



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 March 2015

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-ninth session

9-20 March 2015

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

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”

Resources for gender equality: Good practices and strategies for action/the way forward

Chair’s summary

1. On 13 March 2015, the Commission on the Status of Women held a panel discussion on “Resources for gender equality: good practices and strategies for action/the way forward”. The panel was chaired by Mr. Mohamed Elbahi, Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, and was moderated by Ms. Aruna Rao, Executive Director of ‘Gender At Work’. The panellists were: Diane Elson, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, Mr. Mohamed Chafiki, Director of Studies and Financial Forecasts, Ministry of Economy and Finance of Morocco, Ms. Lydia Alpízar Durán, Executive Director of the Association for Women’s Rights in Development, and Ms. Patti O’Neill, Acting Head of Division, Global Partnerships and Policies, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD. The discussion focused on current financing gaps and how to close these gaps, as well as effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms, new partnerships and innovative financing that are needed to realize gender equality commitments. An Issues paper provided the framework for the interactive dialogue, in which 16 government, one regional group and four civil society representatives participated.
2. Speakers underlined the critical importance of mobilizing domestic resources, particularly through tax revenue, to address gender inequality. It was, for example, highlighted that tax revenue in Africa was ten times the volume of official development assistance (ODA) in 2012 and that, if all developing countries were able to generate tax revenue equal to 15 per cent of their national income, they could realize at least an additional USD 198 billion per year, more than all the foreign development assistance combined. Participants emphasized that mobilized resources needed to be allocated efficiently to make a real impact on the lives of women and girls. Speakers agreed on the critical need to engage with finance and sector ministries to ensure that adequate financing is channeled to programmes on gender equality but also to ensure that fiscal policy overall does not undermine the achievement of gender equality objectives. To this end,

* E/CN.6/2015/1.



participants discussed the role of Ministries of Finance, as they provided directives on resource allocation across all sectors. One good practice example of engaging these ministries was the UN-Women and World Bank initiative ‘Gender Equality Community of Practice for Finance Ministers’.

3. The importance of galvanizing political will and building national capacity and ownership for achieving gender equality more effectively was underscored. Addressing gender inequality required a multi-sectoral approach the alignment of public policies with human rights standards. Efficient fiscal policies that increased the quantity of funding for gender equality and also addressed fundamental systemic and structural barriers, including unequal social relations and discriminatory practices against women and girls in the economy and society at large were required. Participants highlighted the importance of gender-responsive legislative reforms to create an enabling environment for the institutionalization of gender equality priorities in public policies and budgets. Many speakers reported on ongoing initiatives on gender-responsive budgeting to mainstream gender equality in planning and budgeting processes and noted the increase in financing for gender equality commitments as a result of these initiatives. At the same time, existing resource gaps in social service provision and infrastructure, including education, health, water and sanitation, roads and electricity were noted, especially in conflict-affected countries. In addition, speakers called for investing in services for women in vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, and older women. Participants were concerned about the critical under-funding of national mechanisms for gender equality and called for additional resources and capacity building to enhance their effectiveness and influence in national policy and decision-making.
4. Speakers emphasized the importance of official development assistance in achieving gender equality commitments in developing countries, especially in least developed countries. Although there had been an extraordinary upward trend in aid for gender equality since the launch of the Millennium Development Goals, much more effort was required to close gaps in donor spending in priority areas for women and girls, such as economic empowerment, family planning and ending the scourge of violence against women and girls. Participants emphasized the critical need for the donor community to meet the targets on ODA and to supplement such resources with technical assistance and capacity building support. Participants called for all donor support to be aligned with national development priorities, plans and strategies, so as to contribute to the accountability of donors. Evolving partnerships, such as South-South and triangular cooperation are also vital, including for exchanging good practice on financing gender equality.
5. The role of private actors in development financing and financing for gender equality was highlighted. Examples included the funding by financial institutions of programmes for rural women, and support by corporations for women through academic scholarships. Speakers voiced concern that tax evasion and avoidance can significantly reduce revenue available to national governments for development. It was noted that, as a result, governments lose approximately USD 3 trillion in revenue each year. In light of the increasingly important role of private actors as well as public-private partnerships for funding gender equality, there was a need to have good accountability mechanisms in place to ensure these efforts do not contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality.
6. It was noted that in conflict and post-conflict contexts domestic resources for the promotion of gender equality were either non-existent or extremely limited, and where resources were available, significant bottlenecks persisted in service delivery due to restricted capacity. Accordingly, the links between humanitarian and development financing for gender equality should be explored for the benefit of women. Speakers especially from conflict-affected countries called for a strengthened gender dimension in humanitarian financing. Gaps between policy and financial commitments were particularly pronounced in the area of women and peace and security. It was, for example, pointed out that 15 years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security, only 2 per cent of aid to peace and security in fragile states was targeted to gender equality.
7. Participants agreed on the need for improved data and monitoring systems to ensure transparency and accountability in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. Speakers called for the use of

gender equality indicators and for enhanced technical knowledge and tools to conduct gender-sensitive analyses and assessments to determine the quantity and quality of resources allocated for gender equality. Speakers discussed the importance of making budgets more transparent and tracking gender equality allocations in public spending and in ODA. Ministries should, for example, make budgets available and accessible to all citizens through so-called 'Open Budgets'. Civil society had an important role to play towards ensuring that resources were allocated and spent in a transparent manner, with greater accountability. Given a lack of capacity at all levels, particularly the national level, in data collection, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting, speakers called for strengthened partnerships and technical support, including from UN-Women.

8. Participants were concerned about the lack of, and under-funding of civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations. Women's organizations required greater financial investment at all levels, including at the grassroots, as well as improved capacity, to participate in local and national planning and budgeting. There were also calls on donors to increase funding for women's organization and women's investments.
9. In order to respond to the identified gaps and challenges in financing gender equality, speakers called for a comprehensive approach to mobilize maximum resources for gender equality through all policy tools at national level, in all countries. Such actions should include the re-orientation of macroeconomic policies to increase fiscal space, as well as efforts to broaden the tax base, improve tax compliance, and address the implicit and explicit gender biases in tax systems. Resources generated through tax should be used to advance gender equality and women's rights. Implementing gender-responsive budgeting and strengthening accountability mechanisms would ensure more efficient, transparent, and effective financing. Donors should meet their ODA commitments, ensure a stronger focus on sectors where spending for gender equality remains inadequate, such as for women and peace and security, women's economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and efforts to end violence against women and girls. They should also ensure the integration of gender perspectives in all their development initiatives. Private actors, including the private sector, should align its financing for gender equality to national development strategies, and in line with human rights obligations. Engaging civil society organizations in all aspects of financing for gender equality was key to progress. More robust monitoring systems should be developed to measure the impact of programmes and ensure financing is targeted to meeting gender equality commitments. These systems should be complemented with increased capacity at all levels to collect, analyze and report relevant data.