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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COORDINATING UNIT FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Ad hoc Meeting of Experts on Gender and Macroeconomics
(Geneva, 5 July 2002)

Information Notice

Objectives

The Meeting of Experts is convened by the Economic Commissions for Europe in the context of implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with UNIFEM related to activities in transition countries. It is jointly organized by the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UNECE Advisory Services on Gender and Economy and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The purpose of the Meeting is to identify and discuss (i) key gender issues in macroeconomic analysis, policies and practices in transition countries (ii) new initiatives in relation to the ongoing programmes and activities (iii) a joint “umbrella” project on gender and economic policies in transition countries.

Background

Gender dimension of the transition process has got little attention at policy levels in all countries. Yet, women and men unevenly participated in its costs and benefits. Women took over large share costs related to GDP decline, economic restructuring and cuts in public expenditure. They had also less access than men to the benefits from privatization, development of private sector and entrepreneurship. Until recently, women’s position on the labour market continued to deteriorate and their care responsibilities increased to compensate for cuts in public health, education and family related benefits (cash and in-kind). And market driven reforms of social security embodied a risk to reproduce gender inequalities in the economy.

The lack of a gender perspective in transition policies could be partly explained by their focus on economics and the perception that gender is a «social» issue. This division between social and economic side draw on the neoclassical framework of transition policies. The lack of gender sensitivity, however, was also a result of traditional views on women's role in a society and low presence of women in politics. Women were not part of the discussion and decision making on economic policies, establishing market institutions and as a consequence redistribution of assets and entitlements via privatization process and changes in the levels and structure of public expenditure.

More attention to social costs of transition, questioning of the neoliberal agenda and strengthening of women's position open ground for engendering economic policies. This is a new area for gender activities in transition countries, which so far focused on building democracy as well as on selected labour market (discrimination, job creation) and social issues (such as violence, trafficking). There is a need to identify key issues for introducing a gender perspective to economic policies within the context of EU enlargement, which changes the geopolitical environment in whole region as well as challenges to an emerging new information and knowledge-based economy. Also, men's losses, especially those with narrow skills in energy and heavy industries sectors, should be addressed.

Topics

It is proposed to discuss gender implications of trends and policies related to:

- Labour market
- Social protection
- Budgets and public expenditure
- EU enlargement
- ICT

The discussion will serve to identify concrete activities, which could be part of a joint project such as:

- Data collection and research
- Training on economic literacy and preparation of materials (economic literacy series)
- Workshops and seminars
- Publications

Participants

The meeting will be attended by invited experts and representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), International Labour Office (ILO), International Trade Centre (ITC) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Background documents

Papers prepared by experts will be distributed at the meeting.

Preliminary Agenda

9:15 – 9:30 **Registration**

9:30 – 9:45 **Welcoming address**

Ms. Larissa Kapitsa, Director, Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities, UNECE

Ms. Ziina Mounla, Programme Manager, Europe and CIS, UNIFEM

9:45 - 13:00 **Engendering macroeconomic frameworks and policies: opportunities and challenges:**

Ms. Zina Moulin, UNIFEM

Ms. Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, UNECE

Feedback from experts and other participants

- Labour market
- Social protection
- Budgets and public expenditure
- EU enlargement
- ICT
- Tools and methods (research and data)

13:00 - 15:00 **Lunch break**

15:00 - 18:00 **Discussion of strategies and actions for moving forward**

All questions concerning the Meeting of Experts should be addressed to:

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**REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES:
Access to the Palais des Nations**

Security measures have been strengthened at the Palais des Nations and delegates attending meetings are required to have badges issued by the Security Unit and bearing their names, which will give access to Palais grounds. Delegates are invited to complete the attached **Conference Registration Form** and send it to the secretariat. Once in Geneva, delegates will be required to proceed with the original of the form to the Security Section situated at the **Villa Les Feuillantines** (as indicated on the attached map, opening hours: 08:00 a.m.-05:00 p.m.), where the entrance badges will be awaiting. Delegates should plan on about an hour to obtain the badge and reach the meeting room.