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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review

Bangkok, 19–21 November 2024

Chair's summary

I. Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review was held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 November 2024. Over 1,000 participants attended the Ministerial Conference, including representatives of 46 members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and of over 260 intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities and civil society organizations.

II. Summary of discussions

A. Review of the progress made towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and priorities for accelerated action in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 2)

2. The participants in the Ministerial Conference had before them the notes by the secretariat on the review of the status of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and priorities for accelerated action in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MCBR/2024/2); the results of national reviews reported by member States on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (ESCAP/MCBR/2024/3); and the results of stakeholder consultations on the 30-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MCBR/2024/4).

3. A high-level panel discussion was moderated by the ESCAP Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme. The panellists were: Principal Strategic Lead – Pacific Women and Girls of the Pacific Community, Ms. Mereseini Rakuita; Global Director on Gender of the World Bank Group, Ms. Hana Brixi; and Founder and Adviser of Green Welfare Indonesia, Ms. Nala Amirah.

4. The panellists highlighted that notable progress had been achieved since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Gender equality was at the forefront of development efforts and a core component of national development frameworks. Progress had been achieved in education, and maternal mortality rates had decreased significantly in most countries in Asia and the Pacific. Nevertheless, significant challenges persisted.

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Gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, was of particular concern. The importance of integrating gender considerations into governance systems and policies across sectors, mobilizing communities using local values and addressing societal pillars such as culture and religion to promote gender equality were emphasized.

5. The panellists stressed the critical need to address women's participation in the economy, notably the high proportion of women in informal employment and low-paying jobs, women's lack of access to the digital economy and barriers to expanding women-owned businesses. In that regard, there was a need to enhance human capital, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; support women's entrepreneurship; and expand access to social protection. Additional efforts were required to enhance the representation of women, especially young women, in leadership. Enhancing access to care services would also be a key enabler for women's economic participation and leadership. Young women and girls and women farmers faced heightened risks from climate change, including poverty, displacement and child marriage as a financial coping mechanism. The panellists stressed the need for climate-smart education, youth leadership training and intergenerational collaboration to amplify young women's roles in promoting sustainability. The scale of ambitions needed to increase, and collective cross-sectoral action was required to address the intersectional challenges impeding systemic change in favour of gender equality and women's empowerment.

6. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

7. A representative of the Cook Islands, an associate member, also made a statement.

8. A representative of Sweden, a Permanent Observer to ESCAP, made a statement.

9. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds made statements: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organization.

10. A representative of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an intergovernmental organization, also made a statement.

11. Representatives of the following non-governmental and civil society organizations and other entities made statements: International Committee of the Red Cross and International Federation of Business and Professional Women. Representatives of Famalao'an Rights, Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning, Malaysian Youth Diplomacy, National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal, Public Association Women's Organization "Alga" and Women's League of Burma, speaking on behalf of the civil society forum, also made statements.

12. Government representatives reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and resolved to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Gender equality, which was crucial for achieving development goals, including those set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, required strong regional and international cooperation. While significant progress had been achieved, no country had fully achieved gender equality. Persistent gender inequalities, including those exacerbated by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and by the effects of demographic shifts, climate change and digital and technological transformation, were of concern. Strategic actions and cooperation were needed to address risks and capitalize on opportunities presented by the transition to green, digital and care economies. Specifically, bold and transformative actions, partnerships and resources were needed to shift the status quo and meet the commitments outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

1. Poverty, education and training, and health

13. Government representatives noted that, although significant progress had been made to eradicate extreme poverty in the region, women's economic empowerment would be required to make further progress. Several initiatives had been launched to reduce poverty among women and girls, including by supporting women in low-income households and rural areas, implementing targeted non-contributory social protection schemes and providing support for microenterprises.

14. Gender parity in education, including at the secondary level, had been achieved in many countries but more remained to be done to prioritize early childhood development and at the tertiary level. Efforts to promote girls' access to education had been made, including in subjects where they were underrepresented, for example through scholarships, school lunch programmes, gender-sensitive curricula and the provision of free sanitary pads in schools. To bridge the gaps in educational attainment and labour force participation, initiatives had been implemented to promote gender equality in vocational training, lifelong training, digital inclusion and digital learning, and financial literacy.

15. Maternal mortality rates had decreased and, overall, maternal health indicators had improved, but better access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights was needed. Achieving universal health coverage was important, as were gender-sensitive approaches to preventing and treating chronic and non-communicable diseases, improving healthcare infrastructure, expanding services to rural areas and addressing health disparities among ethnic minorities and migrants.

16. Representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds and other intergovernmental organizations called for human rights-based policies and sustainable financing to secure sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls, emphasizing investments in primary healthcare, community health workers and digital healthcare. It was urgent to address the slow reduction in maternal mortality rates, gaps in access to family planning services and issues surrounding bodily autonomy. Furthermore, it was important to promote women's leadership in health policymaking and engage male leaders as allies for gender-equitable policies.

17. Civil society representatives called for action to be taken to strengthen women and girls' access to digital education, in particular in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and to sexual and reproductive

health and rights. Everyone had the right to benefit from scientific and technological progress, and digitalization should be based on human rights and people-centred development. It was important to ensure that women and girls, in all their diversity, had access to social protection and universal health coverage, which would provide them with safe and timely access to a comprehensive range of quality sexual and reproductive health and rights information, supplies and services, including access to contraceptives; safe abortions; maternal, newborn and child healthcare; treatment for sexually transmitted infections; gender-affirming care and hormonal therapy; antiretroviral therapy; and reproductive cancer prevention and treatment services. More public investment was needed in sexual and reproductive health and for comprehensive sexuality education for in-school and out-of-school youth to challenge harmful norms, including those related to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

2. Economic empowerment and decent work

18. Some government representatives noted the progress made in promoting women's economic empowerment, notably in terms of narrowing the gender pay gap, enhancing labour force participation rates, including in traditionally male-dominated sectors, and reducing the number of female-headed households living in poverty. Among the measures taken to promote women's economic empowerment were the following: providing comprehensive employment services, undertaking legislative reforms, recognizing unpaid care work, building climate resilience, encouraging participation in public service providers and small-scale enterprises and building women's confidence to defend their rights. Given the need to improve work-life balance, efforts were being made to provide expanded or more affordable childcare services; promote family-friendly and gender-sensitive workplaces and flexible work arrangements; and strengthen legal protections for parents. Furthermore, initiatives had been implemented for gender-responsive, inclusive and universal social protection to promote women's economic participation, for example by extending the duration of paid maternity leave, expanding parental leave allowances and strengthening financial support for caregivers. To support women entrepreneurs, steps had been taken to reform legislation; strengthen access to finance, markets and skills development opportunities; reduce trade costs; and encourage the formalization of women-led businesses.

19. Some government representatives highlighted that women and girls continued to shoulder the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work, which often resulted in their overrepresentation in informal and low-wage employment, further hindering their ability to make choices and exert autonomy. To address this, Governments had developed a "care economy roadmap", improved the infrastructure to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, conducted time-use surveys and developed gender-responsive care economy models in line with the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening the Care Economy and Fostering Resilience towards the Post-2025 ASEAN Community. Several representatives highlighted the need to address the gender digital divide and enhance digital literacy; expand employment opportunities for women with disabilities and women in remote and Indigenous communities; promote women's access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and reduce the gender pay gap.

20. Representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds also highlighted the importance of women's participation in labour markets. One representative noted that women's labour force participation had

declined in some subregions over the previous three decades and that occupational segregation tended to bar women from high-value sectors. Agrifood systems, for example, provided vital employment opportunities for women and was critical for their empowerment. Further efforts were needed to ensure women had access to decent work, financial services, land rights, technologies and social protection. The disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work borne by women was a key driver of gender inequality. Regular migration pathways and measures for protecting women migrant workers were vital to their safety and well-being. More gender-responsive policymaking and inclusive decision-making were needed, built upon sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis.

21. Civil society representatives called for action to be taken to ensure women's access to and control over resources, including land, as well as access to decent work, dignified livelihoods and universal social protection, including universal health coverage, as means of reducing gender disparities in the world of work and eliminating exploitative employment. The right of women farmers to gain access to livelihood resources, appropriate technologies and entitlements, and the rights of informal workers, should be upheld.

3. Violence against women and girls

22. Many representatives reiterated their Government's commitment to protecting women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence, which remained a significant problem. Several representatives noted with concern the rise of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Legislative reforms had been undertaken and other actions had been taken, including to criminalize online sexual abuse; punish the possession, purchase and advertising of child and youth sexual abuse materials; establish an interministerial mechanism to strengthen preventive and punitive responses to deepfake sex crimes; and create a global partnership aimed at addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence and supporting women, girls and persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in gaining safe and meaningful access to technology.

23. To address various forms of gender-based violence, legislative and policy frameworks had been introduced, including legislation to protect women and girls from spousal violence, sexual violence, domestic violence and sexual harassment and to protect survivors. Tougher penalties and more stringent definitions were being introduced, for example to expand the definition of rape to more comprehensively protect survivors; to strengthen the punishment for the sexual harassment of children; and to criminalize domestic abuse and stalking.

24. To address the root causes of gender-based violence, some Governments had implemented or planned to implement a national action plan to combat violence against all women and girls that was aimed at fostering a culture of respect and equality in all public and private spaces. Several efforts had been made to address gender-based violence through counselling and behavioural change initiatives targeting men.

25. National measures to provide essential services to survivors of violence had been established or strengthened. Examples of such measures were: 24-hour toll-free hotlines; shelters, safe spaces and peaceful villages; psychosocial support; standard operating procedures for the clinical management of rape, sexual violence and gender-based violence; integrated survivor support systems; and a survivor-victim charter. The availability of community care, trained counsellors and public awareness was important. Some representatives

noted that the increase in the reporting of gender-based violence was testimony to the fact that positive changes had been made. Several representatives also noted a decrease in prevalence rates.

26. Representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds emphasized the need for sustained political will and financial support to combat the high prevalence of gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Migrant women were particularly vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and violence, the effects of which were exacerbated by inequalities, conflicts, disasters and pandemics. Addressing violence against women and girls required the systematic integration of gender equality, human rights and health equity principles in policies and programmes.

27. Civil society representatives called for the implementation of laws that criminalized all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. That would require better investigation, reporting and prosecution capabilities; increased access to justice, comprehensive support and protection for victims/survivors; and increased investments in prevention. Support should be provided to community organizations led by women, girls and gender-diverse people aimed at ending sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, national and regional mechanisms should be established and strengthened to prevent all forms of violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, against all women human rights defenders and activists.

4. Women in positions of power and decision-making, and institutional mechanisms

28. Many government representatives noted that progress had been made in terms of increasing women's representation in leadership roles in government, the public sector and business. Nevertheless, challenges remained and additional efforts were needed to enhance women's political participation through training, mentoring, grass-roots leadership programmes, legal reforms and electoral quota policies. Information was shared on measures and tools to address harassment, including online harassment, of women in public office. Several representatives noted the high proportion of women leaders in business, as well as the accomplished women entrepreneurs in their respective countries. Affirmative actions had been taken to increase gender parity on corporate boards and encourage private and public entities to meet national gender targets in employment.

29. Women's rights were stipulated in national constitutions and laws, including legislative and policy frameworks that were aligned with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The implementation of gender-responsive governance at all levels was a priority and more had to be done to address the needs of women in vulnerable situations, including internally displaced women, stateless women, women vulnerable to disasters and armed conflict, Indigenous women and women facing intersecting forms of discrimination and multiple disadvantages. Some representatives shared information on national initiatives to enact or amend legislation to decriminalize same-sex relations, expand gender equality policies to include all genders and sexual orientations and protect the rights of transgender persons.

30. National mechanisms had a role to play in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, as did national action plans on gender equality and national development plans. Gender-responsive budgeting in

particular played an instrumental role, as it enabled the allocation and tracking of official development assistance and annual national budgets towards gender and development initiatives and the monitoring of gender considerations in budget decisions across ministries.

31. Civil society representatives called for the equal representation, participation and leadership of girls, women and gender-diverse persons in decision-making processes across all sectors through affirmative actions and the removal of all barriers to meaningful participation. An intersectional perspective should be taken in all areas and at all levels of decision-making, which should be based on intersectional data on women in all their diversity. Gender-responsive budgeting was needed to effectively implement national gender policies and programmes through a transparent and accountable mechanism that prioritized women's human rights and gender equality across all sectors of government.

5. Peaceful and inclusive societies

32. Several government representatives noted that national action plans on women, peace and security had been adopted and implemented and that, through such plans, Governments recognized the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in peacebuilding and in promoting disaster risk reduction and recovery. Some representatives reported an increase in the proportion of women among United Nations peacekeepers. One representative stressed the need to address the threats from climate change and armed conflict and in that regard called for the implementation of the Pasay Declaration on Women, Peace and Security.

33. Civil society representatives called for immediate demilitarization and for the development of gender-responsive, community-led peacebuilding processes. Policies on youth and on women, peace and security should be context-specific and based on the realities and needs of the communities concerned. Furthermore, it was important to address the root causes of conflict to promote transformative peace. The commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 urgently needed to be aligned, including by adhering to international humanitarian law, preventing sexual violence and ensuring women's meaningful participation in decision-making.

6. Gender and the environment

34. Government representatives stressed the heightened impact of climate change on the safety and well-being of women and girls and the need to empower them to adapt and contribute to the green and blue economies. Women and girls in rural, remote and maritime areas, as well as women and girls with disabilities in the Pacific, were particularly vulnerable to climate change and disasters since their livelihoods depended on natural resources. Policies, action plans and programmes on gender-responsive climate action and disaster risk reduction included: (a) integrating a gender focus in plans developed in the context of the Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership and in disaster management strategies; (b) establishing a disaster care centre to assist those affected by disasters and climate change; (c) implementing a national policy to address the health impacts of climate change; and (d) providing opportunities for skills development to support migration and integration in neighbouring countries, as needed.

35. Civil society representatives emphasized the disproportionate impact of climate crises on women and marginalized groups, noting that such crises exacerbated vulnerabilities related to gender-based violence, health inequities and socioeconomic disparities. Representatives called for the meaningful participation of women and girls in the planning, financing and implementation of climate responses at all levels and for such responses to always be informed by indigenous knowledge.

7. Other cross-cutting issues concerning gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

36. Some government representatives emphasized the role of women's human rights defenders and their contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Concerns were raised over the global rollback on the rights of women and girls. There was a need for strategic and stronger collaboration and partnerships between Governments, international organizations, civil society, grass-roots organizations, women and youth organizations, the private sector, the media and academia.

37. Several government representatives noted that patriarchal and deeply ingrained discriminatory social norms had continued to constrain opportunities for women and girls. It was necessary to engage men and boys to transform gender norms, overcome discriminatory social attitudes and address violence against women and girls. Some representatives also noted the importance of positive family values.

38. Many government representatives emphasized the need to enhance sex-disaggregated and gender data and statistics. Efforts included: (a) the regular monitoring and publishing of statistical data on the status of women; (b) the implementation of a national gender assessment to understand the reasons for the remaining gaps and identify the interventions that should be prioritized; (c) the adoption of legislation to mandate the assessment of the status of women; and (d) the collection of data disaggregated by disability.

39. Civil society representatives called for democratic and accountable platforms to engage with Governments and intergovernmental organizations, alongside the mechanisms and resources necessary to build networks. They also called for solidarity at the subregional level among diverse civil society organizations and highlighted the need for sufficient, flexible and long-term funding for women's rights movements. Legal safeguards were urgently needed to address the risks associated with digitalization, including exclusion from entitlements, misuse of personal data, technology-facilitated violence and environmental impacts, with marginalized communities actively participating in assessing those risks. It was also necessary to end the privatization of essential public services and to increase public spending on health, nutrition, education, universal social protection and care services as a matter of urgency. Governmental and non-governmental actors, including corporations, needed to be held accountable for acts against international human rights law.

B. Thematic discussion on the achievements, challenges, gaps and emerging issues in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and key actions for their further implementation in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 3)

40. The participants in the Ministerial Conference had before them the notes by the secretariat on the review of the status of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and priorities for accelerated

action in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MCBR/2024/2); the results of national reviews reported by member States on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (ESCAP/MCBR/2024/3); and the results of stakeholder consultations on the 30-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MCBR/2024/4).

Advancing women's economic empowerment through employment, decent work, social protection and entrepreneurship (agenda item 3 (a))

41. The participants in the Ministerial Conference benefited from a panel discussion that was moderated by the Director of the Social Development Division of ESCAP. The panellists were: Deputy Director General of the Office of the National Working Committee on Children and Women of the State Council of China, Ms. Huang Shu; Deputy Director General of the Agency for Enterprise Development of the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Viet Nam, Ms. Trinh Thi Huong; and Director of Gender Equality Activities of the International Trade Union Confederation – Asia-Pacific, Ms. Anna Lee Fos-Tuvera.

42. The panellists highlighted the importance of quality employment, decent work, gender-responsive social protection, care policies and gender-friendly entrepreneurial support systems to improve women's economic empowerment and resilience. Strategic investments were proposed to empower women to acquire skills, work, start businesses and lead in sectors related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, with a view to making the transition towards the green and digital economies gender-responsive. It was necessary to strengthen partnerships and collaborations among Governments, the private sector and civil society and to empower women to participate in consultations, dialogues, decision-making and leadership in the world of work. In that context, the crucial role that trade unions could play was underscored, in particular in areas relating to reducing decent work deficits in formal and informal sectors, strengthening the care economy, ensuring the dignity of care workers and facilitating women's participation in relevant decision-making platforms.

43. The panellists pointed to the need for strategies to support women in rural areas and women in informal or vulnerable employment. Tailored measures to enable women to cope with challenges in the changing world of work and to benefit from emerging opportunities included: (a) ensuring a legal environment conducive to women's effective economic participation while eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination and harassment in the workplace; (b) reducing the disproportionate burden relating to unpaid domestic and care work; and (c) supporting women-owned and women-led micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises by facilitating access to finance, markets and capacity-building.

44. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Samoa, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga and United States.

45. A representative of the Cook Islands, an associate member, also made a statement.

46. A representative of ILO made a statement.

47. A representative of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, an intergovernmental organization, also made a statement.

48. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities made statements: Soroptimist International and Tsao Foundation. Representatives of the Mission for Migrant Workers and the Women and Media Collective, speaking on behalf of the civil society forum, also made statements.

49. Government representatives reported on actions that supported women's economic empowerment. In the area of employment and decent work, actions had been taken to ensure equal access to economic opportunities and safeguard women's rights in the workplace. Those measures included a variety of legal measures aimed at ensuring equal pay; eliminating gender-based discrimination in recruitment; expanding maternity and paternity leave; and providing flexible work arrangements and supportive measures, such as access to early childhood education centres and programmes. In the area of social protection, actions undertaken included the introduction or expansion of schemes in support of women's economic empowerment, including: (a) caregiver allowance and health insurance; (b) child and maternity benefits; and (c) old-age pensions and ad hoc schemes to target women in vulnerable situations, including victims/survivors of gender-based violence. The gender digital divide needed to be reduced, with a view to ensuring access to information and communications technologies and leveraging digital tools to improve the efficiency of social protection delivery. Actions had been taken to support women entrepreneurs and their competitiveness, especially for those operating in the informal sector. Those measures included establishing multifaceted policies and programmes to provide vocational, financial and digital skills training, enhance business development and support services, and increase access to credit, microfinance and insurance, as well as access to regional and digital markets. Several representatives also highlighted the commitment of their Governments to actions that promoted the creation of green jobs and supported women to take an active role in both climate action and the green and blue economies across Asia and the Pacific.

50. Several government representatives raised concerns about high levels of reliance on informal work; the limited implementation of existing legal measures safeguarding women's rights in the workplace; and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work borne by women, which hindered their access to decent work and career progression. The disruptions caused by shocks such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and climate-induced disasters were major concerns with negative implications on women's economic empowerment, as were the insufficient and short-term nature of funding, the lack of gender-responsive planning and budgeting, and weak institutional frameworks.

51. Several government representatives called for the acceleration of progress on women's economic empowerment through strengthened multi-stakeholder international collaboration and partnerships at local, regional and global levels with the private sector and civil society. In that context, national and regional efforts to improve women's access to social protection schemes throughout the life cycle needed to be accelerated, with a view to building resilience and alleviating women's disproportionate unpaid care burden. Furthermore, it was necessary to increase support to women entrepreneurs by leveraging digital technologies to improve their access to

markets beyond national borders and to create jobs for women in more diverse, sustainable sectors and the green economy.

52. Representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds and other intergovernmental organizations underscored the multiple and intersecting barriers women encountered that had negative implications for their full economic participation and access to decent work. Trade unions played an important role as an integral part of both the tripartite social dialogue and policymaking aimed at reducing decent work deficits across Asia and the Pacific. A rights-based approach to care was needed, with a view to boosting women's labour force participation rate, redistributing unpaid care work, enhancing productivity and ensuring better working conditions for care workers, guided by international labour standards.

53. Civil society representatives underscored the systemic economic injustices and cumulative disadvantages women faced throughout their lives, which included: (a) having to drop out of school due to child marriage; (b) disadvantaged economic participation; (c) disproportionate care burden; and (d) limited access to social protection, leading to increased economic insecurity and poverty, including in old age. Structural challenges, including unsustainable economic models, ageing populations, rising economic inequality, debt crises, and a rise in precarious and informal work and in gender-based violence, were highlighted as key barriers to the economic empowerment of women and girls.

54. Civil society representatives emphasized the need to address systemic economic injustices that disproportionately affected women and girls, in particular those from marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as migrant and informal workers, people with diverse sexual orientations or gender identities, and persons with disabilities, by ensuring dignified wages, equitable work opportunities, stronger labour protections and the redistribution of care work. Emphasizing a life-cycle approach, representatives called for the mainstreaming of gender equality into all policy measures, improved data collection to enable evidence-based policymaking and evaluation, and inclusive social protection frameworks to safeguard women's rights and promote economic empowerment.

Strengthening women's participation and leadership in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 3 (b))

55. The participants in the Ministerial Conference benefited from a panel discussion that was moderated by United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Asia and the Pacific, Ms. Cindy Sirinya Bishop. The panellists were: Secretary-General of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and champion of the Assembly's Plan of Action on Women's Political Participation, Ms. Siti Rozaimeriyanty Dato Haji Abdul Rahman; Secretary of State for Equality of Timor-Leste, Ms. Elvina Sousa Carvalho; Senior Programme Manager of Disability Inclusion of PNG Women Lead Programme, and Pacific Regional Focal Person for the Indigenous People with Disability Global Network, Ms. Ipul Powaseu; and Chief Executive Officer and Founder of Fermata Inc., Ms. Amina Sugimoto.

56. The panellists highlighted recent achievements in increasing women's participation and leadership in politics and the private sector, which were the result of political will, dedicated policies and plans of action, education and individual persistence. Nonetheless, deeply rooted social norms, persistent structural barriers and limited access to networks were obstacles to women's

political participation and leadership across sectors. The panellists also highlighted particular challenges facing women with disabilities, young women, Indigenous women, and women and girls facing other intersectional forms of discrimination.

57. The panellists emphasized that inclusive leadership and decision-making were essential for robust and sustainable democracies and inclusive development. A collective multi-stakeholder approach was underscored to ensure that women, in all their diversity, were empowered to participate in decision-making and lead at all levels in both the public and private sectors. While strong political will was a crucial prerequisite, several key strategies were identified. Such strategies included strengthening affirmative measures such as quotas for women's representation; providing access to peer-support networks and leadership mentorship, including for the next generation of women leaders; enhancing gender-responsive budgeting; increasing the dedicated and sustainable allocation of resources to support women's rights networks, including those led by women with disabilities and women of diverse backgrounds; and addressing the safety and security concerns of women in politics and women voters, including in digital spaces. Other critical strategies included developing and implementing dedicated plans of action at the regional and subregional levels; aligning the implementation of gender equality, disability inclusion and agendas related to equity and equality; improving intersectional data to enable inclusive policymaking; and ensuring women's leadership in technological innovation and investment in order to tap into the transformative potential of digital and new technologies for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

58. Representatives of the following member States made statements: India, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nauru, Pakistan, Russian Federation, United States, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu.

59. A representative of the United Nations Development Programme also made a statement.

60. Representatives of Afghan women civil society organizations, Boundless: Voices Culture People, Center for Inclusive Policy, CEDAW Action Myanmar, Forum for Dignity Initiatives, Girls Run the World, Palau Research Institute and the Samoa Victim Support Group, speaking on behalf of the civil society forum, made statements. A representative of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also made a statement.

61. Government representatives reported on progress made in improving women's political participation and leadership, in particular in parliaments, national and local governments, the judiciary and the military. Such progress was attributed to national strategies on gender equality and women's empowerment and actions taken: (a) to strengthen legislation that stipulated and increased quotas for women's representation; (b) to implement leadership capacity-building and support programmes for women in the public and private sectors, including for younger generations of women leaders; (c) to improve women's access to higher education; (d) to combat gender-based violence; and (e) to implement public education that promoted women's leadership.

62. Government representatives emphasized that accelerating women's participation and leadership across sectors was dependent on a conducive environment that improved governance efficiency and built inclusive, resilient and peaceful societies. In order to create such a conducive environment, it was necessary: (a) to make policies across sectors gender-responsive; (b) to

improve access to social protection and healthcare for women and girls; (c) to advance the economic empowerment of women; (d) to strengthen legislation to end gender-based violence; (e) to close the gender digital divide; (f) to break patriarchal norms and combat extremism; and (g) to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting to sustain effective policy implementation and action for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The need for tailored measures to ensure equal access to opportunities and to empower women and girls from marginalized communities was also highlighted. It was important to increase women's participation and leadership in climate action and disaster risk reduction, digital transformation, and peace and security. Partnerships and collaboration were also needed at the global, regional and subregional levels to implement relevant strategies.

63. A representative of a United Nations entity highlighted that the underrepresentation of women was a challenge, in fragile States in particular, and pointed out the persistent, biased social norms against women and girls in cultural, social, economic and political spheres. Promising initiatives to empower women and girls to take the lead in finding climate-resilient solutions and promote gender equality in governance systems were shared.

64. Civil society representatives highlighted the urgent need to foster inclusive leadership and decision-making, taking into account the intersectional challenges based on class, caste, ethnicity, disability, indigenous status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics and other identities. Systemic inequalities were underscored, including limited access to education, healthcare, employment and justice, as well as heightened risks of poverty and gender-based violence. Harmful cultural and social norms and discriminatory laws and practices were identified as contributing factors to the exclusion of women and girls in all their diversity from decision-making and leadership across sectors, including those related to climate change and technological transformation. States had to take action: (a) to remove legal restrictions on organizations and movements of women and girls in all their diversity and on the activities of women human rights defenders; (b) to elevate the political influence of and budget allocation to national institutions for gender equality and women's empowerment; (c) to mandate universal physical, digital and informational accessibility and reasonable accommodation; (d) to support the self-determination of women and girls in all their diversity with regard to their bodily autonomy and integrity, as well as their political, economic, social and cultural participation; (e) to establish quotas for the political representation and leadership of women of diverse backgrounds; (f) to allocate direct, flexible and multi-year funding to build the collective leadership capacity of women and girls in all their diversity; (g) to transform harmful social norms, gender stereotypes and stigma through a multifaceted and multi-stakeholder approach that engaged educational institutions, the media, youth, faith leaders and community-led, grass-roots actors; and (h) to align national frameworks with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as with regional frameworks, including the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032; the ASEAN Enabling Master Plan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the Revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. It was also necessary to create more inclusive and gender-responsive policies and frameworks and to reshape local governance systems and international institutions on the basis of human rights, gender equality, justice, sustainable peace and accountability. The importance of gender-responsive humanitarian responses, with the increased

participation and leadership of women in humanitarian actions at all levels, was also highlighted.

Sustainable strategies for responding to and preventing violence against women and girls in an era of uncertainty (agenda item 3 (c))

65. The participants in the Ministerial Conference benefited from a panel discussion that was moderated by Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Ms. Bandana Rana. The panellists were: Director General for Social Development of the Ministry of Women's Affairs of Cambodia and Representative of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, Ms. Nhean Sochetra; Ambassador for Gender Equality of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ms. Stephanie Copus Campbell; Lead of Global Positioning of Breakthrough, Ms. Pritha Chatterjee; and Regional Director of the UNFPA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

66. The panellists stressed the significant economic impact of violence against women and girls, and the role of gender-based violence as a major predictor of conflict. Experiences and lessons learned were highlighted with regard to national action planning and implementation to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. Emphasis was placed on the importance of evidence-driven and inclusive prevention and response measures and of multisectoral coordination and collaboration, as well as strengthened accountability mechanisms at the national and subnational levels, integrating health, education, law enforcement and survivor-centred support services. Measures to account for the specific contexts and needs of women and girls facing intersectional vulnerabilities, such as women with disabilities and persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, were also shared. It was necessary to transform harmful gender norms and toxic masculinity through gender-transformative educational systems and engagement with boys and men, starting from childhood, and to increase investment from both the public and private sectors. A comprehensive approach to addressing the growing threat of technology-facilitated violence and its disproportionate impact on women and girls was needed, with an emphasis on the need to improve the digital literacy of women and girls, establish survivor-informed redress mechanisms and ensure access to survivor-centred support services.

67. The panellists reflected upon lessons learned from efforts aimed at the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to informing the development of resilient and integrated systems that would continue essential survivor-centred services and responses during future crises while integrating prevention and response strategies across the humanitarian-development nexus. Civil society, including grass-roots women's organizations and leaders, had a vital role in designing and implementing context-specific prevention and response strategies. The evidence base pertaining to violence against women and girls, which was based on disaggregated data, needed to be strengthened in order to enable effective prevention and response measures, and closer partnerships were needed among Governments, civil society organizations and international bodies, including the United Nations, aligned with established international mechanisms.

Accelerating gender equality through gender-transformative actions that bridge divides and smoothen key transitions (agenda item 3 (d))

68. The participants in the Ministerial Conference benefited from a panel discussion that was moderated by the Regional Director of the UN-Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The panellists were: Adviser

(Minister) of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare of Bangladesh, Ms. Sharmeen S. Murshid; Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Women, Ms. Ermelita V. Valdeavilla; Head of Digital Policy of the World Benchmarking Alliance, Mr. Dio Tobing; Director of the Public Association Women's Organization "Alga", Ms. Olga Djanaeva; and Regional Director for Oxfam in Asia, Mr. John Samuel.

69. The panellists highlighted the profound and interconnected impacts of climate change, technological transformation and demographic shifts on gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific. Opportunities and challenges were presented by those megatrends, with systemic inequalities often worsening for marginalized groups, in particular women in rural areas. Climate change had a disproportionate impact on women and girls, in particular due to increased care burdens and the destabilization of socioeconomic systems in disaster-affected areas. Addressing those challenges would require gender-responsive climate financing, loss and damage compensation mechanisms, and enhanced support for sustainable livelihoods. The digital gender divide was also a significant barrier. Proactive governance, corporate accountability and investment in digital infrastructure and skills development was needed to achieve universal digital inclusion. It was also necessary to acknowledge and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work to achieve gender equality, and gender-smart financing and institutional frameworks were needed to strengthen the care economy. Strategies proposed for empowering women and girls included promoting women's participation in decision-making and leadership as a catalyst for transformative change, fostering cross-sectoral partnerships and leveraging innovative digital tools and data-driven methods to address systemic gaps. Further institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting and policymaking perspectives into national policies and fostering collaboration were also underscored in the context of evolving social and economic challenges and transitions.

Statements on agenda items 3 (c) and (d) made after the completion of both panel discussions

70. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, United States and Uzbekistan.

71. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds also made statements: FAO, IOM and UNFPA.

72. A representative of the Asian Development Bank, an intergovernmental organization, also made a statement.

73. Representatives of Highlands Women Human Rights Defenders Movement, Hiking with Knowledge Mongolia, Korea Women's Associations United, Musawah Global Vision Berhad, Niue Women Alliance for Climate Justice and Samsara, speaking on behalf of the civil society forum, also made statements.

74. Government representatives reported on progress and actions taken to address violence against women and girls. Several countries had strengthened laws, policies and institutional mechanisms, including by: developing comprehensive national action plans and strategies to combat gender-based violence; criminalizing domestic violence; strengthening the accountability of perpetrators; passing legislation on paid family and domestic violence leave;

enacting legal frameworks to address sexual harassment in the workplace; leveraging dedicated tribunals and judiciary decisions to deliver justice to survivors; and improving law enforcement. To strengthen survivor-centred support services, several countries had established hotlines and digital platforms to assist survivors in reporting cases; trained first responders in law enforcement, healthcare, legal and social services; strengthened referral mechanisms; and increased women's representation in law enforcement. Efforts had also been made to improve quantitative and qualitative data collection to inform the design, implementation and monitoring of relevant policies and programmes.

75. Despite progress, some government representatives expressed concerns about the high prevalence of violence against women and girls and recognized the heightened risks and vulnerabilities of women and girls to violence during emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and disasters, especially for women and girls with disabilities; Indigenous women and girls; those living in rural, remote and coastal areas; and older women. An inclusive and intersectional approach to violence prevention and response was needed. Challenges included ineffective law enforcement; the underreporting of violence due to stigma and fear; data and evidence gaps; and the lack of resources to implement protection and response measures, especially in rural and remote areas and in the context of climate change and increased disaster risks. In the face of emerging technology-facilitated violence and its disproportionate impact on women and girls, stronger legislative frameworks and measures were needed for addressing harmful content and behaviours online and for digital tools for monitoring violence against women and girls.

76. To address those remaining challenges, government representatives noted the importance of aligning national frameworks with relevant international instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It was also necessary to invest more in prevention, through policies and programmes aimed at transforming cultural and social norms and behaviours that underpinned violence against women and girls, with the active engagement of men and boys. A comprehensive, multisectoral approach and the adequate and sustainable allocation of financial resources were important to support effective prevention and survivor-centred response measures. Children and young persons had to be protected in order to break the cycle of violence and the particular vulnerability and needs of women with disabilities had to be addressed. Community-driven solutions in building resilience against violence were also necessary. Survivors with lived experiences needed to be involved in the design and implementation of interventions, and civil society organizations, especially women's rights organizations, needed to be supported.

77. Several government representatives highlighted that, in order to transform systemic inequalities that perpetuated violence, it was necessary to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting; promote gender-inclusive policies and development strategies; to economically empower women through the provision of social protection and employment support; to enhance women's participation and leadership in all settings, including in climate and economic matters; and to bridge the gender digital divide. Regional and international collaboration and increased financial investment for that purpose were essential.

78. Several government representatives underscored the transformative potential of gender-responsive digitalization. In that regard, actions were outlined to improve women's access to technology, digital literacy and skills, especially for women in rural and underserved areas, and to build gender-responsive digital infrastructure, with a view to ensuring inclusivity in technological advancements and fostering women's participation in the digital economy, while safeguarding cybersecurity. Several representatives emphasized the intersectionality of gender with climate change and demographic shifts. Women had roles to play in resilience-building, disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation. Gender-responsive climate financing and policies were needed, as was an increase in women's participation in decision-making and leadership. The care economy was a transformative area for advancing gender equality and resilience. Many representatives detailed policies aimed at improving access to affordable care services and creating inclusive labour markets that offered equitable opportunities for women, as well as improving workplace policies that enabled women to achieve a work-life balance.

79. Several government representatives called for enhanced regional and international collaboration to address: cross-border challenges, including climate-induced migration and technology-facilitated violence; and issues of shared concern, such as the care economy. Improved gender data and robust data-driven policymaking were essential for designing evidence-based policies and solutions. Amplifying partnerships with civil society, the private sector and international organizations was also important for addressing entrenched inequalities and promoting inclusive transitions.

80. With a view to accelerating progress in addressing gender-based violence, several representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds and other intergovernmental organizations underscored the need for broader collaboration and partnerships to combat gender-based violence in connection with megatrends. In the context of migration and displacement, including climate-induced displacement, gender-responsive frameworks were important for: (a) monitoring exploitation, trafficking and other forms of violence against women and girls using improved sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data; (b) promoting the ethical recruitment of migrant workers and the use of safe migration pathways; and (c) creating strong mechanisms to uphold the human rights of migrant women workers and protect survivors. Other specific areas for strengthened collaboration included: gender-responsive policies that incorporated measures to prevent violence against women and girls, including during climate emergencies; and collaboration between Governments and digital technology companies to address digital and technology-facilitated violence, protect digital rights, create safe online spaces for women and girls in all their diversity and incorporate safety protection mechanisms into digital and technology design. Increased funding to support regional and global efforts was also needed.

81. Representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds and other intergovernmental organizations also emphasized the critical role of multi-stakeholder international cooperation in advancing gender equality in the context of megatrends. Key transformative areas for cooperation included: (a) transforming the food and agriculture sectors, focusing on women's access to both resources and decision-making roles, in order to better combat poverty and hunger while promoting sustainable and resilient rural development and business value chains; (b) expanding women's access to quality jobs in high-growth sectors, such as renewable energy, where women

remained underrepresented; (c) adopting a life-cycle approach to enhance the resilience, well-being and economic participation of women and girls, in particular older women, in the context of population ageing; and (d) boosting financial investment in climate adaptation and the care economy across the region.

82. Civil society representatives called upon Governments to eliminate discriminatory laws and policies that obstructed the exercising of: sexual and reproductive health and rights; bodily autonomy; legal capacity; decision-making; and citizenship rights. Emphasis was placed on the multifaceted nature of violence against women and girls due to gender inequalities intensified by the climate crisis, the care crisis, digitalization and decreased political will to protect human rights. Increased public investment was needed to: (a) strengthen social and health protection for women and girls; (b) improve access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services; (c) provide comprehensive sexuality education; (d) address increased vulnerability to gender-based violence in the context of climate change and migration, prioritizing women and girls from marginalized groups, such as sex workers and rural and Indigenous women and girls; and (e) integrate climate justice and violence prevention and response measures. They also urged Governments to address gender-based violence, both online and offline, by taking concrete measures aimed at survivor-centred protection and support services and the strengthened accountability of Governments and digital technology companies to protect digital rights and data privacy and respond to online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

83. Civil society representatives also called for support for women-led action in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction, in particular in rural areas and small island developing States. The integration of gender perspectives into national climate policies and the meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making processes were crucial. Targeted resource allocation and skills development were key enablers for women to lead actions towards environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

C. Other matters (agenda item 4)

84. No statement was made under this agenda item.

D. Adoption of the report on the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review (agenda item 5)

85. The report on the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review was adopted on 21 November 2024.

86. Prior to the adoption of the report, a representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that his delegation wished to deliver an explanation of position to indicate its disassociation from certain terms used in the pre-session documents and the report.[1]

[1] The full text of the statement is available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Iran_Statement_Item5.pdf.