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**Review of the progress and remaining challenges
in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and
Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific**

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Note by the Secretariat**

Summary

The present report contains a summary of the regional review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting achievements, remaining challenges and priority areas for action in realizing gender equality and women's empowerment. The report is based on responses received from member States to the regional intergovernmental survey administered by ESCAP, as well as on the Beijing+20 national review reports submitted by member States to ESCAP.

From their Asia-Pacific Beijing+20 regional survey and their national review reports, ESCAP member States identified progress in: strengthening and adopting gender equality policies, legislation and action plans; eliminating violence against women and girls; and promoting the leadership and political participation of women as particular areas of achievement. The key regional challenge mirrored an area of achievement, namely weaknesses in normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment.

In relation to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, ESCAP member States identified both gains and persistent impediments to equality with respect to economic status, education, health, power, human rights, media participation and portrayal, and the environment.

The priority areas for action to advance achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific, as identified by the ESCAP member States, are: (a) women's engagement in public and political life; (b) women's economic empowerment; and (c) elimination of violence against women and girls.

In order to realize gains in support of gender equality and women's empowerment, the ESCAP member States further identified the need for: (a) comprehensive normative frameworks; (b) gender consciousness; (c) gender capacity; (d) cooperation and partnership; (e) resources; and (f) accountability.

* E/ESCAP/GEWE/L.1.

** The late issuance of the present document is due to late receipt, by ESCAP, of responses from several member States to the Asia-Pacific Beijing+20 regional survey and of the national review reports. It is a summary of the full regional report — "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" — which will be issued as an ESCAP publication in early 2015.

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I. Introduction

1. In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,¹ which were subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly.

2. Every five years since 1995, progress in achieving the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action is reviewed by the Commission on the Status of Women, which is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council. There have been three reviews to date — 2000, 2005 and 2010 — with each review resulting in an outcome document that reinforces global commitment to the empowerment of women and girls, and that outlines priority actions for the coming five years.

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution I, annexes I and II.

3. The fourth review will occur in 2015, marking the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In its resolution 2013/18, the Economic and Social Council called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Platform for Action. In addition, the resolution of the Economic and Social Council encouraged “the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level can feed into the 2015 review”² overseen by the Commission on the Status of Women.

4. In accordance with this mandate, in 2014 ESCAP, in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), undertook a regional review of progress in implementation of the Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific.

5. Analytical review of regional progress in implementation of the Platform for Action was undertaken through administration of a regional survey and submission, by ESCAP member States, of national review reports. ESCAP received 40 regional survey submissions³ and 32 national review reports.⁴ The analytical review encompassed ESCAP member States geographically located in the Asia and Pacific region. The analytical review also benefitted from inputs from civil society.

6. The present document contains a summary of the identified achievements and challenges of ESCAP member States in relation to gender equality and women’s empowerment, including in relation to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. It also outlines the key means of implementation of the Platform for Action, along with member States’ delineated priorities for strengthening implementation and achieving gender equality.

II. Overview of achievements in implementation of the Platform for Action

7. In Asia and the Pacific, overall, three categories of regional achievement in implementation of the Platform for Action were identified by member States:⁵ (a) strengthening gender equality in national governments and governance; (b) addressing violence against women and girls; and (c) promoting the leadership and political participation of women.

² See resolution 2013/18 of the Economic and Social Council, para. 4.

³ Replies to the Beijing+20 regional survey were received from: Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; China; Cook Islands; Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; French Polynesia; Hong Kong, China; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Macao, China; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Russian Federation; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Turkey; Tuvalu; Uzbekistan; and Vanuatu.

⁴ National review reports were submitted to ESCAP and UN-Women by: Afghanistan; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; China; Fiji; Georgia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Marshall Islands; Mongolia; Nauru; Nepal; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Tajikistan; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Turkey; Tuvalu; Uzbekistan; and Vanuatu.

⁵ The phrase “member States” is used to refer to the ESCAP members and associate members that replied to the Asia-Pacific Beijing+20 regional survey (40) and/or submitted Beijing+20 national review reports (32).

Strengthened governance and government institutions

8. In terms of governance, and notably institutional frameworks for achieving gender equality, member States highlighted: (a) the adoption of gender equality-related policies, legislation, action plans and strategies, along with accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;⁶ (b) the establishment and/or strengthened status and mandates of national women's machineries; (c) the increase in awareness of and commitment to gender equality across government entities; and (d) the expansion of gender mainstreaming across the government sector, including the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting.

Eliminating violence against women and girls

9. Member States from the five ESCAP subregions highlighted achievements in eliminating violence against women and girls, including: the introduction of legislation; strengthened law enforcement capacity; establishment of government entities tasked to address the elimination of violence against women and girls; prevention programmes; awareness-raising and mobilization of communities; and implementation of targeted campaigns addressing such issues as human trafficking and sorcery.

Women's political participation and leadership

10. With respect to the third region-wide achievement — being greater political participation and leadership by women — member States reported that women have occupied, and continue to occupy, senior government and non-government positions, from heads of Government and Supreme Court judges to serving on national boards, special taskforces and peace-negotiating bodies. Member States also noted the positive impacts of special temporary measures, such as quotas, in increasing the representation of women among political party candidates and parliamentarians.

Other achievements

11. At the subregional level,⁷ member States in the Pacific, in East and North-East Asia and in South and South-West Asia stressed achievements in women's economic empowerment; achievements related to: (a) the revision of legislation; (b) the introduction of flexible working arrangements; (c) the delineation of minimum wages; (d) the provision of childcare services; and (e) greater access to financial services, including credit.

12. Successes in the area of education were emphasized by member States from both South-East Asia and South and South-West Asia, with such observations as increased female literacy levels; improved school performance among girls; greater numbers of women continuing to tertiary

⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

⁷ The five ESCAP subregions are East and North-East Asia (China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Macao, China; Mongolia; Republic of Korea); North and Central Asia (Armenia; Azerbaijan; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Russian Federation; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan); the Pacific (American Samoa; Australia; Cook Islands; Fiji; French Polynesia; Guam; Kiribati; Marshall Islands; Micronesia; Nauru; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Niue; Northern Mariana Islands; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; Vanuatu); South-East Asia (Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Myanmar; Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Viet Nam); and South and South-West Asia (Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Maldives; Nepal; Pakistan; Sri Lanka; Turkey).

education; gender parity in primary school enrolments; and girls increasingly studying traditionally male-dominated subjects.

13. For some member States located in the Pacific, in South-East Asia and in South and South-West Asia, achievements in relation to women's and girls' health, and particularly maternal health, were highlighted; evidenced by, for example, the reduction in maternal mortality rates and the construction of maternity facilities in hospitals. Member States further highlighted provision of health services to women and girls with HIV.

14. Progress in implementation of the women, peace and security agenda was, in turn, highlighted by member States in the Pacific and in North and Central Asia.

III. Overview of challenges in implementing the Platform for Action

15. Alongside achievements, member States identified overall challenges in realizing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms

16. Across the Asia-Pacific region, member States highlighted institutional-related obstacles pertaining to: (a) policy and legislative "gaps"; (b) resistance to the adoption of gender equality-related policies and legislation; (c) inadequate communication, coordination and capacity impeding the mainstreaming of gender across the government sector; (d) insufficient technical and financial resources, especially for the national women's machineries; (e) lack of understanding of, and appreciation for, gender equality among politicians, policymakers and public servants; and (f) the broadening and strengthening of application of gender-responsive budgeting.

17. Member States also noted challenges related to: (a) the enforcement of existing legislation; (b) the implementation of strategies and action plans; and (c) the monitoring and evaluation of initiatives. Enforcement, implementation and monitoring challenges were, in turn, linked to the absence of, or limited, sex-disaggregated data, gender indicators, gender statistics, official knowledge management systems and processes for the exchange of data and information between government entities.

Sociocultural norms

18. Related to institutional challenges, member States from the Pacific and from South and South-West Asia identified a need to address patriarchy and specifically the associated discriminatory, prejudicial and confining "mindsets", attitudes, values, beliefs and perceptions.

Violence against women and girls and women's leadership and decision-making authority

19. Addressing the obstacle of patriarchy is connected to tackling sector-specific issues of gender equality, including in violence against women and girls and women's leadership and political participation. While both of these issues were listed under "achievements", member States from the Pacific, South and South-West Asia and North and Central Asia registered violence against women and girls and women's leadership and political participation as challenges to the realization of gender equality.

Women's economic empowerment

20. Member States from the Pacific, South-East Asia and South and South-West Asia subregions enumerated impediments to women's economic empowerment. Surmounting poverty, addressing legislative "gaps", eradicating horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, erasing the gender pay gap, increasing women's labour force participation, realizing "balance" between professional and personal responsibilities, and valuing the unpaid care work done by women are examples of the challenges cited by member States.

Women's and girls' health

21. Linked to women's and girls' economic status is their health. Member States from the Pacific, South-East Asia and South and South-West Asia identified health issues as a challenge to achieving gender equality goals. Member States expressed particular concern about: (a) maternal morbidity and mortality; (b) high adolescent fertility rates; (c) malnutrition; and (d) the deleterious effects of non-communicable diseases.

Armed conflict

22. With respect to conflict, member States from the Pacific, South-East Asia and South and South-West Asia subregions made reference to the "women, peace and security" agenda, noting that armed conflict, insurgencies, coups, political uncertainty and instability have undermined peace and the security of women and girls (and men and boys), and have weakened State accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Environment

23. Climate change, natural disasters from earthquakes to typhoons, and environmental degradation were listed as undermining the human security and safety of women and girls. Environmental issues were linked, by member States, to reductions in the paid employment of women, to destruction of women's sources of income generation and to women's impeded access to natural resources, including water.

Diverse needs and interests

24. One further challenge reported by member States concerned equitable consideration and response to the needs and interests of the diversity of women and girls. Disparities were noted, for example, between indigenous and non-indigenous women and between rural and urban women in relation to such issues as poverty, employment, violence and access to services, including health and education services.

IV. The Platform for Action: 12 critical areas of concern

25. In relation to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, member States described actions taken with resulting gains and continuing hurdles to be overcome.

A. Women and poverty

26. Member States reported that poverty among women and girls remains an area of concern. Across the Asia-Pacific region, the reported proportion of female populations, at the national level, living in poverty ranged from a low

of 1.7 per cent to a high of 70 per cent. In their observations of poverty among women and girls, member States referenced the particular vulnerability of female-headed households and of sole parent households, of which the majority are women.

27. To address poverty among women and girls, member States reported application of macroeconomic policies that specifically address the needs of women and girls living in poverty. Gender-responsive social protection emerged as the most common poverty-response measure, followed by employment and livelihood schemes, gender-responsive budgeting and then gender-responsive taxation.

B. Education and training of women

28. Member States documented gains in the area of education and training. For instance, gender parity exists in relation to net primary school enrolment and attendance rates for girls and boys across the region.

29. Across Asia and the Pacific, gender parity in net enrolment and attendance rates is less common at the secondary school level, than at the primary school level, and more so at the tertiary level; some countries have higher female, than male, rates, while others have higher male, than female, rates. Less than 50 per cent of girls (and boys), of applicable age, in some countries in the ESCAP region are enrolled in secondary school.

30. Moreover, it should be noted that while gender parity is increasingly evident in literacy rates across the region, in four member States (all from the South and South-West Asia subregion), less than half of the female population aged 15 years and older are literate, whereas only one member State has a male literacy rate of less than 50 per cent.

31. In progressing gains at the primary school level and in literacy rates, member States highlighted the existence of national policies that mandate equal access of women and men, girls and boys to education, with common reference to free and compulsory education of 12 years' duration.

32. Yet, while normative frameworks provide for equality between women and men, and girls and boys, in education, disparities remain. Challenges to realizing policy and legislative intentions were identified by member States in relation to quality of education, resources, access and "subject streaming". A lack of trained teachers and of trained female teachers was noted, along with the need for greater resources for school infrastructure and transportation. Member States also highlighted the need to eliminate "subject streaming" and sociocultural norms and values that result in premature termination of education for girls.

C. Women and health

33. Member States reported gains in policies and legislation mandating provision of a range of health services to women and girls. The policies and plans solely address the health needs of women and girls or apply to entire populations but contain objectives and measures related to the health of women and girls. In addition, the policies, plans and programmes addressing the health-related needs and interests of women and girls vary in comprehensiveness, coverage and implementation.

34. Member States identified persistent challenges to women's and girls' health and well-being, such as partial implementation of policies and programmes, insufficient resources, lack of specialized services, access

barriers and health sectors that are not entirely gender sensitive. Thus, while women, on average, live longer lives than men, they continue to die during childbirth, have unmet health-related needs, such as in relation to sexual and reproductive health and HIV services, and do not universally enjoy the ability to choose, or access, health services.

35. Among the reported challenges, and while progress was noted, maternal health was highlighted as a particular area of concern, with women continuing to die for pregnancy- and childbirth-related reasons. Factors contributing to high maternal mortality rates, according to member States, include low female literacy rates, poverty, and limited access to both health professionals and health facilities. Additionally, there is a perceived need for greater investment in antenatal care and provision of skilled birth attendants, given the negative correlation with maternal morbidity and mortality.

D. Violence against women (and girls)

36. Member States noted progress in the adoption of measures to eliminate violence against women and girls; measures encompassing the adoption of policies and legislation, the implementation of action plans and the provision of services. Family protection acts, family safety acts and domestic violence acts, along with criminal, civil and family codes, legislate against violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region.

37. Variably covering physical, sexual, psychological, domestic and economic violence, legislation across the region that criminalizes violence against women and girls reportedly contains provisions for protection orders, police safety orders, prison sentences and/or “corrective labour”. Legislation criminalizing all forms of violence against women and girls does not, however, exist in every country in Asia and the Pacific and there are reported challenges to the full and effective implementation of the legislation.

38. In terms of service provision, and as reported, health and legal services are the most common form of assistance available to survivors of violence, followed by provision of shelters or safe houses, and then livelihood support. In relation to women with disabilities, approximately two thirds of member States provide services targeting the prevention of violence against women with disabilities and one third provide targeted services to women with disabilities who experience violence.

39. As observed by member States, existing normative frameworks, programmes and public campaigns to eliminate violence against women and girls are valuable but inadequate, given persistently high rates of violence against women and girls, and apparent impunity for some perpetrators of such violence. Member States reported barriers to the elimination of violence against women and girls ranging from a dearth of data and service provision to inhospitable judicial systems and discriminatory sociocultural norms.

E. Women and armed conflict

40. Some 13 member States reported national action plans on the “women, peace and security” agenda, of which six could be obtained through public information channels. The participation of women in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding bodies has reportedly increased, although women continue to constitute a minority of representatives. Of the 40 respondent member States 12, encompassing the five ESCAP subregions, explicitly stated that no women occupy conflict resolution and/or peacebuilding decision-making positions in their countries.

41. In addition to national action plans, education and training initiatives are variably being implemented in the Asia-Pacific region to raise the awareness of, and capacity to respond to, the “women, peace and security” agenda, by women, law enforcement officers and the judicial sector.

42. Additionally, and in recognition that during and upon conclusion of armed conflict, women and girls may be subjected to abduction, forced labour, forced combat, physical assault, sexual abuse or enslavement, among other forms of exploitation and maltreatment, some member States have policies in place for the protection of women and girls from violence during armed conflict.

F. Women and the economy

43. Member States reported the adoption of policies, legislation and programmes promoting the equal access of women and men to employment and to decent work, as well as to ownership and control of productive resources.

44. Across Asia and the Pacific it was also noted that despite the existence of enabling policies and programmes, inequalities prevail between women and men in the area of employment, as are evident in, for example: (a) lower rates of female, than of male, labour force participation; (b) the gender pay gap; and (c) both vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. Moreover, women are more likely than men to be engaged in vulnerable employment (with the exception of women in East and North-East Asia) and are more likely to be contributing family workers (particularly in both South and South-West Asia and in South-East Asia).

45. One area of reported action in relation to advancing women’s engagement in the economy is entrepreneurship. Member States reported measures promoting women’s entrepreneurship. Approximately two thirds of member States seek to integrate the needs of women into entrepreneurship-related policies, programmes and budgets, as well as provide resources to institutions that support women’s entrepreneurship.

46. Member States reported the need for further action in relation to: (a) the revision, adoption and enforcement of legislation that mandates equality of rights and opportunities for women and men; (b) the allocation of resources for women’s economic empowerment and decent work; (c) implementation of measures that encourage “balance” between working life and family life; (d) targeted consideration of, and action on, the needs and interests of particular groups of women workers, such as domestic workers, migrant workers, informal sector workers, and rural workers; and (e) investment in time use studies that increase understanding of women’s and men’s productive and reproductive labour and inform decision-making.

G. Women in power and decision-making

47. Member States reported that progress has been made in increasing the participation of women in the public domain, but that women continue to hold a minority of national and subnational political offices, as well as of senior level public and private sector positions. In 17 of the 50 member States for which data could be obtained, less than 10 per cent of national parliamentarians (in single and lower houses) are women and, in a further 15, women constitute between 10 and 20 per cent of national parliamentarians. In 29 of the 35 countries in Asia and the Pacific for which data are available, one in five, or fewer, national ministers are women. The under-representation of women in national parliaments is reflected at the subnational level.

Member States reported, for instance, that women constitute less than 20 per cent of village, state and local government representatives.

48. Member States reported removing obstacles to women's participation in elected bodies, highlighting constitutional and legislative provisions for the equal rights of women and men to stand for election. Member States also reported the existence of "special temporary measures". Several member States in Asia and the Pacific noted the application of quota systems: (a) to elected positions (such as seats in national parliaments or local governments); and/or (b) to political party candidate lists.

49. Member States cited revision of sociocultural values and beliefs, adoption and enforcement of enabling policies and legislation and enhanced resources and capacity as requirements for achieving the equitable representation of women and men in decision-making forums.

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

50. Across Asia and the Pacific there are national institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. Taking various forms, the institutional mechanisms are mandated to realize gender equality and empower women.

51. Member States enumerated the achievements of their institutional mechanisms; achievements related to enhancing gender equality normative frameworks, fortifying government gender architecture, tackling violence against women and girls, empowering women economically, promoting women's leadership and strengthening gender equality data and statistical systems.

52. In terms of challenges, members States reported a lack of political will and accountability, limited awareness of and appreciation for gender equality, low status, insufficient resources, scant data and poor coordination among government entities as some of the obstacles faced by their institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women in fulfilling their mandates.

53. Key identified strategies for fortifying the institutional mechanisms include: (a) ensuring that the national women's machineries are "stand-alone entities" within government structures that are endowed with the status and authority to achieve substantive progress towards de jure and de facto equality; (b) strengthening intra-governmental collaboration and coordination in advancing gender equality, including the formulation, adoption, implementation and monitoring of policies and legislation that mandate equality of rights for women and men, girls and boys; and (c) awareness-raising and education initiatives, and increasing provision of human and financial resources.

I. Human rights of women

54. All member States in Asia and the Pacific, with the exception of three,⁸ have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Eighteen member States have, however, applied reservations to their ratification. Incorporation of the Convention into national contexts reportedly remains incomplete, despite national constitutional and legislative human rights provisions.

⁸ The Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Palau and Tonga.

55. Member States reported that the human rights of women and girls are violated, as evidenced in the prevalence of violence against women and girls, and the associated need to strengthen women's and girls' access to justice and legal literacy. The importance of women and girls exercising their human rights in relation to such issues as education, health, employment and political participation was also noted, as well as the importance of progressing both awareness of the Convention and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls.

56. In recognition of the need to protect and promote the human rights of women and girls, member States stated that they have independent national institutions the mandates of which include the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls. Additionally, recognising that legal literacy is important to the ability of women and girls to exercise their human rights, member States reported having measures in place for promoting the legal literacy of women and girls. The types of measures implemented in countries in Asia and the Pacific to advance women's and girls' human rights include: (a) awareness-raising and education; (b) advocacy with policymakers and leaders; and (c) provision of (free) legal aid and counselling, along with the training of women legal and paralegal professionals.

J. Women and the media

57. Significant regional variability exists in relation to the participation and portrayal of women and girls in the media. One quantitative measure of women's engagement with the media is the proportion of professional journalists who are women. In 12 of the 21 member States that provided statistical data, women constitute less than 50 per cent of professional journalists (ranging from 0 per cent to 45 per cent), with a notable presence of member States from the South and South-West Asia subregion, but also with member States from the Pacific, East and North-East Asia and South-East Asia. In 5 of the 21 member States, equal numbers of women and men journalists were reported, while in 4 member States women were reported as constituting the majority of professional journalists (commonly around 60 per cent).

58. While women are the majority of professional journalists in a few Asian and Pacific countries, they continue to encounter obstacles to their engagement in the media; challenges related to, for example, equal wages, fair treatment, recognition of their work, harassment, and balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

59. Member States highlighted initiatives to increase rates of participation of women and girls in the media, including programmes for and by women, provision of education and training, and measures to raise the number of women occupying leadership and decision-making positions. Initiatives promoting balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women and girls are also, reportedly, in place, such as legislation proscribing pornography and awareness-raising of media personnel.

K. Women and the environment

60. With respect to environmental issues, member States variably reported responding to the particular needs and interests of women and girls in relation to natural resources, climate change and disaster risk reduction.

61. A primary undertaking for member States is mainstreaming gender in policies, plans and programmes that seek to promote women's and men's equal command of natural resources, access to energy sources, engagement in

climate change initiatives and participation in disaster risk responses. Member States variably reported: (a) the existence of national policies that promote women's and men's equal ownership, management and use of natural resources, such as water, fuel, land and forests; (b) integrating and addressing the vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls in climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives; and (c) mainstreaming gender in disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.

L. The girl child

62. Member States reported having integrated measures — policies, legislation, actions plans and/or programmes — for eliminating all forms of discrimination against the girl child. With universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁹ in Asia and the Pacific, various child-focused (but not girl-specific) national policy measures were cited to support claims of integrated measures.

63. National policies, legislation, public campaigns, education and training initiatives reportedly address a range of issues to enhance the status of the girl child, from matters relating to education, marriage, inheritance and sociocultural norms to creation of spaces and opportunities for girls to engage in physical activities, social exchange and life skills development. Normative measures and both awareness-raising and public campaigns are more common measures in member States, than are programme and service initiatives for eliminating all forms of discrimination against the girl child.

V. Implementing the Platform for Action

64. When it comes to the mechanisms for implementing the Platform for Action, member States listed requirements that can be categorized into four general categories: (a) normative frameworks and institutions; (b) partnership and cooperation; (c) data and statistics; and (d) budgets and funding.

A. Gender equality normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms

65. Member States in Asia and the Pacific have adopted policies in support of gender equality. Stemming from an underlying goal of empowering women, advancing the status of women, achieving social justice and/or promoting equal opportunities for women and men, the gender equality policies variously address a range of issues, including human rights, participation in public life, health, education, poverty and livelihoods, violence against women and girls, and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. Operationalization of the policies and legislation occurs through gender equality strategies and action plans that, similarly and variably, embrace the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action.

66. While member States reported the existence of national policies, legislation and action plans, they also observed that such documents do not necessarily address all issues pertinent to gender equality and women's empowerment and, for some, exist only in draft form (or not all).

67. Translation of policies, legislation and action plans from paper to practice requires institutional mechanisms. In that respect, member States described public sector gender mainstreaming initiatives; the construction of functions to enable implementation and monitoring of policies, plans and

⁹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

programmes; and the importance of communication and collaboration to realizing the intent of the gender equality policies and legislation.

68. The existence of officials and entities mandated to address gender equality does not, however, automatically translate to full and effective implementation and monitoring of policies, plans and programmes; in other words, to gender equality results. There is a reported need for strengthening political will, capacity and resource investment across the institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women for substantive gender equality gains to be realized.

B. Cooperation and partnership for gender equality

69. Member States reported cooperation and partnership among government entities and between Government and civil society in implementation of the Platform for Action.

70. Member States stated that intra-governmental cooperation and participation is primarily enabled by the national women's machineries and manifests in multi-stakeholder bodies, written agreements and joint implementation and monitoring of commitments and initiatives for gender equality and women's empowerment. Facilitating cooperation and partnership, the national women's machineries reportedly coordinate government entities, provide technical assistance and review the gender equality-related work of line ministries by, for example, analysis of annual reports.

71. Interministerial, departmental or agency forums, task forces, committees and reference groups are other means through which intra-governmental cooperation and partnership on gender equality is demonstrated.

72. In terms of cooperation and partnership between Government and civil society, member States mentioned national councils, committees and forums for which members are comprised of both government and civil society representatives. The various government-civil society bodies are reportedly convened on a regular basis to promote continuous consultation. Governments and civil society also, reportedly, cooperate and partner in: (a) conducting campaigns to raise awareness on gender equality; (b) implementing programmes such as those that focus on the elimination of violence against women and girls; (c) participating in international and regional forums; and (d) monitoring the operationalization of policies and action plans.

73. Member States highlighted the contribution of civil society to progressing implementation of the Platform for Action and thereby advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Member States also observed that the existence of structures and modalities of cooperation and partnership between Government and civil society on implementation of the Platform for Action, and on achieving gender equality more broadly, did not necessarily reveal the quality and effectiveness of the collaboration.

C. Gender equality data and statistics

74. Across Asia and the Pacific, the national statistics offices are, according to member States, investing in the sex-disaggregation of data and the articulation and application of national core sets of gender indicators, including a subset on the issue of violence against women and girls.

75. In measuring the multiple dimensions of gender equality, countries in Asia and the Pacific have formulated, and are formulating, national indicators and progressively applying the minimum set of (52) gender indicators as agreed by the United Nations Statistical Commission. Depending on the country and the nature of the survey, information is gathered on a range of subjects, including age, ethnic affiliation, language, religion, family, education, housing, health, disability, economic security, the labour force, employment, livelihoods, decision-making, human rights, life satisfaction, crime and safety, justice, governance, citizenship and the natural environment. The collected data are compiled and made accessible to interested persons through electronic and print mediums.

76. According to member States, the gender data that are collected, compiled, analysed and published inform government planning processes, policy formulation, service delivery, programme implementation and monitoring of activities.

77. While noting that gender equality data are collected and utilized, member States also reported shortcomings in their statistical systems in terms of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics. The efficiency and effectiveness of national statistical systems are, reportedly, impeded by: (a) limited awareness of the importance of gathering data on gender equality; (b) lack of technical capacity; and (c) insufficient resources. The implications of such deficiencies in gender equality data and statistics are policies, plans and programmes that fail to adequately respond to the different needs and interests of women and men, girls and boys.

78. In relation to the globally agreed minimum set of (52) gender indicators, several member States reported plans to collect, or commencement of collection of, data on the global minimum set.

79. As with the global minimum set of gender indicators, varied progress has been made by countries in Asia and the Pacific in the application of the nine core indicators on violence against women, as adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission. While some countries have yet to commence employing the nine core indicators to measure violence against women and girls at the national level, others are pursuing various initiatives, including undertaking family health and safety surveys and establishing national databases

D. Budgets and funding for gender equality

80. As indicated by member States, government funding for gender equality is insufficient for achieving the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action. The national women's machineries in 15 of the 17 member States that provided funding information are allocated less than 1 per cent of the national budget, despite their substantial mandates.

81. Besides quantitative allocation of funds, gender-responsive budgeting is a modality employed by some member States to foster equitable and accountable resource allocation. More than 10 member States reported the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting, variably manifesting as: (a) gender budget statements; (b) the inclusion of gender-responsive budgeting in national budgetary frameworks; and (c) designation of a minimum budget allocation for gender equality initiatives.

VI. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment

82. Member States identified priority actions for the coming years, along with the core implementation requirements, for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

A. Priority areas for action on gender equality

83. The majority of member States identified three priority areas for action on gender equality and women's empowerment for the Asia-Pacific region; namely, increasing women's engagement in public and political life, empowering women economically and eliminating violence against women and girls.

Women in leadership and decision-making positions

84. Member States emphasized the need to increase the number of women occupying leadership and decision-making positions, from national parliaments to local levels of governance. Achieving gender parity across leadership and decision-making positions is seen, by member States, as requiring identifying women with the potential to lead; investing in building the capacities of women to occupy leadership positions; engaging "male champions"; and employing special temporary measures, such as quotas, affirmative action and targeted funding.

Women's economic empowerment

85. Multiple initiatives are required, according to member States, to empower women economically. Suggested measures to reduce poverty among women and girls and to promote their economic independence include gender-responsive economic policies and programmes that embrace social protection, facilitate the acquisition of labour market knowledge and skills by women, promote the employment of women and enhance women's access to assets, credit and other productive resources. Other identified areas for attention include reducing the gender pay gap, accounting for women's unpaid care work, advancing the rights of women engaged in the informal sector, fostering entrepreneurship and making decent work a reality for more women workers.

Elimination of violence against women and girls

86. Member States emphasized the application of the due diligence standard of prevention, protection and prosecution in order to eliminate violence against women and girls in Asia and the Pacific. Action on violence against women and girls is seen as requiring the existence and implementation of normative frameworks comprised of policies, legislation and strategies, along with a position of "zero tolerance". Other requirements for eliminating violence against women and girls, as listed by member States, are: education initiatives; provision of a range of services, including safe houses and reintegration measures for violence survivors; community mobilization, ensuring the engagement of leaders; research to elucidate the various aspects of violence against women and girls; and gender-sensitive judicial systems. Particular forms of violence were highlighted for attention by member States, including trafficking in women and girls, child marriage and other harmful practices, domestic violence, cyber prostitution and pornography, sorcery-related crimes and violence against elderly women.

Sociocultural norms

87. For some member States, successfully addressing issues of leadership and decision-making, economic empowerment and violence requires tackling the underlying cause of inequality between women and men, namely patriarchy. To equalize relations of power between women and men, member States emphasized improving the status of women in society and revising negative and stereotyped images and attitudes about women and girls and their roles. Women and men, as well as girls and boys, were identified by member States as target groups in the transformation of sociocultural norms, wherein members of both sexes are “agents of change”.

Normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms

88. Member States from the Pacific, South and South-West Asia and North and Central Asia identified the need to strengthen normative frameworks and associated institutional mechanisms, which can structure and substantiate action on gender equality. To this end, the adoption of gender equality policies and legislation, as well as ensuring gender equitable impacts of other government policies and legislation, were deemed important. Effective implementation of policies and legislation was, in turn, viewed as requiring greater coordination between, and gender capacities of, all government entities. Particular mention was made of the need to strengthen the national women’s machineries and to expand the application of gender-responsive budgeting.

Women’s and girls’ health

89. With policies, legislation and strategies framing action on gender equality, member States further listed specific sector issues requiring attention. Women’s and girls’ health was registered as one such issue by member States in all ESCAP subregions except East and North-East Asia. In the area of health, member States emphasized the need to address women’s and girls’ maternal health (particularly in relation to reducing mortality rates), access to health services, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Environment

90. Another sector-specific priority area for action identified by member States in the Pacific, South-East Asia and South and South-West Asia was the natural environment. Member States drew particular attention to the need for gender-aware attention and response to both the impacts of climate change and the management and use of natural resources, including potable water and renewable energy sources. Actions were deemed to be necessary for raising women’s and girls’ awareness of environmental issues and for building their resilience to climate change, as well as for fostering gender-responsive disaster risk reduction.

Women, peace and security

91. Member States in the Pacific, South-East Asia and North and Central Asia identified implementation of the “women, peace and security” agenda, as exemplified in Security Council resolution 1325, as a priority area for action. Member States in these three ESCAP subregions stressed the importance of promoting the rights and security of women and girls during times of conflict and in post-conflict settings.

Access to justice

92. Related to the “women, peace and security” agenda is another area for action listed by member States in the Pacific, South and South-West Asia and North and Central Asia: access to justice. There is a perceived need to enforce legislation, to end impunity for persons who violate the rights of women and girls, to increase women’s and girls’ legal literacy and to provide (free) legal services. Given that women’s and girls’ ability to exercise their rights is contingent upon official recognition of their existence, civil registration, including the right to citizenship regardless of the legal status of a child’s parent(s), is a related area for attention.

Diversity and data

93. Two further priorities identified by member States — priorities that cut across all of the aforementioned areas for action — are: (a) addressing the specific needs and interests of different groups of women and girls; and (b) strengthening gender statistics and the sex-disaggregation of data. Given the intersectionality of inequalities, conscious consideration of the differences and similarities of women and girls categorized as rural, indigenous, migrant, refugee, with disability and poor, for example, is reportedly required if all women and girls are to be empowered. Sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics are, in turn, deemed to be priorities because strategic action on, and accountability for, gender equality and the empowerment of women requires the collection, analysis and application of reliable, valid and comprehensive information; and evidence-based and evidence-responsive action.

B. Accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action

94. Member States identified six key requirements for accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific.

Normative frameworks

95. The first key requirement is political commitment and a “whole-of-government” approach to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. Member States emphasized the need for greater political will and shared responsibility across government ministries and departments, reflected in the existence and implementation of comprehensive and multi-sector gender equality policies, plans and programmes.

Gender consciousness

96. The translation of policies, plans and programmes to concrete actions requires consciousness, capacity and collaboration; three other means of accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action identified by member States. In terms of consciousness, member States declared that there is a need to raise the awareness and understanding of parliamentarians, public service employees and the public more broadly. That is, greater cognizance of gender, gender equality, gender mainstreaming and gender issues is required for accelerated action on gender equality. Member States made particular reference to raising the awareness of government representatives, the judicial sector, civil society and women.

Gender capacity

97. Developing upon raised consciousness, there is perceived need, by member States, to strengthen the capacity of individuals and entities responsible for implementing gender equality policies, plans and

programmes. Gender equality capacity investment is understood to require the delivery of training and the provision of technical assistance across the government sector in order to enable the mainstreaming of gender and the adoption of such measures as gender-responsive budgeting. In terms of capacity, member States emphasized the need to invest in national women's machineries.

Cooperation and partnership

98. Enhancing collaboration among government entities, and between Governments and civil society, is another posited means of accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action. Under the umbrella of collaboration, member States highlighted the importance of strengthening: (a) the sharing of knowledge, including data, and experiences, particularly in relation to the Platform for Action; (b) coordination mechanisms, such as multi-stakeholder committees, councils and forums; and (c) the participation of women and women's organizations from the international to local levels. Shared ownership, within which there is clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities, was, in turn, listed as a means of bolstering cooperation and partnership on gender equality. In this respect, member States noted the importance of engagement with civil society and the private sector.

Resources

99. Member States further stated that accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action requires greater resource investment. With particular emphasis on financial resources, member States highlighted the need for sustainable financing mechanisms, targeted resourcing and greater national budget allocations for their national women's machineries. Fulfilment of mandates and operationalization of commitments is seen as being contingent upon adequate resource investment.

Accountability

100. The sixth key means of accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action, identified by member States, was accountability. Enhanced accountability reportedly requires monitoring and evaluation of the breadth of gender equality initiatives which, in turn, necessitates the articulation of measurable targets and indicators, as well as the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the application of gender statistics.

VII. Conclusion

101. Through the analytical review, member States reinforced the continued relevance of the Platform for Action as the global agenda for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. In application of this agenda, member States reported both progress towards achieving the strategic objectives of the 12 critical areas of concern and persistent challenges to full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action.

102. Almost 20 years after the adoption of the Platform for Action, member States stressed that sustained and enhanced efforts are still required in order to overcome the persistent obstacles to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Sustained and enhanced efforts are deemed to require the strengthening of institutions (particularly national women's machineries), increasing financing, enhancing accountability, forging stronger partnerships and strengthening regional cooperation for gender equality and women's empowerment.

103. In recognition that progress is possible, as evidenced by the concrete gains that have been made, but that more can be done, member States, at the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, will have an historic opportunity to renew their commitment to realizing substantive equality for women and men, and for girls and boys, across the Asia-Pacific region in the development era beyond 2015.
