approach that is responsive to women's health across the life cycle. The uneven and narrow focus of implementation undermines the indivisibility and interdependence of the human rights of women and girls.

374. The global review shows that human rights standards and principles have not been applied in a cross-cutting manner across laws, policies and programmes in all critical areas of concern. For example, the implementation of the critical area of concern on health should be grounded in international human rights standards on women and health, by ensuring that health care is available, accessible, acceptable, appropriate and of good quality, without discrimination against women and girls, and by ensuring that women participate in decision-making regarding health-care policies and services (see E/2001/22, annex IV, general comment No. 14 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). The implementation of the critical area of concern on the economy should reflect international human rights standards, requiring that economic policies ensure non-discrimination and equality, and non-retrogression in the realization of economic and social rights, including

women's access to decent work (see E/2005/22, annex X, general comment No. 18 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).

Lack of attention to multiple forms of discrimination and inequality

375. The review of the national implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern shows that while States have recognized the need to address the specific needs of women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination, efforts to implement the Platform for Action have largely neglected disparities among women and girls. Despite significant gains in girls' educational attainment at the primary and secondary school levels, girls who are poor and/or live in rural or conflict-affected settings continue to experience significant disadvantages. While many States have made efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making, there is a glaring gap as regards ensuring the participation and voice of particularly marginalized women in key decision-making forums. Where statistics are collected to monitor progress and gaps relating to gender equality, they are most often only disaggregated by sex, thus overlooking differences and inequalities among women based on other factors.

Persistence of discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes and unequal power relations between women and men

376. Discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes have long been recognized as major impediments to the achievement of gender equality and the realization of women's rights. As the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action has shown, even where equality before the law has been achieved, discriminatory social norms remain pervasive, which affects all aspects of gender equality, women's empowerment and women's and girls' human rights, for example their right to be free from violence, their rights to inheritance and property, the right to an adequate standard of living, their right to education, their right to work, sexual and reproductive health and rights, the right to water and sanitation and their right to participate in public and political life. Discriminatory norms and stereotypes have shifted in some contexts, such as the questioning of the breadwinning role as exclusively male as a result of families increasingly relying on women's earnings. Yet, new discriminatory norms that perpetuate gender inequalities have emerged in other arenas, such as the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes that sexualize women and girls in the media, including the rapidly expanding social media platforms. Discriminatory social norms that perpetuate violence against women remain persistent, for example, norms that excuse violence and stigmatize survivors.

377. However, social norms are not monolithic in any society and they are also subject to change, whether as a result of broader processes of economic, cultural and social change, or through changing gender dynamics, including through deliberate social action by women's rights advocates in alliance with other stakeholders to foster norms of equality, human rights and justice. In order to promote the rights of girls and women it is particularly important that men and boys take responsibility for challenging discrimination and nurturing social norms that support social justice, fairness and gender equality, which already exist in all societies, as an important complement to the implementation of human rights standards.

Conservative and extremist resistance to gender equality

378. The realization of women's and girls' human rights is being threatened in some contexts, in both developing and developed countries, by the emergence and mobilization of conservative forces and extremist groups that increasingly resist gender equality and women's and girls' human rights. Such forces exist on a spectrum, with diverse manifestations across different contexts. However, a common feature is the misuse of religion, tradition and culture to curtail women's human rights and entrench stereotypical gender roles, particularly in relation to women's rights over their bodies and sexuality as well as women's and girls' rights to participate in public life, including in educational institutions, labour markets and politics. In some contexts these forces have reshaped laws, state institutions and social norms related to gender equality, thereby reinforcing discrimination and violating women's human rights (see A/67/287).

379. As the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights has elaborated, the reality of diversity within all communities makes it imperative to ensure that women's voices within a community are heard without discrimination, particularly those who represent the perspectives, interests and desires of marginalized groups (see A/67/287). While the resistance from extremist groups to women's human rights is not a new phenomenon, over the past 20 years such forces have become increasingly connected with greater capacity and resources to influence political agendas. Far from representing "authentic" religious traditions or cultures, such forces represent modern phenomena, sometimes offering new interpretations of religious precepts. In contexts where dominant economic policies have resulted in growing inequalities, persistent poverty and a dearth of decent jobs, especially for young people, and where governments have failed to deliver a sense of security, basic social services and sustainable livelihoods, some of those groups have gained legitimacy by stepping in to fill the gap. Religion or culture, in and of themselves, cannot be reduced to a static, closed set of beliefs and practices, as those are never monolithic and often fluid. However, the politicization of religion and culture can lead to the violation of women's human rights through the codification of discriminatory norms and stereotypes into actual laws, policies and practices (see A/HRC/17/26). Culture or religion cannot be a justification for the violation of the human rights of women and girls.

Persistence of violent conflict

380. Continuing instability and new outbreaks of violent conflict in which civilians are increasingly under attack are key impediments to progress across the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. Conflict-affected countries perform worse on key human development indicators, with time series data showing slower progress or even regression. Sexual and gender-based violence is exacerbated during conflict and is a key risk factor for HIV and AIDS. Women's access to services, economic opportunities and justice is undermined as a result of the destruction of civilian infrastructure and damaged state institutions. Gross breaches of human rights, which at times involve direct targeting of women and girls and the defenders of their rights, undermine global commitments, while the continued lack of security prevents women's political, social and economic participation. Militarism, based on violent masculinities and a culture of domination, perpetuates discrimination against women and undermines progress towards gender equality.

Disabling economic context

381. It is clear from the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action that progress towards gender equality has been stymied by the broader economic context marked by crisis and instability. Financial globalization has brought with it the threat of destabilizing financial flows and periodic economic crises that can result in increased inequalities and vulnerability, with particularly detrimental effects on poorer women. The global financial crisis, since it began in 2007/2008, and the austerity measures adopted in many countries, since 2010, have put progress towards gender equality in further jeopardy.[161] Economic crises, however, merely accentuate the existing structural inequalities and disadvantages that women experience. Addressing the underlying causes and consequences of crises, therefore, provides an opportunity to tackle patterns of gender inequality and discrimination that are entrenched in economic structures and policy processes in order to shift towards new policy approaches that are gender-responsive (see A/HRC/26/39).

382. Dominant macroeconomic policies of financial and trade liberalization, deflationary monetary policies and public sector reforms have not, overall, been conducive to creating decent employment conditions for women or supporting public investments in areas needed to achieve gender equality. Further, such approaches have often focused narrowly on raising the level of GDP as their primary goal and have, for the most part, failed to support the achievement of substantive equality for women. In some instances, GDP can even increase as a result of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, which are reliant on fossil fuels and natural resource extraction that contribute to environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity, which also has a negative social impact, including for women and girls. Alternative approaches emphasize human development, well-being, the realization of human rights and environmental sustainability. Increases in GDP are important only to the extent that they support increased investments to achieve sustainable development and the realization of human rights, including greater gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Inadequate resources for gender equality

383. Insufficient resources for targeted spending on gender equality, such as the implementation of laws, policies, national gender equality mechanisms and national action plans, as well as the low level of resources allocated to sectors such as social protection, health, education and water and sanitation represent a major challenge in the full implementation of the Platform for Action. Gender-responsive budgeting can support the effective and efficient allocation and spending of available resources for women and girls. However, the impact of such allocations will be limited when overall budgets for the provision of services, social protection and infrastructure are grossly inadequate. There are a range of options for mobilizing resources, both domestically and internationally, by improving the efficiency of revenue collection, broadening the range of taxes used to generate revenues while ensuring that they are equitable both in terms of revenue mobilization and expenditure, and international

[161] See A/HRC/26/39; see also Isabel Ortiz and Matthew Cummins, “The age of austerity: a review of public expenditures and adjustment measures in 181 countries”, Working Paper (New York, Initiative for Policy Dialogue; Geneva, South Centre, 2013); and UN-Women, *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality* (New York, 2014).

borrowing to finance investments which have significant social returns (see A/HRC/26/28).

384. While the share of ODA allocated to gender equality has remained relatively stable, there remains considerable underinvestment in gender equality, particularly when aid spending is broken down by sectors. Aid focused on gender equality is concentrated in the social sectors of education and health, with alarmingly low levels of aid targeted towards economic sectors. Donor funding for women's role in peace and security and sexual and reproductive health and rights remains inadequate. While North-South development cooperation continues to be a primary source of ODA, particularly for the least developed and landlocked developing countries, South-South development cooperation is on the rise. However, specific information is not available on spending allocated towards gender equality in the context of South-South development cooperation. Relatively new sources of financing, such as private-public partnerships, the private sector and philanthropic foundations also have a growing influence on priorities and financing for gender equality, however they are often focused on a narrow set of issues.[162] A critical question is the extent to which all donors are accountable for the impact of their actions on gender equality.

Women's low levels of participation

385. The low levels of participation and leadership by women and girls in decision-making are a key barrier to progress across all critical areas of concern. Women remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making at all levels, in the household, local governments, the management of environmental resources, national planning and development structures, national parliaments and global governance. There is no consistent effort to ensure the participation and influence of women and women's organizations in shaping and monitoring policies across the critical areas of concern, which may mean that public services, programmes and infrastructure are not sufficiently responsive to women's specific needs or interests. Women's participation is of critical importance, both as an issue of justice and equality and because the active presence of women can put gender-specific concerns on the agenda and monitor the implementation of policies and programmes. However, participation is more than just numerical presence in decision-making forums. It is about the effective articulation of issues that matter to different groups of women and the ability to influence and monitor policies. Enabling women's participation, however, should not mean that women carry the sole responsibility for prioritizing gender equality concerns. All decision-makers, women and men, must take responsibility.

Absence of strong accountability mechanisms

386. The implementation of the Platform for Action has been hampered by the absence of strong accountability mechanisms to enable women to hold decision-makers answerable for their actions. Key institutions and mechanisms for promoting gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls, such as national gender equality mechanisms and national human rights

[162] Julia Miller, Angelika Arutyunova and Cindy Clark, *New Actors, New Money, New Conversations: A Mapping of Recent Initiatives for Women and Girls* (Toronto, Association of Women's Rights in Development, 2013).

institutions, are often underresourced and lack the political support or recognition they need to fulfil their mandate. Gender mainstreaming and efforts to ensure whole of government prioritization of and responsibilities for concrete progress towards gender equality remain limited, which is particularly concerning given that all policy and programme areas must contribute to achieving gender equality. While women's organizations play a crucial role in monitoring progress and advancing claims for women's rights, the constraints on the ability of civil society to influence decision-making, including resource constraints, present major obstacles for women's organizations in fulfilling their role.

387. State restructuring and public sector reform in many contexts has increased the influence and impact of private sector actors on women's enjoyment of their human rights in many countries. While governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action and for ensuring that private actors do not violate the human rights of women and girls, there is a growing demand for private actors also to be held answerable for their actions to other stakeholders.[163] The influence and impact of transnational corporations and international financial institutions and the actions of States beyond their borders also pose challenges for accountability.[163] States, especially more powerful developed States, exert significant influence outside their borders, particularly through trade, investment and financial policies, which often constrain the capacity of less developed States to achieve development goals.[163] There is a need for stronger accountability mechanisms to respond to these challenges.

Limited data to track progress

388. A significant challenge for effectively monitoring progress towards gender equality is the lack of comparable data of high quality, collected over time. Many areas of statistics that are of critical importance such as time use, asset ownership, women's experiences of poverty, women's participation in decision-making at all levels, including local government, and violence against women, are still not produced regularly by countries. As evidenced in the review of national implementation, even where "snapshot" data exist, there are often no trend data to enable monitoring of changes over time. Data and statistical requirements for the post-2015 development agenda will be substantial, particularly for monitoring gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls in the new framework.

B. Moving ahead: priorities for accelerating implementation and achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of the human rights of women and girls in the post-2015 context

389. **Twenty years ago the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established a visionary agenda and set of commitments for advancing the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity. The vision remains pertinent, as Member States deliberate on the**

[163] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Center for Economic and Social Rights, *Who Will be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda* (Geneva and New York, 2013).

post-2015 development agenda. Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls must be a central priority in the post-2015 development agenda. To be transformative, the future agenda must be universal and anchored in human rights. It must achieve sustainable development in all three dimensions, economic, social and environmental.[164] **It must create peaceful societies by changing cultures of violence, masculinity and militarism. Gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights are fundamental for achieving human rights, peace and security and sustainable development.**

390. **As recognized in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and in the report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970 and Corr.1), the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to sustainable development and as such, implementation efforts must be accelerated to achieve the future goals. This means the future agenda must address gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls in a comprehensive manner and tackle the key structural constraints that are holding back progress for women and girls: persistent discrimination in law and in practice; unacceptably high levels of violence against women and girls and of harmful practices; women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work; the denial of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights across the life cycle; and women's significant underrepresentation in decision-making at all levels in the public and private sphere. It also means addressing gender equality in a transversal manner across all other areas of the new agenda. Given the urgency and scale of the task ahead, States must not wait until the post-2015 development agenda is in place, and rather take immediate action for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action, so as to achieve clear, measurable and major change by 2020.**

391. **The full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must be a priority for the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and the post-2015 development agenda. The stark gap between global norms and women's and girls' practical enjoyment of human rights calls for urgent attention to bridging the gap and achieving substantive equality for women. Accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action across all critical areas of concern and maximizing the synergies between them requires all the human rights of women and girls to be realized, with attention given to the interdependence and indivisibility of rights. Religion or culture must not be misused to justify discrimination against women and girls. Of paramount importance is that States look beyond the "averages" to monitor the impact and results of laws and policies for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.**

392. **Based on the lessons learned from the implementation of the Platform for Action, urgent action is required in five priority areas to accelerate progress: transforming discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes; transforming the economy to achieve gender equality and sustainable development; ensuring**

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164 Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda entitled "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet" (A/69/700).

the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels; significantly increasing investments in gender equality; and strengthening accountability for gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls.

Transforming discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes

393. **The transformation of discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes must be a priority for accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action and for effectively moving towards gender equality, women's empowerment and the realization of women's and girls' human rights. Policies and programmes across the critical areas of concern must change underlying discriminatory social norms, power relations and gender stereotypes and instead, promote positive norms of gender equality, human rights and social justice. Strategies should be context-specific, some examples of actions include: programmes, including public and media campaigns, to mobilize communities to reject violence against women; outreach and education campaigns supporting women's role in politics, public life and leadership; policies that support the redistribution of unpaid care work between women and men in the household; and policies to remedy discriminatory practices regarding inheritance and women's access to resources. Men and boys must take responsibility for challenging discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes and fostering positive norms of gender equality, non-violence and respect.**

Transforming the economy to achieve gender equality and sustainable development

394. **Achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment requires transformative economic and social policy agendas that are firmly anchored within a human rights framework. Macroeconomic policies should expand the overall fiscal space, while a broad range of gender-responsive social, economic and environmental policies should prioritize increasing State investments in infrastructure, public services and social protection measures. Such policies should work in tandem to ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of economic and social rights for all; reduce and redistribute the burden of care work placed on women and girls; and promote sustainable livelihoods and ecological integrity. Governments should guard against economic policy positions that lead to retrogression in the enjoyment of rights. In the context of an increasingly integrated global economy, macroeconomic policy should reduce vulnerabilities by adopting measures that minimize systemic risks. Macroeconomic policies should also generate decent work for women and men and ensure women can enjoy their full range of rights at work. Processes of policy design, implementation and monitoring across all policy areas should be participatory by creating channels and mechanisms for participation and dialogue with women's rights advocacy groups, civil society organizations and associations.**

Significantly increasing investments in gender equality

395. **Increasing investments in gender equality to fulfil the vision of the Platform for Action requires greater efforts to mobilize and increase domestic and international resources for gender equality, including official development assistance. For the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and**

the post-2015 agenda, it will be vital to reorient fiscal and monetary policies to generate and increase public spending on gender equality and to monitor and analyse the effects of such public spending on gender inequality through gender-responsive budgeting. In order to rectify persistent underinvestment, resources must be significantly increased for national gender equality mechanisms and local, national, regional and global women's organizations.

396. **All developed countries should meet the 0.7 per cent target for ODA commitments, including the commitments to the least developed countries of 0.15 per cent of gross national income by 2015, thereby ensuring a stronger focus on gender equality, with attention to sectors where spending remains inadequate. Given the increasing role of South-South development cooperation, it is important to monitor and analyse spending allocated towards gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights in such cooperation. Global taxes, such as the proposed financial transaction tax, can also provide additional sources of revenue and ease financial constraints, particularly for lower income countries. All donors must be transparent in their decisions and actions and abide by international human rights standards.**

Ensuring the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels

397. **The full and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making to influence the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies is essential for accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action. Temporary special measures provide a proven strategy for increasing women's representation in decision-making and should be replicated and expanded. Greater efforts are needed to address the barriers to women's full and equal participation in decision-making, including the discriminatory culture of political institutions, financial constraints, the lack of family-friendly provisions and threats of violence and intimidation. Women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding must be pursued as a priority. States also have a responsibility to protect women human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work.**

Strengthening accountability for gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls

398. **Achieving gender equality requires the involvement of women and men, girls and boys, and is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Governments must meet their obligations as duty bearers and women and girls must be empowered in claiming and enjoying their human rights. Accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action will require strengthened accountability mechanisms for gender equality, including in respect of national gender equality mechanisms, national human rights institutions and regulatory bodies. This means reforming the mandates, operations and norms within institutions and ensuring they are properly resourced and responsive to women and girls and that there are consequences for not meeting obligations. All parts of government must be responsible for achieving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized across government, with effective means of monitoring progress. National action plans for gender equality should be strengthened, by costing their implementation, setting clear goals, reporting on and monitoring frameworks and ensuring the allocation of adequate resources.**

399. **Member States, international finance institutions and transnational corporations must be held accountable for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights, both within their borders and extraterritorially. While States must continue to regulate the private sector so as to ensure compliance with human rights standards, multi-stakeholder accountability frameworks which include civil society can provide complementary avenues of accountability for the private sector. Such frameworks should include transparent reporting processes and procedures, public consultations and hearings and the ability to submit and handle complaints.**

400. **The United Nations system has a strong role to play in supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including through pursuing systematic gender mainstreaming; substantially increasing resources to deliver results, especially under the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks; monitoring progress with better disaggregated data and statistics; and institutionalizing robust accountability systems, including through the full implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (see General Assembly resolution 67/226).**

401. **Increased efforts are needed from Member States to address data gaps and prioritize the collection, reporting, use and analysis of data to effectively monitor progress towards gender equality. Significantly increased investments in national statistical offices are needed, along with increased capacity-building, as part of the data revolution, and substantially increased resources devoted to the production of a broad range of gender statistics so as to make the monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda possible. However, the lack of data should not be an excuse for policy inaction. In addition to gender statistics, other sources of data, including qualitative data, should be validated and used to provide information on the full complexity of women's and girls' lives and experiences.**

Annex

Regional distribution rates of responses to the questionnaire

Economic Commission for Africa	*Economic Commission for Europe*	*Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*	*Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*	*Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*
Algeria	Albania	Antigua and Barbuda	Afghanistan	Bahrain
Angola	Andorra	Argentina	Australia	Iraq
Benin	Armenia	Barbados	Brunei Darussalam	Jordan
Botswana	Austria	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Cambodia	Lebanon
Burkina Faso	Azerbaijan	Brazil	China	Oman
Burundi	Belarus	Chile	Fiji	Qatar
Cabo Verde	Belgium	Colombia	India	Saudi Arabia
Cameroon	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Costa Rica	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Syrian Arab Republic
Chad	Bulgaria	Cuba	Japan	United Arab Emirates
Comoros	Canada	Dominica	Marshall Islands	Yemen
Congo	Croatia	Dominican Republic	Mongolia	State of Palestine
Côte d’Ivoire	Cyprus	Ecuador	Nauru	
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Czech Republic	El Salvador	Nepal	
Djibouti	Denmark	Grenada	New Zealand	
Egypt	Estonia	Guatemala	Palau	
Eritrea	Finland	Guyana	Papua New Guinea	
Ethiopia	France	Mexico	Philippines	
Gabon	Georgia	Panama	Republic of Korea	
Gambia	Germany	Paraguay	Samoa	
Ghana	Greece	Peru	Singapore	
Guinea	Hungary	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Solomon Islands	
Guinea-Bissau	Iceland	Suriname	Thailand	
Kenya	Ireland	Trinidad and Tobago	Timor-Leste	
Lesotho	Israel	Uruguay	Vanuatu	
Liberia	Italy	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Viet Nam	
Madagascar	Kazakhstan			
Malawi	Kyrgyzstan			
Mali	Latvia			
Mauritania	Lithuania			
Mauritius	Luxembourg			
Morocco	Malta			

Economic Commission for Africa	*Economic Commission for Europe*	*Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*	*Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*	*Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*
Mozambique	Monaco			
Namibia	Netherlands			
Niger	Norway			
Nigeria	Poland			
Rwanda	Portugal			
Sao Tome and Principe	Republic of Moldova			
Senegal	Romania			
Seychelles	Russian Federation			
Sierra Leone	Slovakia			
Somalia	Slovenia			
South Africa	Spain			
South Sudan	Sweden			
Sudan	Switzerland			
Swaziland	Tajikistan			
Togo	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia			
Tunisia	Turkey			
Uganda	Turkmenistan			
United Republic of Tanzania	Ukraine			
Zambia	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
Zimbabwe	United States of America			
	Uzbekistan			
51/54	**52/56**	**25/33 (44)**	**25/43 (53)**[a]	**11/12 (17)**[b]

Note: A total of 164 national reports were received by UN-Women, either directly from States or through the regional commissions. The table reflects the regional distribution, by regional commissions. Reports have been listed under one region only. The number in parentheses reflects the total number of members of the corresponding regional commission.

[a] The member countries of the Economic Commission for Africa who submitted reports but are also members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia are Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.

[b] The member countries of the Economic Commission for Europe who submitted reports but are also members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.