

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

Meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy

(Almaty, Kazakhstan, 19 September 2018)

Background Note

Theme 2018: Accelerating progress towards gender equality and achieving the SDGs: strategies for advancing women's economic empowerment in the SPECA region

I. Introduction

1. At the 12th session of the SPECA Governing Council in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 6 December 2017, 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 to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Governing Council welcomed “progress made in strengthening cooperation between SPECA and regional organizations and institutions in providing support to the SPECA participating countries in their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through enhanced regional economic cooperation in the SPECA region.”¹

2. The 2018-19 Workplan adopted at this meeting, includes a focus on gender statistics as well as a continuation of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy (TWGGE) that promotes gender mainstreaming into economic policies in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Strengthening sub-regional cooperation can enhance the ability of participating countries to achieve the SDGs, in particular SDG 5, that aims to *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* as well as to mainstream gender in other SDGs.

3. The TWGGE will convene on 19 September 2018 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. This Background Note sets out the objectives and format of the meeting.

II. Background

1. 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.

2. The meeting of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy, held in Geneva on 27 February 2017 identified priorities for sub-regional cooperation on the implementation of the SDG 5 and its mainstreaming into other SDGs. The participants of the TWGGE agreed on key recommendations to build coherent gender-transformative policies with the aim to increase employment of women in public and private sectors, ensure decent job creation for women and men with equal pay for work of equal value and invest in education and training.

¹ Meeting report available through the following link:

https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session12/Report_of_the_12th_session_of_the_SPECA_Governing_Council_English_final.pdf

3. Following these recommendations, the current SPECA TWGGE meeting will bring together policy makers and specialists to assess progress, examine good practices and agree on policy principles that will help Governments improve the way they develop and implement policies and measures. Special attention will be paid to progress in gender-transformative policies aiming at SDG 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women – and how these policies have accelerated the achievement of other SDGs, such as SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 9 and SDG 10.

4. 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).

III. Objectives

Key objectives of the meeting are:

- a. Review of policies, programmes and measures to achieve SDG 5 and its linkages to other SDGs in key areas as a follow up to the recommendations of the SPECA TWGGE meeting in February 2017;
- b. Identify opportunities for further sub-regional cooperation on the implementation of the SDG 5, with a particular focus on women’s economic empowerment;
- c. Adopt a work plan for 2018-2019.

IV. Provisional Agenda

<i>Time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
Morning, 19 September 2018	
9:30 – 10:00	Registration of participants
10:00 – 10:30	Welcome and opening Opening statements by the Chairperson of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy, Ms. Hijran Huseynova, Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs (Representative of Azerbaijan), Representative of Kazakhstan, UNECE and UNESCAP.
10:30 – 12:30	Country presentations of economic policies and strategies for accelerating progress towards gender equality and the achievement of SDG 5 and related SDGs In this session, country’s representatives will provide a short update on recent policies, programmes for women’s economic empowerment and gender equality related to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Participants are invited to share progress in achieving SDG 5 and how this progress has helped to accelerate other SDGs, such as SDG1, SDG4, SDG8, SDG 9 and SDG 10. Issues of important linkages between SDG 5 and respective SDGs will be addressed in view of the specific country’s needs and national plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghanistan • Azerbaijan • Kazakhstan • Kyrgyzstan • Tajikistan • Turkmenistan • Uzbekistan

12:30 – 14:00 **LUNCH BREAK**

Afternoon, 19 September 2018

14:00 – 14:40 **Review of activities in 2017 – 2018**

Under this agenda item, activities of the SPECA Thematic Group on Gender and Economy over the past year will be reviewed. A brief summary of key activities related to the advancement of women's economic empowerment in the SPECA region will be provided by representatives of UNECE and UNESCAP.

14:40 –16:00 **Partnership for sub-regional cooperation for women's economic empowerment: strategies to accelerate progress and linkages in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

In this session, representatives of UNDP, UN Women, UNECE, UNESCAP and other international organizations, as well as civil society will be invited to present views on how to further strengthen partnership to better reflect the gender dimension and its impact on sub-regional policies. Strategies, programmes and measures to accelerate women's economic empowerment in key areas will be discussed. The discussion will benefit from the study on women's economic empowerment in SPECA countries and its findings in several thematic areas for policy action.

16:00 –16:30 **Coffee break**

16:30 –17:00 **Partnership for sub-regional cooperation for women's economic empowerment: strategies to accelerate progress and linkages in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (continuation)**

Working group members are invited to discuss where they see greatest potential and benefit of mainstreaming gender in sub-regional cooperation, and what help international organizations could provide to assist SPECA gender machineries as well as other local institutions.

17:00 – 17:20 **Discussion on priorities and future activities for 2018 -2019**

Under this agenda item, the priorities for sub-regional cooperation in achieving SDG 5 and its mainstreaming throughout the SDGs will be identified. Modalities of the functioning of the working group (frequency of meetings, activities and resources) will be reviewed and agreed upon, and activities for the period 2018/2019 will be discussed.

17:20 – 17:30 **Conclusions and approval of work plan**

V. Organization of Work

The work of the TWGGE meeting will be organized in two main sessions:

The first session (morning 19 September) will focus on the progress of achieving SDG 5 in the economic area in the SPECA countries. In view of the recommendations agreed at the SPECA TWGGE meeting in February 2017, representatives of countries will share practices in designing and implementing gender-transformative policies for the achievement of SDG 5 and their impact on accelerating other SDGs, such as SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 9 and SDG 10. The session will summarize main activities since its last meeting.

The second session (afternoon 19 September) will provide a platform for a policy-oriented dialogue among representatives of SPECA countries, international organizations and civil society to discuss how to further promote partnership in sub-regional cooperation. Views on strategies to accelerate women's economic empowerment in sub-regional cooperation policies will be exchanged.

Participants: government representatives of SPECA countries, UN WOMEN, UNDP 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, with a focus on advancing women's economic empowerment.

Key Expected Output: By the end of the meeting, SPECA TWGGE will have agreed to a work plan for 2018-2019.

