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## Gender and Economy

*Interview with Ms. Aitgul Baigazievna Samakova, Adviser to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Chairperson of the National Commission on Family Affairs and Gender Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Co-Chair, SPECA Project Working Group on Gender and Economy*

*The SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy met in July. As Co-Chair, how do you evaluate its role after more than one year of activity?*

The Working Group, established in 2006, is truly moving on. For the first time discussions are taking place not only between gender experts. Economists are also starting to discuss gender issues, which used to be considered solely from a social point of view. In that sense I am very pleased with the progress we have made. Recently, the Working Group met to provide recent updates on the SPECA process. The thematic discussions included gender aspects of national development strategies and poverty reduction strategy papers, gender responsive budgeting, women's self-employment and entrepreneurship, and the gender dimension of social reforms including pensions. We also discussed the creation of a knowledge hub on gender and economy, in order to raise the awareness of policymakers and other stakeholders that gender equality is an economic asset and should be fully integrated into National Development Strategies (NDS) and national budgets.



The meeting was attended by more than 30 participants from several SPECA countries, among which Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Representatives of donor countries, Norway, Finland and Israel, and international organizations as well as international experts were also present.

*What was the outcome of the meeting?*

Mainstreaming gender into regional economic cooperation is still a challenge. As such, it requires the participation of all stakeholders and the cooperation between agencies. I think the meeting itself was a step forward in this direction, as it provided a useful platform for

## Intellectual property rights

International Conference on "Intellectual Property Rights Protection and Transforming Research and Development Outputs into Intangible Assets in Economies in Transition", followed by the annual meeting of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Intellectual Property



Experts from national intellectual property (IP) offices and ministries, international organizations, research institutions and the business community met in Geneva on 25 to 27 July to discuss good practices and policies on intellectual property commercialization, protection and rights enforcement in the UNECE region with a special focus on countries with economies in transition.

A well-designed intellectual property regime increases national wealth and benefits consumers by stimulating research and investment into new technologies and innovative products, and by enabling the transfer of technology, including between countries at different stages of economic development. Innovative industries are key drivers of economic growth and key providers of well-paying jobs, thus contributing to the achievement of broad development objectives.

However, these benefits are not automatic. Inadequate legal, regulatory and policy frameworks underpinning IP can hold back economic development. They can undermine the incentives to invest in research and development, impede the diffusion of technology, contribute to economic losses from IP-related crime, and contribute to public health and safety hazards from unsafe counterfeit goods.

Getting the framework conditions right can be a challenge. It requires a strategic approach with buy-in from the political leadership, a careful assessment of the needs and priorities of the country, and then a tailor-made approach to meeting these



discussion among economists, statisticians, and gender experts.

Despite considerable progress made in mainstreaming gender into NDS, many areas, especially economic ones, remain gender insensitive. In addition to the lack of awareness of policymakers mentioned earlier, another cause lies in the lack of sex-disaggregated statistics and indicators.

The issues appeared to be equally relevant for all SPECA member countries and called for pilot projects. We came to the conclusion that more work is needed in some areas, such as labour market, access to economic resources, and the impact



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of welfare system reforms. The crosscutting issues of poverty alleviation and rural/urban disparities also emerged as areas of concern.

*How will the work be carried on in the future, especially in the light of the Berlin Conference in November?*

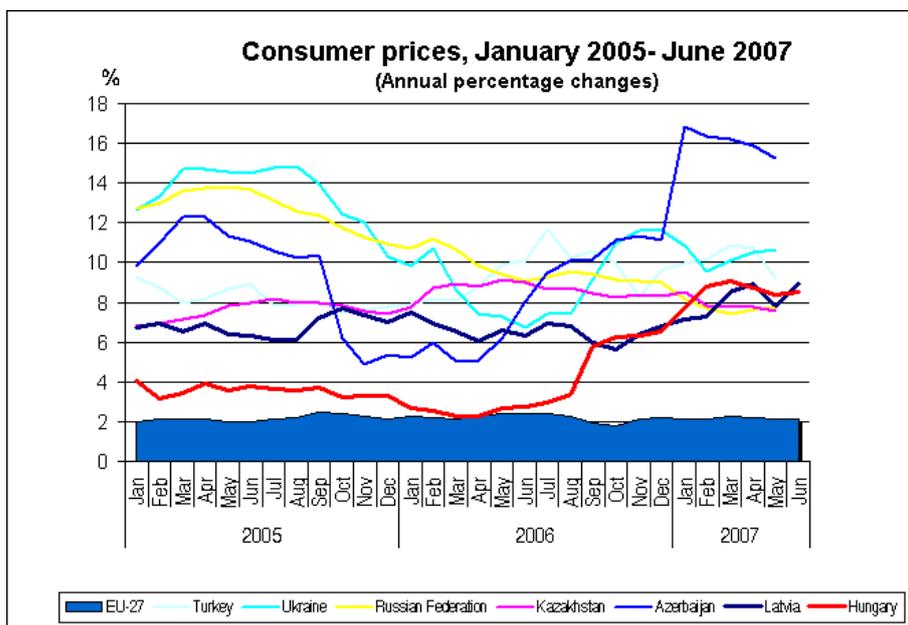
We believe that the work of the Working Group on Gender and Economy should be more closely linked to the work of other SPECA Project Working Groups and the SPECA process. Indeed SPECA is not just about gender. It tackles many other issues. This approach seems to be especially appropriate in the context of the SPECA Governing Council meeting and the **Berlin Conference "Central Asia and Europe: a New Economic Partnership for the 21st Century" (13-14 November 2007)**. The conclusions achieved at the meeting will be used as inputs for preparation of the background paper for the Berlin Conference.

This year we will also co-organize two training workshops in Haifa, Israel (26 August-7 September; and 21 October-4 November). Both will be supported by the Government of Israel and are designed to tackle the growing demand for capacity building in the area of women's entrepreneurship. ✨

For more information visit <http://www.unece.org/oes/gender/Welcome.html>.

## Facts and Figures

### Inflation remains an issue in some UNECE countries



Source: UNECE Statistical database and national statistics

Inflation rates remain very uneven across the UNECE region, reflecting in part the ongoing price liberalization in some countries and differences in the monetary and fiscal stances of their governments. The disparity is also due to the impact of exchange rate movements and vulnerability to the changes in the energy prices on international markets. The chart depicts some more extreme cases of consumer price dynamics in the region particularly at the beginning of 2007.

Over the last few years, inflation has remained low and virtually stable in the European Union as a whole. However, in some of its member countries (e.g., Latvia and Hungary) consumer prices have been rising rapidly since late 2006. At the same time, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation have been able to bring the annual inflation rate to below 8% in recent months, while in a few other CIS countries, as well as in Turkey, inflation has again been in double-digits. In Azerbaijan, the inflationary pressures from oil-related revenues have been behind the consumer price escalation during the last twelve months, reinforced in January 2007 by the rise in prices and tariffs of public utilities.



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priorities. And it is not just about having the right laws on the books either. It is about implementation and application.

Which requires funding and investing in people.

Beyond getting the framework conditions right, one common theme that emerged from the discussions was the need to raise awareness – among scientists, entrepreneurs, consumers and policymakers – of the benefits and opportunities offered by a well-designed intellectual property system. All too often, the full commercial potential of innovations goes unrealized because scientists and universities – but also entrepreneurs and firms – just lack awareness: awareness of the need, the means and costs to protect their IP, awareness of the risks and financing requirements of turning an innovation into a commercially viable product, awareness of the value of the IP they have and of the best ways to maximize that value. And

all too often authorities struggle to prevent major health and safety hazards caused by the proliferation of fake drugs and cosmetics which are poisonous, or fake appliances, car parts, or toys which break or go up in flames too easily – all because consumers are not sufficiently aware that fake goods are not just damaging the business of legitimate producers, but can also damage the health of those who buy the fakes.

The meetings brought together representatives of all stakeholder groups from throughout the UNECE region to exchange their experiences and to discuss what works and what doesn't, and how to help governments in building up capacity in the design and application of IPR systems for the benefit of consumers and firms. ✨

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