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Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Sixth African Regional Conference on Women
on Mid-Term Review of Dakar and Beijing Platforms for action

22- 26 November 1999
Addis-Ababa

The African Plan of Action to accelerate the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women

(Period: 2000–2004)

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INTRODUCTION

The African Plan of Action was formulated within the framework of the mid-decade review of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action. That review was conducted through the Sixth Africa Regional Conference on Women, held from 22 to 26 November 1999 at the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The review was conducted in the form of national progress reports that were prepared by the Governments of most African countries with inputs from all the actors involved in implementing the action plans. Evaluation reports were also prepared by the Organization of African Unity, the Africa Development Bank, non-governmental organizations, the Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations agencies. The reports demonstrated great commitment to implementing the action plans that came out of Dakar and Beijing.

Most countries had allocated both financial and human resources to implementing national plans of action and had registered success in the past four to five years in such areas as increased school enrolment of girls, wider areas of coverage of health services, creation of women's groups for solidarity and collaboration, wider coverage of awareness-raising campaigns and programmes with regard to women's human rights, establishment of microcredit schemes, and expansion of adult literacy programmes. At least 15 of the reporting countries had formulated comprehensive national gender policies to guide other sectors in incorporating gender concerns in their policies, plans, and programmes. For the most part, the national plans of action included activities beyond the mid-decade review.

But the evaluation reports were also explicit about the problems that they had come up against in the implementation process, and in some cases they suggested ways of confronting these problems during the next phase. The African Plan of Action that follows addresses the most frequently raised problems with a view to providing a framework within which the problems can be resolved.

Conceptual Overview

It is now five years since the Dakar PFA was adopted. In the intervening period there have been a number of new developments and commitments made since Beijing, which provide a new context for the formulation of the African Plan of Action for the next five years. Some of these developments include the many and relevant recommendations emanating from theWorld Conference on Human settlements (Habitat II, Istanbul, 1996), and more recently (June 1999), the conclusions and recommendations of the Third Meeting of the follow-up Committee on the Implementation of the DND and the ICDP-POA adopted by the UNGASS in June 1999.

The combined impact of past macro-economic policies and globalisation has resulted in number of adverse consequences. These include overall social dislocation and the increased numbers of people living below the poverty line. In many African countries, women continue to increasingly carry large burdens of responsibility for the poor, aged, orphaned children and the sick. Poor women and children (orphans) head many households. The family is ordinarily the primary source of economic and social protection for those who cannot support themselves because of disability, illness, old age, inflation, low wages, unemployment, or displacement. Unfortunately, urbanization and its accompanying lifestyle coupled with the poverty that has resulted from the poor performance of most African economies have left the traditional African social welfare system weakened and ineffective. The burden therefore falls disproportionately on women, who have to assume greater responsibility for the care of the poor and the helpless in addition to other productive and reproductive roles.

These experiences require new policy shifts from a single factor approach to a more

comprehensive multi-sectoral approach to people's well being and security. Governments should consider, as a matter of priority, innovative actions to respond to this growing problem. In view of the urgency of this matter, governments should consider setting up, where they do not exist new mechanisms, and strengthening existing ones. Some countries have made a start in this direction.

Such examples are strongly recommended to run parallel poverty alleviation programmes in order to lighten the heavy responsibilities that women carry to maintain those unable to care for themselves.

It is against the background of these major structural shifts, which offer opportunities and challenges, that this plan should be interpreted.

Statement of mission

The African Plan of Action is proposed to help implement the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action through national, subregional and regional plans of action. It is a synthesis of strategies and mechanisms proposed to address and resolve a number of issues that have been identified as posing serious constraints in the past five years to implementing the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

The issues fall in six categories:

1. While most countries had drawn comprehensive national plans of action for implementing the platforms, few had defined concrete strategies for coordinating the activities that were actually implemented by a variety of actors in a variety of sectors. Duplication of effort and consequent waste of precious resources at the expense of the targeted beneficiaries were a major concern in most countries. Although there was an attempt to assign the coordinating role to a particular structure in some countries, these structures for the most part lacked the necessary mandate or the accompanying tools and resources to carry out their role effectively.

2. Yet another weakness that was linked to the national plans of action was that they omitted well-defined mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation process, which should be predicated on a clearly formulated set of indicators. In the absence of such a mechanism, it was impossible to gauge accurately the level of progress made and thus correct the process as necessary.

3. Practically all countries were silent on the issue of accountability. While commitment to implementing the Dakar and Beijing Platforms was explicit, as demonstrated by declarations and resolutions the Governments adopted, the national reports were silent on the issue of accountability to the people who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of the platforms. Silence in this sense leads to negligence and lip service, which safeguard the status quo at the expense of the advancement of women, gender equality, and sustainable development.

4. In the platforms for action, gender mainstreaming in policies, plans, and programmes in all sectors was accepted as the most effective strategy for achieving gender parity. This strategy therefore places on all sectors the responsibility for implementing the platforms. Unfortunately, few countries to date have either formulated comprehensive national gender policies or drawn up gender-sensitive sectoral policies. At the same time, the presence of women in critical masses at decision-making levels continues to be elusive, thus pushing back even further the likelihood of a demand for accountability. It is imperative to ensure that those who attain decision-making

positions have the necessary leadership skills and the capacity to analyse and evaluate policy and programmes from a gender perspective.

5. Countries implementing the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, whose vision is equality, development, and peace, have encountered a preponderant shortage of resources due to lack of access and control of those resources at the individual, national, subregional, and regional levels. Existing legislation and economic liberalization policies, privatization, debt repayments, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), and world trade terms respond unfavourably to the interests of the marginalized and the underprivileged in Africa, particularly women. Large and widening economic inequalities have resulted in insecurity, squalor, and inefficiencies, and they have undermined family systems at the risk of institutionalizing poverty. Recent reports show that the world's wealthiest 16 per cent uses 80 per cent of the world's natural resources. And yet, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights guarantees all people the right to "freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources . . . at their exclusive interest in no case shall a people be deprived of it" (article 21.1).

6. In the recent past, a number of emerging issues have become pervasive and life threatening to the entire African society. They must be addressed directly and decisively by the Governments and the entire population. Two of the issues, HIV/AIDS and the problem of the needy and helpless, pose particular threats due to their size and their far-reaching effects. In most African countries, the level of poverty is growing by the year as the number of people who are living below the poverty line increases by the millions. The strength of the extended family to take care of these people, a role that largely falls on women, has been eroded to bare bones as evidenced by the number of beggars of all ages and street children in the cities. The question of where the responsibility lies for both the victims of HIV/AIDS and poverty must be answered and acted upon as a matter of urgency before it is accepted as a way of life and eventually becomes the demise of Africa.

The African Plan of Action examines the issues outlined above within the context of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action and the priorities selected for focus by the different actors. It proposes a framework within which strategies and mechanisms for addressing them can be put in place and activated, nationally, subregionally, and regionally. The ultimate goal of the African Plan of Action is therefore to accelerate implementing the Platforms for Action in the next five years, after which the accomplishments of the decade after the Beijing Conference will be evaluated.

COORDINATION MACHINERY AND STRATEGIES

Justification

Governments have committed themselves to implement the Dakar and Beijing Platforms, but NGOs, United Nations specialized agencies, and other structures are contributing to the exercise locally, nationally, subregionally, regionally, and internationally. Since the Beijing Conference, many structures have been set up at every level to promote gender equality. Member States have made efforts to involve their institutions in formulating policies, programmes and plans with a view to translating the Dakar and Beijing Platforms into action. This poses a problem in eliciting the participation and cooperation of the myriad institutions of Government, civil society, the private sector, and NGOs. The national, subregional, and regional institutions suffer from ill-defined statutes and mandates, lack of skills in gender analysis, inadequate financing and equipment, centralized authority, poor capacity to mobilize, unprofessional approach to the issue of gender, and lack of

coordination.

The multiplicity of structures and actors, diversity of strategies pursued, and poor coordination of activities constitute obstacles to the harmonious implementation of national plans of action and to realistic evaluation. Each of the countries has to develop strategies and machinery for coordinating gender activities, to promote not only smooth implementation, follow-up, and evaluation but also remedial action and better planning. Indeed, the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms would be easier if all players established close links and shared information.

Vision

Each Member State regularly coordinates, through appropriate machinery located either in the Office of the President or the Office of the Prime Minister or any other highest level office, the various activities conducted to promote gender equality among the various actors under the 12 critical areas of concern. Coordination makes it possible to avoid duplication of effort, save time and resources, and maximize impact.

Strategic objectives

At the national level

1. Establish a National Consultative and Coordinating Committee at highest executive level of the State who will decide on the composition. Ministries and actors including the civil society would be represented on this committee, whose responsibility would be to design, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of official commitments. The committee would be vested with the authority to enforce compliance with all official commitments and to ensure that they were implemented.

2. Build and enhance the capacity of the National Consultative and Coordinating Committee for gender and development.

3. Circulate official policy, programme, and planning documents among the partners.

4. Build or enhance the capacity of the United Nations agencies in each country to interact with the NC-CC.

At the sub-regional level

5. Create or strengthen in each inter governmental organisation (IGO) at subregional level a gender mechanism responsible for following up the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

At the regional level

6. Strengthen the capacity of the existing gender structures in the regional IGOs to facilitate their role in following up the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

Strategic actions

National level

7. Establish a National Consultative and Coordinating Committee for the promotion of gender equality.

8. Provide gender training for all national, bilateral and multilateral development partners.

9. Establish, under the leadership of the UN resident coordinator system, a consultative and coordinating mechanism for United Nations agencies to support the implementation of the Platform for Action. This mechanism will provide technical and financial support to the national follow-up teams responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Platforms.

10. Have United Nations agencies lead, in coordination with national, subregional and regional organizations, Capacity building experts in skills in gender analysis and related skills.

Subregional level

1) Create or strengthen a gender mechanism responsible for overseeing follow up of the Dakar + Beijing PFAs in each sub regional IGO .
2) Such a mechanism should be placed at a sufficiently high level to directly influence decision-making, and adequate resources allocated to their programmes and activities.
3) Sub regional IGOs should work closely with SRDCs to ensure complementary planning, programme delivery and coordination.

Regional level

1. Strengthen the status and the human and financial resources of gender units in ADB, ECA, and OAU, to facilitate their role in coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of the Platforms for Action.

2. Strategically locate the gender equity promotion mechanisms within the OAU, ADB and ECA as close to the policy-making level as possible to enable them to directly influence policy.

3. Establish an institutional mechanism at ministerial level with the framework of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community to promote monitor and evaluate gender equity.

4. Member States are responsible for providing resources for gender mainstreaming.

Actors

Members of governmental, intergovernmental, and United Nations agencies, NGOs, civil society, and private sector officials, by becoming effectively involved, have an important role to play in promoting gender equity.

Indicators

11. Establishment and operation of National Consultative and Coordinating Committees for the promotion of gender equality.

12. Number of people and structures trained in the gender approach.

13. Number of people and structures receiving official documents.

14. Existence and efficient operation of a gender mechanism in each subregional IGO.

15. The number of programmes monitored and evaluated by the gender focal points of the ADB, ECA and OAU.

Time frame

For the coming four years, each country should have an operational consultative and coordinating committee for the promotion of gender equality and a consultative and coordinating mechanism in United Nations country offices to support the implementation of national plans of action.

Resources

Member States, should together with development partners including the bilateral and multilateral cooperation, take responsibility at the national, sub-regional and continental levels to provide resources for gender mainstreaming projects.

STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORMS FOR ACTION

Justification

Through the Addis Ababa Declaration on the African Platform for Action on Women in June 1995, the African Heads of State and Governments "declared their solemn commitment to the principles, objectives and priorities enshrined in the African Platform for Action"; they also reaffirmed that "the implementation of the African Platform for Action is the primary responsibility of Africa Governments and peoples". In this connection, they asked ADB, ECA, and OAU to "closely monitor the implementation of the Platform and to submit periodic reports thereon to the Council of Ministers and to [their] Conference". Similarly, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 committed themselves "to implement the [Beijing] Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programmes". They also recognized that "it is essential to design, implement and monitor effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women".

Unfortunately, although most countries have already formulated and started to implement their national action plans, they have not been as efficient in creating mechanisms to monitor how the implementation process evolves so that they can evaluate it periodically. The national action plans in most of the reporting countries lack indicators to measure movement towards the defined objectives, or at best, the indicators have been inconsistently defined. It therefore becomes impossible to estimate progress made towards the overall goal of mainstreaming gender as a strategy towards sustainable development, equality, and peace. For a comprehensive solution to this problem, each country needs to develop ways to monitor and evaluate how well the platforms for action are being implemented.

Vision

Each country monitors annually and every five years evaluates the implementation of the platforms for action through a clearly defined mechanism with concrete indicators for each of the 12 critical areas of concern.

Strategic objectives

At the national level

16. Constitute a national technical team of experts in each country, which will define clear indicators in the 12 critical areas of concernby which it will regularly monitor and evaluate implementation progress.

At the subregional level

17. Ensure that the subregional IGOs develop appropriate tools with which to monitor and evaluate performance in gender mainstreaming.

At the regional level

18. Ensure that the regional institutions have monitoring and evaluation tools that they use regularly in following up their implementation performance.

Strategic actions

National level

19. Identify and where possible appoint staff specially in all the 12 sectors for the national technical team , trained in:
    - formulating indicators for measuring progress made in the implementation process
    - analysing policy and programme to ensure that gender concerns are integrated
    - monitoring and evaluation processes
20. Formulate monitoring and evaluation tools.
21. Monitor annually the implementation process and mid-term and biennial evaluation of progress made in the implementation.

Subregional and regional levels

Monitor and evaluate teams within the IGOs and regional institutions selected and trained in:

- formulating indicators for measuring progress made in the implementation process
- analysing policy and programme to ensure that gender concerns are integrated

- monitoring and evaluation processes

22. Formulate monitoring and evaluation tools.

23. Monitor annually the implementation process and biennial evaluation of progress made in gender mainstreaming.

24. The follow up mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of the African Platform for Action should be accelerated by the formation of a joint secretariat comprising the OAU, ADB,ECA. The OAU shall have responsibility of chairing the secretariat which shall work out precise modalities of coordination among the three organisations

Actors

1. Selected staff from sectors representing each of the 12 critical areas of concern appointed by the highest authority within Government ministries who come together to constitute one national technical team for monitoring and evaluating the implementation process. Evaluation and monitoring teams in IGOs and regional institutions (ADB and OAU).

2. Trainers in formulation of indicators, policy analysis for gender audit, monitoring and evaluation processes. These should be constituted by ECA and the African Center for Women (ACW) in collaboration with OAU, ADB, other UN agencies, subregional, regional, bilateral and multilateral training institutions.

Time frame

In the next four years, each country should have a trained national follow-up team that conducts monitoring and evaluation exercises for the national evaluation report due in 2004.

Resources

The cost should be shared among Governments, which should provide the team members, host the training workshops and carry out the monitoring and evaluation exercises. ECA, should take a leading role among UN, bilateral and multilateral agencies and the subregional and regional training institutions, in formulating and implementing the training programme.

Women and decision-making

Justification

Comprehensive development can happen only when women achieve better social, economic, and political status and take active part in the management of public affairs. In most countries, women are under-represented at every level of administration in the public or private sector. They account for less than 10 per cent of the legislature. Discriminatory attitudes and practices, family responsibilities, low income, little education, lack of self-confidence, the inability to control their sexuality and reproductive roles, and the non-competitiveness of women leaders all combine to prevent women from attaining positions of power. It is therefore the responsibility of each State to take the measures required to create an enabling environment that will allow women to participate more in development, enhance the capacities of women leaders and achieve social justice.

Vision

Each country has concrete, timebound and effective institutional framework for promoting equal gender representation in decision-making bodies in the public and private sector, the legislature and political parties, and in international organizations.

Strategic objectives

25. Increase the number of women in political and decision-making positions.

26. Promote affirmative action to reduce gender disparities in decision-making organs.

27. Provide women with the opportunity to participate in decision-making.

28. Increase capacity of women in decision-making.

29. Promote democratic values, liberty, gender equality and separation of power.

30. Develop gender sensitivity in all decision-making processes and at all levels.

Strategic actions

National level

31. Ensure that there is an irreversible critical mass of women in decision-making positions.

32. Ensure that professional women from relevant fields constitute at least 33 per cent of the national delegations attending all statutory meetings, nationally and internationally.

33. Ensure that men at technical and decision-making level constitute at least 33 per cent of the national delegations for statutory meetings to discuss gender and women issues at national and international levels.

34. Train for capacity building in leadership

Subregional level

35. Provide women equal opportunities to head the subregional IGOs. Effective search for candidates should be built into the normal recruitment process.

36. Ensure that at all times at least 50 per cent of the managers of the technical departments in the IGO are women.

Regional level

37. Make a concerted effort to ensure that women candidates are promoted to decision-making positions in OAU and women candidates are supported for the post of the Secretary-General in OAU.

38. Build into the recruitment policy an effective search for qualified female and male candidates in the posts of Secretary-General, assistant secretaries-general and technical directors.

39. When the Secretary-General is a man, ensure that 50% of assistant secretaries-general are women, or vice versa.

40. In the soon-to-be-established African parliament, ensure that at least 33 per cent of the parliamentarians are women.

41. Ensure that women constitute at least 50 per cent of decision-makers in the soon-to-be-established African Monetary Fund, the African Court of Justice and the African Central Bank.

6. The Organisation of African Unity should in particular:

a) device mechanisms that would facilitate and ensure women's participation in the electoral process of the Pan-African Parliament , or their appointment to these new structures (the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Union, the African Court of Justice) and other leadership areas.

b) ensure the equal access to and full participation of women in the preparation of the constitutive legal texts of the Union and all the related structures.

c) ensure that women's interests are taken into account and their perspective incorporated in the constitutive legal texts of the Union and all the related structures .

7. The OAU and the ECA should strive to involve the African Women Committee on Peace and Development in the implementation of the Sirte plan of action.

Actors

Governments bear responsibility for promoting women to decision-making positions.

Indicators

1. The number of women in decision-making positions at national, subregional, and regional levels increased to at least 33%.

2. Gender policies formulated.
3. Legislations put in place.
4. Gender sensitive programmes designed.
5. Recruitment policies and effective such mechanisms for women candidates put in place.
6. Training programmes instituted

Time frame

In the coming four years, Governments should take adequate institutional measures to promote the advancement of women into decision-making positions.

Resources

The necessary resources for establishing and operating these structures should come from governments, NGOs, civil society organizations and bilateral and multilateral and development partners.

MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PLATFORMS FOR ACTION

Justification

Insufficient resources continue to present an important constraint in implementing the platforms. Practically all the reporting countries cited this as a critical obstacle in the same way it had been declared responsible for the low implementation rate of the Nairobi forward-looking strategies. Yet it is also a fact that there are enormous quantities of national resources, a lot of which nationals take out of the continent for external spending or banking. Conversely, large quantities of financial resources enter the continent in different ways and for various purposes without seeming to make much difference to the perpetual cry of shortage. The issue of access and control of both external and internal resources therefore needs to be examined in depth in the light of its crucial position in successfully implementing the Platforms for Action. The high debt burden coupled with structural reforms in most African countries has affected the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action. In most African countries, civil service reforms, cut-backs in budgets for social sector have led to decline in resources allocated to implementation of Platforms for Actions. Consequently, these problems have had a multiplier devastating effects especially on programmes aimed at poverty alleviation as most countries are more obliged to issues of debt servicing.

The States shall "undertake to eliminate all forms of foreign economic exploitation, particularly that practised by international monopolies so as to enable their peoples to fully benefit from the advantages derived from their national resources" (article 21.5).

The problem of access to and control of resources applies equally to resources that originate from external sources as either loans or grants. Their distribution and utilization is often perceived as neither transparent nor equitable. Moreover, women benefit least from them, due to their absence in positions of decision-making and their limited access to and control of credit and productive resources due to socio-cultural causes.

African Governments have the moral responsibility and the protective role to eliminate the current situation of large inequalities and human misery aggravated by poverty because people have lost their access to and control of their national resources. They have the responsibility to create political, economic, and social stability by facilitating the exploitation of available national resources to shape the future of the nations for the benefit of the people. They need to formulate policies that will reconcile the imperatives of global markets with the national needs of the people, their welfare, cohesion, and the assurance of increased participation of women in decision-making at all levels.

Vision

In the planning period, attain an increase in the rate of creating national wealth while preserving the national resources and the equitable distribution of the benefits of economic and social growth and development, to forestall impoverishment of the poor and the powerless, particularly women.

Strategic objectives

At national level

1. Engender budgeting and macro-economic planning processes to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to accelerate implementation of the African and Global PFAs.

2. Reinforce the capacity to absorb and manage the resources allocated to the implementation of Beijing programme of Action and Dakar Platform for Action.

At the regional level

2. Mobilize external resources from bilateral and international partners for the successful implementation of the PFA, including from debt cancellation and conversion.

3. Advocate for the strengthening of funding agencies such as UNIFEM mandated to support women/gender programmes.

Strategic actions

To achieve the above objectives, governments should:

1. Ensure that privatization increases the number of national stakeholders and owners in the national economy through empowerment and fair competition in wealth creation for the nations. To this end, Governments should find a way to retain enterprises that are fully or partially privatized, until a critical mass of nationals including women are financially in a position to purchase and run them profitably. Governments should ensure that women have access to ownership and management of businesses, within the context of privatization. This was successfully done in Malaysia and in the Association of South East Asian Nations (SEAN) countries that have indigenized privatization.
2. Link negotiations for terms of debt repayment including debt relief with resources for the implementation of the Platforms for Action.

3. Recycle the debt relief for gender mainstreaming.

4. Develop and strengthen gender budgeting and macro-economic planning mechanisms to ensure finding for activities carried out to implement the PFAs.

5. Where there is no specific target and/or less than one percent is currently being allocated, intergovernmental subregional and Regional economic structures and civil society organisations should alleviate at least one percent of their total annual budget for women/gender related activities the UN agencies that have set targets for resource allocation for gender mainstreaming and advancement of women should set a time frame and undertake to implement their commitments in this regard.

Actors

The actors are the governments, the national committees, the NGOs, the civil society and other collaborating institutions at national and international levels.

Indicators

Indicators include the level of budget allocation for Platform for Action implementation.

Time frame

In the next two years each country should have developed and strengthened its gender budget and macro economic planning mechanisms, and in the next four years each country should have developed and strengthened other resource mobilization mechanisms.

Mechanisms and structures

The national coordination committee should be responsible for promoting and monitoring the mobilization of resources from the sources stipulated above. The committee should also determine the financial needs for the implementation of the Platforms for Action in different sectors.

VI. Strategies and mechanisms for accelerating the integration of a gender approach in policies, planning and programming

Justification

Gender is a social construct linked to the norms of a given society. It constitutes a variable for differentiating, organizing, and structuring social roles and relationships. In describing such societal roles and responsibilities, gender analysis facilitates taking into account the economic and social roles of women and men and effectively integrates their specific constraints and strengths in development activities. Using a gender approach, a community can conduct activities that promote equal participation of men and women in its development at the same time as it achieves an equitable sharing of resources. For Africa to develop sustainably, its men and women must participate equally, but lopsided appropriation of resources and prevailing social norms do not allow women to play fully their role in development or to reap the benefit for their own well-being.

In adopting the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, member States committed themselves to working for gender equality. They should therefore effectively integrate the gender approach in national policies, planning, programming, and project evaluation with a view to achieving the set objective. Five years since the adoption of the regional platform, however, there is still a long way to go to integrate the gender approach systematically in national policies, planning, programming, and project evaluation. This weakness is evident both in the state structures and in the civil society, private sector, and non-governmental organizations. Some sub regional organisations have also taken

steps to institutionalize and mainstream gender into their policies, programmes and activities, while others are in the process of doing so. These efforts need to be encouraged and strengthened.

Vision

The public, private sector, civil society who are responsible in each country for implementing the national plan of action understand and use the gender approach in programme formulation and implementation.

Strategic objectives

At national level

8. Promote capacity building for members of the National Consultative and Coordinating Committee for the promotion of gender equality, the national technical team_ members of all sectoral committees or commissions responsible for implementing national plans of action, and all development partners.

9. Integrate national plans of action in all projects implemented by national and international partners.

10. Promote a system for collecting gender-disaggregated data and building related databanks in every ministerial department and structure responsible for national statistics, planning, and programming

At subregional and regional level

11. .Promote the mainstreaming of gender concerns, and capacity building in the policies, programs and activities of all subregional and regional organisations.

Strategic actions

12. Institutionalize systems for collecting gender-disaggregated data.

13. Establish gender-disaggregated databanks in the relevant structures.

14. Provide initial and regular gender training for policy makers, legislators, planners and programme implementors as well as development partners.

15. Development of gender mainstreaming natural guide adopted to National realities.

At subregional and regional level

5. Develop and strengthen mechanisms for mainstreaming of gender concerns, and capacity building in the policies, programs and activities of all subregional and regional organisations.

Indicators

16. Engendered national plans of action.

17. Availability of sex-disaggregated data

18. Resources for data collection and analysis

19. Number of policy makers, parlimentarians, legislators and programme implementors trained

20. Number of training sessions.

Time frame

Over the coming four years, each State should systematically use the gender approach in all official documents and monitor their implementation. The National Consultative and Coordinating Committee for the promotion of gender equality is appropriate for implementing the various measures, with the assistance of the national, bilateral and multilateral development partners and the national technical team members of sectoral committees or commissions responsible for implementating national plans of action.

Resources

The implementation of this programme will require a close working relationship among States, NGOs, civil society organizations,_bilateral, and multilateral development partners.

VII. AIDS/HIV and its implications for women's empowerment

Justification

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is progressively wiping out the post-colonial gains of public health and economic development efforts of the last 30 years in Africa. It is ruthlessly killing the young people in the prime of their productive life. Nearly 11 million Africans have died of AIDS alone at an average rate of 2 million per year and nearly 6000 per day, at a cost of up to US$1000 per funeral. Infections gallop at the daily rate of 10,000 adults 15-49 years, mainly women, and 2000 children under 15 years, mainly girls. In this regard, it is noted that the incubation period in Africa is generally much shorter than the 20 years so far experienced elsewhere. The birth rate, the only means of replacing the dead and dying, is only 72,000 per day, and it is declining. The prevailing neglect, mystery, myths, stigma, prejudice, and intolerance for a primarily public health concern continue to fuel the spread of a deadly disease that is contracted primarily through sexual intercourse, an act central to male and female relationships. Yet once again females find themselves disadvantaged due to social and economic dependence, and physical and physiological differences that expose them, more than their male partners, to infections. Young girls are at greater risk due to some traditional practices, sexual abuse, forced marriage, prostitution, and myths that infected men can be cured by having sexual relations with a virgin, thus exposing the girl to tearing of the genitals, which accelerates infections. Women with disabilities also are at a greater risk of STD and HIV/AIDS infection arising out of their double marginalisation as women and as disabled. Elderly relatives with little means or support particularly carry the burden of orphans. The breadwinners die; families disintegrate, and poverty and despondency reign.

Although infection rates vary between African countries and sub regions, high mobility within the continent means that no country will remain unaffected by HIV/AIDS.

Prevention is the key to slowing the spread of AIDS in Africa and curtailing its ultimate impact—devastation of African populations. Prevention strategies must address the structures that place the woman in a disadvantaged position in society and instead empower her to protect herself and her children. Local resources must be mobilized to prevent infections and manage health care, not only to bury the dead.

Vision

The vision of the Plan of Action is to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS infections by 50 per cent by 2004 by creating awareness and reducing the socio-economic devastation of HIV/AIDS.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objectives include increasing resources to fight the disease and its effects, empowering women socially and economically, and demystifying or removing fear and the sense of mystery about HIV/AIDS through realistic information, education and communication programmes in the community.

Strategic actions

To demystify HIV/AIDS and reduce the spread of infection, central Governments have the responsibility to take strategic actions:

21. Formulate or review HIV/AIDS policy to check the spread of the infection and then to eradicate it through non-discrimination, demystification of the disease, and protection of both the infected and the uninfected.

22. Set up or strengthen national HIV/AIDS committees or their equivalents that will develop national HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes.

23. Legislate against all discriminatory practices that have implications on HIV/AIDS, promoting regulating the age of consent and controlling and prohibiting deliberate contamination of the uninfected by the infected.

24. Promote community-based health care (for example, as in Zambia), which encourages the infected to live positively within the community. The approach enhances information, education, and communication to reduce myths and subsequent isolation. It also empowers, involves, and protects the woman and caters for the orphans.

25. Prevent transmission through transfusion of infected blood, use of contaminated needles, syringes, surgical and dental equipment, and breast-feeding by infected mothers. To do this, Governments in close collaboration with NGOs, women's groups, the private sector, and international agencies should design and implement programmes and projects for:

- sensitization, training and inspections
- HIV screening and contact tracing to protect public health, particularly of the high-risk groups, to be determined at the national level
- conducting family life and sex education on the dangers of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, targeting the youth
- building community associations through age groups and professional, religious, or other clubs to facilitate information interchange and networking and to promote community feeling and concern for one another. Through these, transmission will be reduced and the care of those already infected will be intensified and made more effective
- setting up homes and centres (for example, as in Zimbabwe) to rescue orphans, particularly girls, from defilement, violence, neglect, or abandonment, and build or reassign hospitals, health centres, and clinics, under professional and skilled personnel, to provide health services, including counselling, to the communities

26. Enable countries to investigate and negotiate for a supply of available testing kits and medicines at a reasonable cost.

27. Safeguard all nationals against unethical practices, such as drug testing studies conducted without informed consent. Women need to be educated, trained, and empowered socially and economically while their human rights are protected from being violated by anyone in any way.

28. Enable the national HIV/AIDS committee, national women's groups and organizations, and the civil society to ensure political will and commitment, such as through lobbying.

29. Support applied research by compatriots in Africa using indigenous or modern methods.

30. Conduct educational programmes and sensitization campaign including counselling for the women and youth on illicit drug related issues.

Sub-regional level

11. Set up or strengthen sub regional mechanisms for the collective negotiations for bulk purchase of HIV/AIDS drugs at reduced costs

Actors

Actors include individuals, both infected and uninfected; the community; governments; NGOs; collaborating national, subregional, regional, and international institutions.

Indicators

Some of the indicators are the number of communities organized and functioning in the control of HIV/AIDS; the number of information, education and communication groups and clubs; the number of health centres, clinics, homes, and hospitals responding to community health-care and social needs; the number of people seeking assistance at these centres; the rate of new HIV/AIDS infections; the rate of sexually transmitted disease infections; death rates, birth rates, fertility rates and population growth rates; the rate of condom use; and the number of HIV/AIDS rape cases and subsequent convictions. PFA implementation to eradicate HIV/AIDS will be monitored and evaluated regularly by the national multisectoral teams, which will involve experts in this field.

Resources

Governments have the moral obligation to allocate sufficient resources to control the pandemic as a matter of priority. Resources for the community-based approach should be mobilized internally as well. However, access to available tests and medicines should be negotiated externally without the conditionalities that distract nations from their priorities or encourage external dependence.

Mechanisms and structures

National governments will set up national HIV/AIDS committees or their equivalents comprising representatives from sectoral ministries, particularly health, social services, education, finance, and law enforcement agencies. The committees will include representation from women's groups, the private sector, and the civil society. The national committees will form subregional and regional committees in which they will involve related subregional and regional organizations to facilitate exchange of information and monitoring of the cross-border interactions that may influence the control of the spread of the epidemic. National multisectoral monitoring and evaluation team will carry out monitoring and evaluation, and report to the national coordinating and consultative committees with mandate, status and power for effective coordination.

VIII. Access to and contribution towards the provision of basic goods and services by the women in the African Society

Justification

Poverty and lack of control of resources is the main cause of inequality in African societies where women suffer the most. With the breakdown of the traditional African family support and increasing poverty, the woman, while still without means, is overloaded with the care of the poor and the needy besides her other productive and reproductive responsibilities. The Platform for Action rightly recognizes the multidimensional problem of poverty with its origins in the national and

international domains, the continued decline of employment at a faster rate for women than for men, and the unsustainable economic growth and deepening interdependence among nations due to globalization.

Women have stressed the need for African countries to create national, sub-regional and regional markets for national, sub-regional and regional products. They re-affirm the need for their workload and the burdens they carry for the families to be lightened and to be included into the national accounts at the macro and micro levels. The African society must assist them to do so. The African governments have the moral responsibility to lighten the women's workload, to add value to their activities, to acknowledge women's role in national development and to make their contribution visible. In support, PFA restates the need to empower women to utilize national and other resources sustainably with adequate institutional and financial framework and support at all levels.

Vision

National manufacturing including women's is directed towards production and provision of essential goods and services for African communities through small and medium industrial enterprises that will provide labour remuneration and subsequent capital earnings for women. This will be achieved through total commitment by governments, their partners and civil societies in the setting up and running of basic industrial income earning enterprises. New and extended manufacturing programmes will be up and running in two years. Reduction in poverty among the women by a minimum of 1% will be achieved at the end of five years.

Strategic objectives

National governments should aim:

1. To raise the purchasing power of the communities and that of the women in particular by creating employment.

2. To industrialize entrepreneurial activities.

3. To achieve self reliance in the production and provision of utility goods

4. To allocate adequate financial and human resources for establishing indigenous small and medium industrial enterprises.

5. To reduce women's domestic workload

6. To encourage the private sector to set up small and medium industrial enterprises in an enabling, protective and supportive environment.

Strategic actions

At national level

To develop small and medium harmonize throughout the text enterprises that will provide paid employment for women, governments in collaboration with partners in development should:

1. Formulate policies that will enhance women's participation in national development accessing and exploiting national resources.
2. Repeal all laws and amend all regulations prohibiting access to and use by women of national resources for national development.
3. Build capacity for setting up and running of small and medium enter, ensuring training in technology, management, marketing and networking.
4. Provide access to capital and assets for setting up and running industrial plants that will lighten women's workload and technologically produce articles required and marketed in African communities. They should establish funds and credit guarantee schemes to facilitate this endeavour.
5. Encourage franchises for enterprise development

At subregional and regional levels

1. Facilitate establishment of small and medium industries for the production and provision of utility items in the country, the sub-region and the region.
2. Promote intra-African trade at the sub-regional and regional levels within the African Economic community, guiding the location of different types of enterprises and avoiding duplication and undue saturation of sections of the markets.

Mechanisms/structure

National Consultative and Coordinating Committee should ensure that the National Machinery and the Ministry of Industry facilitate policy formulation, programmes and project design and development of indigenous small and medium industries which add value to women's participation in national development.

Actors

The main actors are:

- The national government.
- The Private sector, NGOs and IGOs as government partners
- The civil society
- National Consultative and Coordinating Committee
- The National Women's Machinery
- Women as groups and as individuals
- International partners

Monitoring and evaluation

The indicators will include:

Number and distribution nationally and regionally of industrial enterprises set up in the planning period; gender disaggregated data on number of people employed in new enterprises; gender disaggregated data on the number of people in industrial-related decision making positions; per capita income by gender; gross national product per year.

Resources

Governments will allocate resources from the national budget. Governments may seek assistance from partners sympathising with the principle of empowering women for self-determination in economic affairs, e.g. distinct input from UNIDO and ILO is anticipated. The private sector will be encouraged to set up franchises in small and medium enterprises that will employ women in various parts of the country. Women will also be encouraged to use savings and credit facilities among themselves and in financial institutions to expand their entrepreneurial activities. Other sources will be Women's national banks where they exist and specialised funds created for reducing poverty among women.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADB African Development Bank
ECA Economic Commission for Africa (United Nations)
HIV/AIDS human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
NGO non-governmental organization
IGO inter-governmental organization
OAU Organisation of African Unity
PFA Platform for Action
SAP structural adjustment programme
STD sexually transmitted disease
UNDP United Nations Development Programme

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Sixth African Regional Conference on Women
on Mid-Term Review of Dakar and Beijing Platforms for action

22- 26 November 1999
Addis-Ababa

Declaration

Of the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women *Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action* 22-26 November, 1999, Addis Ababa

We, the participants of the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women, representing governments and civil society; meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 22-26 November, 1999.

Reaffirming the commitments made in Dakar and Beijing to the empowerment and advancement of women, their full participation in decision-making processes and access to resources;

Reaffirming also the explicit recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of women and men;

Recognizing that efforts have been made to implement the Platforms for Action over the last five years, particularly in the following:

- To-date, forty-seven African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- There is an increase in the participation of women in politics and decision-making - one country has passed the 30% target in parliament and several others are on the path to reach this objective.

- In several countries, land tenure reform processes have led to legislation which provides for women to own, use and inherit land. Also, there is a rise in women-specific mechanisms created by mainstream finance and banking organizations, to facilitate easier access to loans and credit schemes. There is also a greater understanding of women's life-cycle needs and efforts to provide basic services to address those needs.

- There is now a vibrant and growing women's activism and advocacy for peace, which has helped to mount pressure for the inclusion of women in mainstream peace-processes hence the formation of the OAU Women's Committee on Peace and Development. Using their community management skills and participatory approach to power, women are bringing a qualitatively different perspective to peace negotiations and peace building.

- A global consensus has been reached that women's rights are human rights and that Violence against Women is one of the most widespread violation of human rights.

- Positive steps have been taken, in countries' efforts to promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and to provide education, health and a better quality of life.

- The strong advocacy around female genital mutilation has led to the decrease of the practice, or its replacement with new positive rites of passage, within some rural communities across the continent.

- As a result of constitutional reviews and reforms new progressive legislation, which addresses specific concerns of women, have been enacted.

- Efforts to improve the effectiveness of national machineries for the advancement of women

have increased, in order to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all government institutions, sectors, policies and programmes.

- An enhanced recognition by some regional inter-governmental organizations of the importance of including a gender dimension in all their programmes and policies has been translated into concrete gender mechanisms.

We recognize with grave concern that, although these achievements give us hope, gaps and shortcomings persist, such as:

- The high incidence of wars and violent conflicts, marked by the increased targeting of civilian populations through various tactics, including the indiscriminate use of antipersonnel weapons, continue to drain the continent of its resources, contributes to the negative perception that protracted exile or displacement is an acceptable way of life for many Africans and legitimizes the most abysmal forms of violence against women and children.

- Continuous violation of the basic human rights of women, children and men, including the right to life as wars and military engagements take priority over the promotion of sustainable development. In addition, embargoes and blockades are causing a lot of sufferings and agony to ordinary women and men and children.

- The systematic under-representation of women in decision-making and leadership persists, despite the gains made,

- Deepening poverty, namely feminized poverty, affects increasing numbers of women, particularly rural women,

- The lack of women and girls' control over their lives and their limited choices expose them particularly to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and further erodes their economic and social status; this is a severe constraint to women's advancement and Africa's development,

- Lack of quality health services, especially reproductive health services, has contributed to high maternal mortality and morbidity rates,

- Lack of attention and resources committed to the special needs of disabled and elderly women exacerbates their marginalization,

- Inadequate access by women and girls to education and information, leaves them continuously deprived of any meaningful personal development, lagging far behind the scientific and technological advances that characterize the end of the 20th century. As a result, scores of African women will enter the third millenium in a state of almost total deprivation and marginalization,

- Lack of adequate resources and inappropriate status for national machineries is a major constraint to their promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality.

- Lack of gender disaggregated data, at the institutional level, which can be used to influence policy-making and gender-responsive action.

- Lack of meaningful societal transformation in attitudes and policy-making structures towards women's power and participation.

We are convinced that:

- The new millennium is a critical opportunity for transformative change in women's advancement towards equality – African leaders must see this transition as a test of their leadership,

- Women are a key partner for development and their capabilities and leadership skills must be used if there is to be qualitative change and the achievement of an African Renaissance.

- The full participation of women in decision making will bring about an equitable sharing of resources and sustainable human development to the African Renaissance.

- African women must become partners in environmental management and protection and their wisdom and indigenous knowledge must be incorporated in this regard,

- The operationalization by all governments in Africa of their commitments towards the empowerment of women and gender equality is a pre-condition to reverse the trend of underdevelopment,

We therefore urge all stakeholders in development on the African continent, including international organization to:

- Expedite the transition from pledges to concrete action as we enter the 21th century.

- Strengthen their resolve, and re-affirm prior commitments to address all the root causes of discrimination against women, girls and gender inequality.

- Put in place well-resources and effective mechanisms to allow women to enjoy fully all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, empowerment and gender equality.

- Redouble efforts to achieve peace and human security in Africa and, recognizing the catalytic role of women in local peace initiatives, to ensure their equal participation and influence in peace processes at higher national and regional levels,

- Ratify CEDAW if they have not already done so, remove reservations by June 2000 and to accelerate its implementation

- Make the provisions of CEDAW part and parcel of the domestic law in each country so that women can claim and enforce their rights within their national courts.