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**AD HOC MEETING
OF THE SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON GENDER AND ECONOMY**

**Wednesday, 4 November 2009, 2-6 pm
Palais des Nations, Salle S1, Geneva**

REPORT

The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was launched in 1998 to strengthen sub-regional cooperation in Central Asia and its integration into the world economy. The members of SPECA are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Project Working Group on Gender and Economy was established in June 2006, Baku Azerbaijan. It is jointly supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

Opening of the meeting

The Ad Hoc Meeting of the SPECA Project Working Group on Gender and Economy was held on 4 November 2009 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The meeting was opened by the Senior Adviser to the Executive Secretary and the Senior Social Affairs Officer and Gender Focal Point of UNECE and chaired by Azerbaijan.

Participants included representatives from Azerbaijan, Israel, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan as well as representatives from UNIFEM and UNECE (see Annex I for the full list of participants). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss progress made in 2008-2009 and to agree on the workplan for 2010-2011.

Progress Report 2008-2009

The Progress Report 2008-2009 was presented by Ms. Malinka Koparanova, Senior Social Affairs Officer and Gender Focal Point of UNECE. The following main areas of activity were presented: (i) development of the UNECE Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender; (ii) development of MDG-related indicators in the gender and economy area; (iii) assessment of the business environment for women entrepreneurs; (iv) capacity-building activities to support women entrepreneurs in the SPECA region; and (v) gender and economy in the context of the Beijing +15 Regional Review (for the full report, see Annex II)

Following the presentation of activities in 2008 and 2009, representatives from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, UNIFEM and the UNECE Statistical Division took the floor to report on policy developments in the region and gender-sensitive statistics.

Azerbaijan

Ms. Hijran Huseynova, President of the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs in Azerbaijan, reported that several state programmes have been implemented with gender components. The State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development contains a set of measures aiming to promote women's employment and women's entrepreneurship. Several Business Training Centres in Azerbaijan provide consultations on business planning, marketing and training services for women. Ms. Huseynova proposed the following activities for the Working Group: (i) establishing a database for women entrepreneurs drawn from all SPECA member countries and including information on their activities; (ii) organizing workshops and roundtables with participation of successful women entrepreneurs; (iii) facilitating women's adaptation to economic demands of modern society by providing trainings on information technologies and the legal business environment as well as organizing discussions on the problems faced by women in the economy; and (iv) organizing advocacy campaigns for women's participation in the economy through the media.

Kazakhstan

The representative from Kazakhstan, Ms. Aida Kurmangalieva, Director at the Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning in Kazakhstan, noted that special attention was paid by her Government to the social security of mothers and children. In addition to the social programmes of Kazakhstan the Government developed and adopted a "Road map" which facilitated the creation of 400,000 new jobs in the course of one year. In Kazakhstan gender responsive budgeting, including gender impact assessments, has been adopted. However, it was emphasized that specialists were needed to effectively implement gender responsive budgeting in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, she reported that measures to address the problems experienced by the self-employed were undertaken and that problems associated with unofficial migration have recently become prominent in Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan

Ms. Zamira Azhigulova, Head of the Section on Gender Issues at the Social Development Department in Kyrgyzstan reported that gender impact assessments for new laws and programmes were postulated by law. However, the lack of specialists in this field presented a challenge for effective implementation. Moreover gender impact assessments are hampered by the lack of sex-disaggregated data. Many women are involved in the informal economy which raises additional problems for data availability.

Gender-sensitive statistics: women and economy

In the area of statistics and monitoring of gender equality and women's (economic) empowerment, the possibility of establishing a more comprehensive set of indicators for measuring gender equality in the economy was explored under the United Nations Development Account Project on "Strengthening Social Inclusion, Gender Equality and Health Promotion in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)".

Ms. Jessica Gardner from the UNECE Statistical Division highlighted the main MDG indicators relevant to the gender and economy area. For a more holistic investigation of gender aspects additional indicators were proposed in the areas of poverty reduction, access to resources, entrepreneurship, access to the labour market, the labour market, reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, social protection and economic decision-making and public life. In her presentation Ms. Gardner pointed out that further work is needed in this area. Possible directions include: (i) examining and harmonizing a set of indicators; (ii) establishing a relevant

methodology for their calculation; (iii) generalizing these indicators for different countries; and (iv) compiling and maintaining a database.

The Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender

Ms. Malinka Koparanova, Senior Social Affairs Officer and Gender Focal Point at UNECE, outlined the main elements of the Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender which is a web-based information portal targeting policy makers, non-governmental organizations, and interested experts in the gender and economy area. It provides a regional platform for the exchange of information, policy guidance and good practice in mainstreaming gender in economic policy making. Initially developed with a focus on SPECA countries, the Knowledge Hub is being extended to cover all countries in the UNECE region to encourage region-wide information sharing. The web portal further informs about the relevant United Nations global processes such as progress on the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Exchange of policy experience and policy relevance of findings

Ms. Yelena Kudryavtseva, Programme Specialist at UNIFEM, outlined the main activities of UNIFEM. These are (i) strengthening of women's economic security; (ii) eradication of violence against women; (iii) women's participation in democratic administration; (iv) implementation of gender aspects in national development strategies; (v) implementation of methods for monitoring. It was noted that ensuring of property right to land is also one of the main directions of UNIFEM activity. Ms. Kudryavtseva reported that the protection of working immigrants' rights is a new area of activity and that UNIFEM is currently working on a project focusing on women in rural areas.

Workplan 2010-2011

The second part of the Meeting focused on the workplan for 2010-2011 (see Annex II). The UNECE Regional Adviser and SPECA Focal Point, Mr. Marton Krasznai, gave an update on the SPECA Programme including a briefing on the Governing Council Meeting in Bishkek on 13 November 2009.

Ms. Malinka Koparanova presented a proposal for the activities of the SPECA Project Working Group on Gender and Economy for the period 2010-2011. These activities include continuation of the promotion of gender mainstreaming into economic policies and further support through capacity building.

The key objectives of information sharing, advocacy and guidance on mainstreaming gender into economic policies which are pursued through the UNECE Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender will remain a strong priority of the Project Working Group in 2010-2011. The Knowledge Hub will be further developed as an interactive platform to support networking between policy makers and experts across the region.

Building on the successful cooperation with the Government of Israel in capacity-building since 2006, training workshops in support of women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia will continue to be organised in 2010 and 2011. The Project Working Group's work in support of women's entrepreneurship in the region will draw on the insights gained from pilot studies on the assessment of the environment for entrepreneurship in the region in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In addition to these activities the following directions for further work were discussed: (i) innovation and knowledge-driven development: mainstreaming a gender perspective; (ii) gender impact assessments and gender responsive budgeting; (iii) poverty and economic well-being in the context of migration; (iv) gender and climate change.

Addressing economic challenges and sustaining growth for all through gender-sensitive policies in innovation and knowledge-driven development in SPECA countries is an important area of work. Project activities would build on the knowledge gained from pilot studies of the assessment of the business environment for women entrepreneurs.

Evaluating the gender implications of national economic policies in the region is another potential area for work. Particular emphasis would be given to the promotion of gender impact assessments and gender responsive budgeting in core policy areas.

Evaluating gender differentiated effects of the crisis on poverty and economic well-being via the channels of remittances and migration flows has become of particular importance in view of the adverse effects of the world economic and financial crisis on the SPECA countries. Research and analysis would be undertaken to enhance understanding of the importance of migration policies and gender implications in the SPECA region.

Assessing the gender implications of climate change in the region: policy recommendations to mitigate potential adverse effects of changes to the environment on gender equality was also discussed as crucial for some of SPECA countries, such as Azerbaijan.

Discussion

The Chair invited country representatives to provide comments and feedbacks on the Work Plan for 2010-2011.

All country delegates considered the proposed Workplan to be highly relevant to the needs of their countries, and supported the activities listed in the Workplan 2010-2011 (see Annex III).

In view of further cooperation the Chair outlined the need to exchange experience and lessons learnt from other countries in this area, such as Israel, and to organize trainings in support of women entrepreneurs in Central Asia.

The gender implications of climate change were pointed out as a new direction for work. Ms. Kudryavtseva (UNIFEM) informed the participants that 2011 would be the year of Ecology in Azerbaijan and reported on a conference in which the Minister of Ecology and representatives of the National Oil Company participated. One of the areas covered was “Ecology and Women”.

Closing of the meeting

The Chair expressed satisfaction with the achievements of the Project Working Group on Gender and Economy during the reviewed period and encouraged the members of the Project Working Group to continue to cooperate in implementing forthcoming project activities. The Chair and other participants of the meeting expressed their appreciation to the UNECE secretariat for their efforts in organizing the meeting as well as the activities of the Working Group.

Ms. Malinka Koparanova expressed her sincere appreciation to all representatives for their active participation and cooperation which made this event successful.

The Work Plan for 2010-2011 was agreed (see Annex III).

Annex I

List of participants

Azerbaijan

Mrs H. HUSEYNOVA (Chair)
President, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs

Mrs S. MANAFOVA
Deputy Head of the Department, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs

Mr E. AMIRBAYOV
Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan

Mr I. ALAKBAROV
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan in Geneva

Israel

Ms R. LANGER ZIV
Adviser, Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva

Kazakhstan

Ms A. KURMANGALIEVA
Director, Ministry of Economy and budget planning of Republic of Kazakhstan

Mr Y. ZHUMANBAYEV
Expert, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

Kyrgyzstan

Ms Z. AZHIGULOVA
Head, Section on Gender Issues, Social Development Department

UNIFEM

Ms Y KUDRYAVTSEVA
Programme Specialist, UNIFEM, Kazakhstan

UNECE Secretariat

Mr P. ROBINEAU
Senior Adviser to the Executive Secretary

Ms M. KOPARANOVA
Senior Social Affairs Officer and Gender Focal Point

Mr M. KRASZNAI
UNECE Regional Adviser and SPECA Focal Point

Ms T. LUIGE
Social and Demographic Statistics Section, Statistical Division

Ms J. GARDNER
Social and Demographic Statistics Section, Statistical Division

Ms T BIELAWSKA
Consultant

Ms U. HERMELINK
Assistant Programme Officer

Ms L. WARTH
Associate Expert on Gender

Ms I. LILI
Intern

Annex II

Progress Report 2008-2009

The Governing Council of the SPECA officially established the Project Working Group (PWG) on Gender and Economy at its meeting in June 2006, Baku Azerbaijan. The PWG on Gender and Economy is jointly supported by ECE and ESCAP.

The main purpose of the PWG's activities is to mobilize women's potential for economic growth and to contribute towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Support to SMEs and entrepreneurship is an important part of mobilizing women's economic potential as women play an active role in the development of the private sector in the SPECA region.

In line with its Terms of Reference, the PWG: (i) raises awareness, that gender equality is a smart choice for economic policy, through policy oriented research, exchanges good practices and preparation of policy guidelines and recommendations; (ii) develops pilot projects in selected areas (in particular gender-sensitive SMEs policies and gender budgets); and (iii) promotes cross-sectional linkages and synergies with other relevant areas of SPECA activities, such as statistics, trade, and information and communication technologies.

Activities carried out under the 2008-2009 workplan

Development of the UNECE Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender

The Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender is a web-based information portal targeted at policy makers, non-governmental organizations, and interested experts in the gender and economy area. It provides a regional platform for the exchange of information, policy guidance and good practice in mainstreaming gender in economic policy making. Initially developed with a focus on SPECA countries, the Knowledge Hub is being extended to cover all countries in the ECE region to encourage region-wide information sharing.

The information platform contributes to raising awareness of the economic implications of gender (in)equality. It encourages mutual policy learning by providing examples of gender-sensitive economic policies across the region, and provides an extensive resource section through a virtual library which provides, for instance, gender mainstreaming handbooks and tool kits as well as useful links to government websites, international organizations and NGOs which are active in the gender and economy area. The web portal further informs about the relevant United Nations global processes such as progress on the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender can be accessed through the ECE web page at www.unece.org/gender.

Development of MDG related indicators in the economic area

In the area of statistics and monitoring of gender equality and women's (economic) empowerment, the possibility of establishing a more comprehensive set of indicators for measuring gender equality in the economy was explored under the United Nations Development Account Project on "Strengthening Social Inclusion, Gender Equality and Health Promotion in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)". As a result of this work, indicators for a number of relevant subject areas were proposed to provide a more holistic understanding of progress towards gender equality in the economic realm than is currently provided by the indicators agreed to under the MDGs. New indicators are proposed in the areas of poverty reduction, access to resources,

entrepreneurship, access to the labour market, the labour market, reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, social protection and economic decision-making and public life.

The proposed new indicators were presented at an Expert Group Meeting organized by UNESCAP in Bangkok on “Closing the Gaps: Strategies to Combat and Monitor Exclusion in Asia and Pacific” on 29 September - 1 October 2009.

Assessment of business environment for women entrepreneurs

In co-operation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) research was undertaken to analyze the achievements and perspectives of women’s entrepreneurship development in pilot countries in Central Asia with the purpose of developing policy recommendations for the improvement and further development of entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the region.

The results of a completed pilot study in Uzbekistan, for example, have pointed to the importance of the consolidation of the existing structures for the support and development of women’s entrepreneurship as well as the creation of new support systems, including the strengthening of legal protection of women in the economic sphere. An enhanced involvement and participation of business women in formal dialogue between the Government and the private sector could facilitate that women’s business needs are communicated and taken into account in policy developments. Furthermore, the study highlighted the need for improved access to financial services, such as micro-credits, and consultative services for inexperienced business women in areas such as business education, supply and exchange of information, contribution in establishing business relations and ICT services.

Capacity-building activities to support women entrepreneurs in the SPECA region

The majority of micro and small enterprises are run by women. They are an important source of opportunity and income for women. There is a recognized need for the support of tools and support systems for women entrepreneurs. In order to improve the business environment for women in Central Asia, the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre, in cooperation with ECE, have continued to run biannual international training workshops on “Women entrepreneurs and information communication technologies” and on “Support systems for women in small business at national and local levels” to provide this support.

The capacity-building workshops, held in Russian, are targeted at women’s entrepreneurs from Central Asia. They provide them with support, guidance and managerial tools on the use of new technologies in the management of small business. Further they address government institutions in charge of small and medium-sized enterprise development at national and local levels, women’s business associations and other civil society organizations to build their capacity to strengthen the support environment for women entrepreneurs. Over the years, the training scheme has not only played an important role in strengthening the support for women entrepreneurship but has also facilitated networking among women entrepreneurs across Central Asia.

Gender and Economy in the context of the Beijing +15 Regional Review

SPECA countries have provided national contributions to the 15 year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including up to date information on activities in the gender and economy area. These have informed the regional synthesis report prepared by the ECE secretariat in 2009, which will contribute to the Global Review in New York in March 2010.

The Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting, organized in Geneva on 2-3 November 2009 has a strong focus on gender and the economy. The regional synthesis as well as policy-oriented background papers on the linkages between gender equality and the economy, particularly through gender-sensitive economic policies, gender and the corporate sector, and new partnerships, networks, and alliances for gender equality in the region were prepared in 2009 and are available for download on the UNECE gender website (www.unece.org/gender).

Annex III

Workplan 2010-2011

Gender equality objectives continue to be of great importance in the economies of Central Asia. Engendering economic policies makes economic sense from the perspective of innovation, employment and sustainable growth and it ever so timely in the context of the current economic crisis affecting the region. The SPECA Project Working Group on Gender and Economy is committed to support its member countries in developing gender-sensitive policy responses to economic challenges. In 2010 and 2011, this objective will continue to be pursued in particular, as agreed in the groups Terms of Reference, through (i) raising awareness among all stakeholders on gender and economy issues and exchanging good practices in mainstreaming gender into economic policies; (ii) developing pilot projects in selected areas such as financing and other support measures for women's entrepreneurship and gender budgets; and (iii) promoting cross-sectional linkages and synergies with other relevant areas of SPECA activities, such as statistics, trade and ICT.

Proposals for specific activities as reflected in the current work plan will be further elaborated through partnership and consultations involving UNECE, UNESCAP, UNDP, UNIFEM, OSCE, IOM, the Council of Europe, and other partners actively involved in Central Asia in the field of Gender and Economy area.

Ongoing activities which are planned to be further pursued during 2010 and 2011:

Building on the experience of previous activities and the expertise gained, the following activities are ongoing and will be continued in 2010 and 2011.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER INTO ECONOMIC POLICIES

The key objectives of information sharing, advocacy and guidance on mainstreaming gender into economic policies which are pursued through the UNECE Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender will remain a strong priority of the PGW in 2010-2011. The Knowledge Hub will be further developed as an interactive platform to support networking between policy makers and experts across the region.

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Building on the successful cooperation with the Government of Israel in capacity-building since 2006, training workshops in support of women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia will be continued to be provided in 2010 and 2011. The PWG's work in support of women's entrepreneurship in the region will draw on the insights gained from pilot studies on the assessment of the environment for entrepreneurship in the region in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In addition to the core areas of activity outlined above, and building on the core areas of expertise in UNECE and UNESCAP the following proposed project areas are envisaged to be pursued in 2010 and 2011 provided support by interested donors and partners is obtained.

Directions for possible future activities

- 1) INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT: MAINSTREAMING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Addressing economic challenges and sustaining growth for all through gender-sensitive policies in innovation and knowledge-driven development in SPECA countries. Project activities would build on the knowledge gained from pilot studies of the business environment for women entrepreneurs (cooperation project with ILO).

2) GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AND GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Evaluating the gender implications of national economic policies in the region. Particular emphasis will be given to the promotion of gender impact assessments and gender responsive budgeting in core policy areas.

3) POVERTY AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

Evaluating gender differentiated effects of the crisis on poverty and economic well-being via the channels of remittances and migration flows. Research and analysis would be undertaken to enhance understanding of the importance of migration policies and gender implications in the SPECA region.

4) GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Assessing the gender implications of climate change in the region: policy recommendations to mitigate potential adverse effects of changes to the environment on gender equality.

Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected.	
Mainstreaming Gender into Economic Policies	2010 - 2011
Further development of the Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender as a networking tool for policy makers across the region, information source on gender mainstreaming techniques as well as the sharing of good policy practices	
Capacity building activities	2010 - 2011
Training workshops on support systems for women in small business in Haifa, Israel to strengthen the business environment for women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia	2010 - 2011
Two training workshops on the use of information and communication technologies targeted at women entrepreneurs in Central Asia	2010 - 2011
Possible projects/activities in areas where UNECE/ESCAP have considerable experience and in-house expertise and which envisage additional supported by interested donors/partners. These projects could be implemented in addition to and in coordination with projects/activities listed above.	
Gender-sensitive policies in innovation and knowledge-driven development	2010 - 2011
Gender Impact Assessments and Gender Responsive Budgeting in core policy areas	2010 - 2011
Analysis of poverty and well-being in the context of migration in SPECA countries	2010 - 2011
Gender equality in the context of climate change in Central Asia	2010 - 2011