



**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-ninth session**

**Managing the transition from MDGs to SDGs:
Lessons learned for gender equality from the MDGs to galvanize transformative change**

**Thursday, 19 March 2015
3.00 pm to 6.00 pm**

ISSUES PAPER

1. Introduction

In its resolution 2013/18, the Economic and Social Council decided that at its fifty-ninth session, in 2015, the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) 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.

As part of the review and appraisal, the Commission will hold a panel on managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The panel will build on the outcome of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to identify the key actions and commitments needed to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda transforms the lives of women and girls, including in its operationalization. The panel will result in a Chair's summary that will contribute to the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and will constitute a contribution by the Commission to the annual main theme of the Economic and Social Council in 2015.

2. Elements for discussion

A. Background

The agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/2014/27) represent the only negotiated outcome agreed by Member States that provides a comprehensive assessment of the MDGs from a gender perspective, setting out areas of progress and gaps, as well as factors contributing to lack of progress and future actions. From a gender perspective, the MDGs have played an important role in galvanizing attention and resources for gender equality and women's empowerment, but progress in the lives of women and girls has been uneven and fallen short of expectations. There have been important gains in some areas such as girls' access to primary education, but less progress in other areas such as maternal mortality, women's access to decent work and women's and girls' access to safe, reliable and hygienic sanitation facilities. Progress has also been uneven, both within countries, with stark differences in achievement between socioeconomic groups, as well as between countries.

Several key lessons emerge from a gender perspective. MDG 3 has been important for signaling gender equality as a global priority. However the targets were narrowly framed and did not include several fundamental issues such as the disproportionate share of unpaid care work carried out by women and girls, women's lack of access to assets and resources, women's low participation in decision-making at all levels, realizing sexual and reproductive health and rights, and eliminating violence against women and girls. The MDGs did not tackle the structural foundations of gender inequality which hold back progress, in particular unequal power relations between women and men, and the persistence of social norms, stereotypes and practices that discriminate against women and girls. Gender mainstreaming has been inadequate in the design and implementation of the framework, thus impeding progress on all MDGs. The lack of resources and of political will to prioritize gender equality has been a major impediment holding back progress in the achievement of all MDGs. The focus on national averages has also been problematic, as it has masked significant gaps in achievements for women and girls experiencing multiple forms of discrimination. Furthermore, the MDGs have not paid attention to the broader context for the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women, such as the impact of economic crises, climate change, violent conflict and the influence of extremist groups.

Building on the lessons learnt from the MDGs, the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action generated several priority actions for accelerating progress towards gender equality in the post-2015 context. 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-- with gender equality as a cross cutting priority. Gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights are fundamental for achieving human rights, peace and security and sustainable development for all.

As recognized in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and in the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, 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. It also means that gender equality must be addressed in a transversal manner across all other goals and in all aspects of the new agenda.

The full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must be a priority for the post-2015 development agenda. 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.

To this end, the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action identified five key priority areas to accelerate progress towards gender equality in the post-2015 context: transforming discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes; transforming the economy to achieve gender equality and sustainable development; ensuring the full and equal participation and leadership 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.

As the international community transitions from the MDGs to the SDGs it is essential that the lessons from the MDGs for women and girls form the basis for the way forward and the unfinished business of the MDGs becomes the central priority.

B. Questions for discussion during the dialogue

The following issues could be considered:

- How can successful approaches to mainstreaming a gender perspective across social, economic and environmental policies be institutionalized moving forward? How can these successes help to ensure that gender equality concerns are systematically addressed across the post-2015 development agenda?
- What implementation strategies will ensure that the post-2015 development agenda delivers results for the most marginalized groups of women and girls living in challenging contexts, for example conflict affected countries?
- What will it take to ensure the full and equal participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in shaping, influencing and reviewing the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda at local and national levels? What kind of monitoring, reporting and accountability mechanisms will be needed to achieve that?
- What kinds of mechanisms and structures are needed at national, regional and global levels to ensure that all stakeholders fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to achieve gender equality?
- How will the UN system support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda for women and girls? What changes are needed to ensure the UN system's accountability for gender equality results?

3. Format

The panel will be chaired by Mr. Mohamed ElBahi, Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (Sudan), supported by a moderator who will facilitate the inter-active discussion. The discussion will begin with introductory presentations of 7 – 10 minutes by four panelists. The outcome of the panel discussion will be a Chair's summary and will serve as the Commission's contribution to the ECOSOC main theme of 2015.