



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

Meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy

(Geneva, Palais des Nations, Salle IX , 27 February 2017)

Background Note

Theme 2017: Sub-regional Cooperation for Gender Equality and Sustainability:

Identifying Barriers and Defining Opportunities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in SPECA through a gender lens

I. Introduction

1. At the 11th session of the SPECA Governing Council in Ganja, Azerbaijan, 23 November 2016, participating countries in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, (SPECA) reiterated their commitment to the Programme as a platform for promoting sub-regional cooperation in the SPECA region, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Ganja Declaration, adopted at this session, specifies that SPECA can provide the intergovernmental cooperative framework to help achieve the SDGs in several key areas, including among others gender equality.

2. The SPECA Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy¹ (WGGE) as one of the Working Groups of the Programme is tasked to follow closely the efforts of participating countries to implement gender sensitive economic policies in the framework of the 2030 development agenda and offer advice and assistance within the area of gender and economy. Strengthening sub-regional cooperation can enhance the ability of participating countries to achieve the SDGs, in particular SDG 5 and to mainstream gender in other SDGs.

3. The thematic WGGE will address these issues in a meeting on 27 February 2017 in Geneva. This Background Note sets out the objectives and format of the meeting.

II. Background

4. Gender equality is a key driver of sustainable development for all countries in Central Asia. Women play a crucial role in the labour force throughout the region. Women engaged in economic activities – employed, self-employed and as providers of additional employment opportunities –, benefit society as a whole and thus contribute to sustainable development in their countries. The economic and business environment in this region is shaped by common

¹ At the 10th session of SPECA Governing Council (Dushanbe, November 2015), it was decided that starting from 2016, the SPECA Project Working Groups will be converted into Thematic Working Groups (TWG).

factors and suffered the combined effects of multiple crises, including years of conflict in the recent past. Women are facing similar challenges of weak institutions and underdeveloped markets and share common disadvantages in access to economic and financial resources, information and networks. By removing existing barriers to women's full participation in the economy and providing support where it is needed, we can enable women to fulfil their potential for the benefit of all.

5. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is not only defined as a stand-alone goal – SDG 5 – but it is strongly recognized as a force multiplier across all areas: 11 out of the 17 SDGs have integrated gender-sensitive targets. Many of these targets outline the means of implementation, such as economic reforms, use of enabling technologies and strengthening of legislative and policy environment.

6. Sub-regional economic cooperation has provided gains for the SPECA member countries through expanding markets and increasing women's involvement in producing goods and services, exchanging practices and policies, sharing knowledge, building capacity and networks. The importance of sub-regional dimensions along with regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development is also acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda (para 21 of the Agenda).

7. The SPECA framework, including its Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy can provide an important platform for supporting progress towards many of the SDGs through the exchange of best practice, capacity-building, joint development and implementation of regional projects and the sharing of experience on the use of new financial mechanisms and partnerships.

III. Objectives:

Key objectives of the meeting are:

- 1) Review of policies, programmes and measures addressing gender gaps in the economic area
- 2) Identify barriers and define opportunities for sub-regional cooperation on the implementation of the SDG 5
- 3) Identify gender-sensitive policies and measures to mainstream gender in other SDGs
- 4) Adopt a work plan for 2017-2018.

IV. Draft Provisional Agenda

<i>Time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
Morning, 27 February 2017	
9:30–10:00	Registration
10:00–10:30	Welcome and opening
10:30–12:00	Country presentations on main gender gaps in the economic area
	Azerbaijan
	Kazakhstan
	Kyrgyzstan
	Tajikistan
	Turkmenistan
	Uzbekistan
12:00–12:30	Report on UNECE's gender the activities in SPECA in 2015-2016
	Lunch break
Afternoon, 27 February 2017	
14:00–18:00	2030 Agenda and SPECA TWGGE: new opportunities and challenges
14:00–14:30	Presentation of the key issues on SDG 5 and related SDGs from the SPECA study
14:30–16:00	Discussion and exchange of experience
16:00–16:30	Coffee break
16:30–17:30	Discussion on priorities and future activities for 2017-2018
17:30–18:00	Conclusions and approval of work plan

V. Organization of work

The work of the WGGE meeting will be organised in two main sessions:

The first session (morning, 27 February) will focus on key gender gaps in the SPECA economies, policies implemented to close these gaps and how regional cooperation has contributed to closing these gaps. Country presentations by representatives of SPECA member States will be followed by a panel discussion. The session will summarize main activities and share best practices since its last meeting.

The second session (afternoon 27 February) will provide a platform for a policy-oriented dialogue and exchange of vision among SPECA representatives and international organisations to discuss the role of SDG 5 in accelerating the rest of the SDGs in the economic area. Questions to be addressed include: country's priorities in achieving SDG 5, institutions to monitor report, and how gender sensitive targets in rest of the SDGs can become an accelerator for sustainable development. To achieve its objective: outline the most important SDGs and their linkages with

SDGs from a regional perspective, the key conclusions of a study by a consultant on SPECA and SDGs will be presented followed by a discussion.

Participants: government representatives of SPECA countries, ESCAP, UN WOMEN, UNDP, FAO, and other international organizations.

Key Expected Outcome: By the end of the meeting, SPECA TWGGE will have agreed on a common vision and strategic priorities for sub-regional cooperation in achieving SDG 5 and its mainstreaming in other SDGs.

Key Expected Output: By the end of the meeting, SPECA TWGGE will have agreed to a work plan for 2017-2018.
