

# COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

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**CSW41 AGREED CONCLUSIONS (1997/3)**

United Nations, March 1997

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**Governments, international organizations and the private sector should recognize the contributions women make to economic growth through their paid and unpaid work and as employers, employees and entrepreneurs. They should adopt the following:**

1. Governments, international organizations, the private sector, non governmental organizations, social partners (employers' organizations and labour unions) should adopt a systematic and multifaceted approach to accelerating women's full participation in economic decision-making at all levels and ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of economic policies, including economic development policies and poverty eradication programmes. To this end, Governments are urged to enhance the capacity of women to influence and make economic decisions as paid workers, managers, employers, elected officials, members of non-governmental organizations and unions, producers, household managers and consumers. Governments are encouraged to conduct a gender analysis of policies and programmes that incorporates information on the full range of women's and men's paid and unpaid economic activity. Governments, international organizations, particularly the International Labour Organization (ILO), the private sector and non-governmental organizations, should develop and share case studies and best practices of gender analysis in policy areas that affect the economic situation of women.
2. In order to ensure women's empowerment in the economy and their economic advancement, adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels, as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources, for the advancement of women, will also be required.
3. Governments should promote and support the elimination of biases in the educational system so as to counteract the gender segregation of the labour market, enhance the employability of women, and effectively improve women's skills and broaden women's access to career choices, in particular in science, new technologies and other potential and innovative areas of expansion in terms of employment.
4. Economic policies and structural adjustment programmes, including liberalization policies, should include privatization, financial and trade policies, should be formulated and monitored in a gender-sensitive way, with inputs from the women most impacted by these policies, in order to generate positive results for women and men, drawing on research on the gender impact of macroeconomic and micro-economic policies. Governments should ensure, inter alia, that macroeconomic policies, including financial and public sector reforms, and employment generation, are gender-sensitive and friendly to small-scale and medium-sized enterprises. Local-level regulations and administrative arrangements should be conducive to women entrepreneurs. It is the responsibility of Governments to ensure that women are not discriminated against in times of structural change and economic recession.
5. Governments should ensure that women's rights, particularly those of rural women and women living in poverty, are being promoted and implemented through their equal access to economic resources, including land, property rights, right to inheritance, credit and traditional savings schemes, such as women's banks and cooperatives.
6. The international community should actively support national efforts for the promotion of microcredit schemes that ensure women's access to credit, self-employment and integration into the economy.
7. Microcredit schemes should be supported and monitored in order to evaluate their efficiency in terms of their impact on increasing women's economic empowerment and well-being, income-earning capacity and integration into the economy.
8. Governments, the private sector and those organizations in civil society that provide training services that promote a gender balance in terms of education and participation in economic activity, should focus on institutional capacity-building and

consciousness-raising as well as on improving and upgrading technical skills, including business and management skills and the use of new technologies. Local and traditional technologies and products based on women's knowledge should also be supported and promoted.

9. Non-governmental organizations and women's organizations should develop incentives for outstanding women entrepreneurs. It is important that Governments, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil society, women's organizations and other relevant actors promote women's entrepreneurial and self-employed activities through technical assistance services or programmes; information on markets; training; the creation of networks, including those at the regional and international levels; and adequate financial support; and where appropriate, by developing incentives. In order to strengthen the link between sustainable development and poverty eradication, such encouragement and support should extend to businesses owned by women in environmental, resource-based and export-oriented industries.
10. To secure a critical mass of women's participation in top decision-making positions, Governments should implement and monitor anti-discriminatory laws. The public administration and the private sector should comply with these laws and introduce changes to corporate structures. Positive or affirmative action can be an effective policy instrument for improving the position of women in sectors and levels of the economy where they are under-represented. Governments should stimulate employers to introduce objective and transparent procedures for recruitment, gender-sensitive career planning, and monitoring and accountability systems.
11. Social partners (labour unions and employers' organizations) and non governmental organizations should consider monitoring and publicizing the enterprises and organizations that take initiatives for the advancement of women and publicizing information on the companies that violate anti-discrimination laws.
12. Governments should intensify their efforts to implement the actions identified in the Beijing Platform for Action for the elimination of

occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination. In that regard, the security of women's employment and the conditions for their reintegration into the labour market need to be the subject of special attention. Due consideration should also be given to women in the informal sector and atypical jobs.

13. Governments, labour unions and the private sector should develop and use analytical tools to compare wages in female and male-dominated occupations, including measures and tools to better reflect the real value of the skills, knowledge and experience of women developed through waged and unwaged work, as well as the full range of the requirements and conditions of waged work, with the aim of achieving equal pay for work of equal value, with a particular focus on minimum wages and low-wage industries. Gender-sensitive monitoring is crucial in enforcing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Comprehensive policy-making in this field should include:
  - (a) Use of analytical tools;
  - (b) Effective legislation;
  - (c) Transparency of women's and men's wages;
  - (d) Changing the gender-based division of labour and the stereotyped choices of men and women;
  - (e) Effective guidance for employers.
14. Governments are encouraged to develop strategies to increase the well-being of low-waged workers, including enforcement of existing laws in particular in those industries where the most vulnerable workers, predominantly women, are found.
15. Full integration of women into the formal economy and, in particular into economic decision-making, means changing the current gender-based division of labour into new economic structures where women and men enjoy equal treatment, pay and power. To this end, better sharing of paid and unpaid work between women and men is required. Governments should take or encourage measures, including, where appropriate, the formulation, promotion and implementation of legal and

administrative measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and personal and/or family life, such as child and dependant care, parental leave and flexible working schemes for men and women and, where appropriate, shorter working hours.

16. Governments should consider ratifying the new ILO Convention on home-based workers.
17. Governments and employers should ensure the protection of the rights of migrant women workers, by creating better educational and employment opportunities, preventing and combating trafficking in women and children, and eliminating discrimination against women in the labour market.
18. Governments should monitor and enforce equal opportunity policies and labour laws pertaining to the practices of all of the national and transnational corporations operating in their countries.
19. Women and men should identify and support women-friendly corporations and socially responsible businesses through investments and the use of their services or products.
20. The unpaid work of women, such as work in agriculture, food production, voluntary work, work in family business, and work in natural resource management and in the household, is a considerable contribution to the economy. Unpaid work should be measured and valued through existing and improved mechanisms, including by:
  - (a) Measuring, in quantitative terms, unremunerated work that is outside national accounts, working to improve methods to assess its value, and accurately reflecting its value in satellite or other official accounts that are separate from but consistent with core national accounts;
  - (b) Conducting regular time-use studies to measure, in quantitative terms, unremunerated work;
  - (c) Providing resources and technical assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in valuing and making visible women's unpaid work.
21. The international community, in particular the creditor countries and international financial institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should further pursue effective, equitable, development-oriented and durable solutions to the external debt and debt-servicing problems of the developing countries on the basis of existing debt relief and reduction mechanisms, including debt reduction, grants and concessional financial flows, in particular for the least developed countries, taking into account the negative effect of these issues on women and women's programmes.
22. The funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and the World Trade Organization, within their respective mandates, should improve coordination and dialogue at all levels, including the field level, in order to ensure the effectiveness of their programmes and policies to support gender equality.
23. Development policies should focus on the economic empowerment of women. The interlinkage between national policies at the macrolevel and economic and social gender roles and relations at the microlevel should be clear in order to make the policies more effective. The impact on women of liberalization policies, which include privatization, financial and trade policies, should be assessed.
24. Governments should commit themselves to the goal of gender balance, with special emphasis on reaching a critical mass of women, as soon as possible, when nominating representatives to serve on governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental bodies dealing with policy-making in the areas of finance, economic development, trade and commerce (for example, the Fifth Committee and Second Committee of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Trade and Development Board, the Industrial Development Board and the General Council of the World Trade Organization).
25. The production and use of disaggregated statistics by sex should be promoted as a fundamental tool for monitoring the gender division of the labour market and the participation of women in high-level management positions, including economic

decision-making, showing the advantages of women's participation in top management and conversely the costs of their exclusion. With regard to the United Nations system, a special data section on women managers should be part of the 1998 synthesis report and the report on the status of the world's women. This could serve as a special mechanism for monitoring how gender-balance goals are being achieved.

26. Issues such as the impact on women of structural adjustment and liberalization policies, which include privatization, financial and trade policies, should be further examined and could be taken up in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development, to be considered by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

27. The international community, while strengthening international cooperation, should emphasize the importance of an open, rule-based, equitable, secure, non discriminatory, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system that will also ensure the equal access of women to markets and technologies and resources at both the national and international levels. ■

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