



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN**

**Workshop-cum-Expert Group Meeting on the Institutional Strengthening of
National Women's Machineries in South and South-West Asia**

**18-21 January 2011
Bangkok**

**REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP-CUM-EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE
INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF NATIONAL WOMEN'S MACHINERIES IN
SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA ^a**

^a This Report has been issued without formal editing.

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I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIORITY FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

A. Recommendations

1. Introduction

1. While there has been some progress since the Beijing Platform for Action in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, participants at the Workshop-cum-Expert Group Meeting on the Institutional Strengthening of National Women's Machineries in South and South-West Asia, held in Bangkok from 18 to 21 January 2011, recognized that more efforts were required and innovative long-term/integrated approaches needed to accelerate the strengthening of national women's machineries (NWMs).
2. Participants recalled the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing + 15 adopted at the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes, and the Dhaka Resolution adopted at the Seventh South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference Commemorating Beijing, held in Dhaka in October 2010.
3. Participants acknowledged that national women's machineries have played important roles in promoting equal rights and the advancement of women, overseeing gender mainstreaming in national policies and programmes and facilitating the strengthening of formal legal and policy frameworks for gender equality.
4. Participants expressed concern about the continuing issues and gaps including:
 - a. Entrenched patriarchal norms and attitudes
 - b. Marginalization within government structures
 - c. Weak linkages with other ministries and departments
 - d. Lack of financial and human resources
 - e. Limited technical capacity
 - f. Lack of sex-disaggregated data
 - g. Low levels of women in senior leadership and decision-making
 - h. Barriers against women's economic rights and participation in governance in formal and non-formal settings.
5. In the above context, participants recognized the need to strengthen the effectiveness of national women's machineries in South and South West Asia and accelerate institutional change, especially with respect to their strategic roles in policy influence, coordination and monitoring. They accordingly recommended the following priority actions for the next two years for consideration by relevant UN entities at the subregional level (particularly ESCAP and UN-Women) and by national women's machineries at the national level:

2. Framework for subregional cooperation

Recommended actions to be undertaken by relevant UN entities, in particular ESCAP and UN-Women, in support of national women's machineries:

6. Support to be provided to assist institutional assessments of national women's machineries in order to identify capacity gaps and develop plans for institutional strengthening. This support is to be provided upon specific request by the concerned country.
7. In response to country request, an in-depth capacity development workshop to be convened involving national women's machineries in at least three countries, with the specific focus of each workshop to be identified as a result of further needs assessment at country level.
8. Technical resources to be produced to support and strengthen the policy advocacy role of national women's machineries, for example through the preparation of a research study/tool on the costs of gender inequality.
9. A compendium of good practices on national women's machineries (particularly in combating violence against women and influencing macroeconomic policies) to be produced and disseminated across the South and South-West Asian subregion.
10. Coordinated use of the ESCAP and UN-Women websites to be promoted to share information on developments, training/resource materials, events, publications/studies and other initiatives of relevance to the institutional strengthening of national women's machineries.
11. Engagement by national women's machineries and national statistical organizations to be facilitated in the web-based portal/knowledge community on Violence Against Women which is currently in the process of being established as part of a joint UN Regional Commissions Project.
12. Steps to be taken to ensure that national women's machineries in South/South-West Asia are involved in UN Secretary-General's UNiTe Campaign, which was launched in the Asia-Pacific region on 25 November 2010.
13. The possibility of a subregional workshop for national women's machineries on gender and climate change to be explored in collaboration with the national women's machinery in the Maldives.
14. Advocacy materials and research findings to be generated and disseminated to enhance awareness among the general public about gender equality and women's issues including violence against women (including through using a variety of media and the involvement of faith-based organizations).
15. A survey of Workshop-cum-Expert Group Meeting participants to be conducted in 12 months to evaluate Workshop-cum-Expert Group Meeting follow-up and identify progress, emerging lessons and gaps requiring attention.
16. A follow-up subregional workshop to be convened in 2013 to review progress in taking forward the recommendations and learnings of the present workshop, identify

lessons and advise on priorities for ongoing sub-regional cooperation to support the institutional strengthening of national women's machineries.

3 Priorities for national-level action

Recommended actions by governments and national women's machineries:

17. The need for greater financial resources to be allocated to the work of national women's machineries to be advocated, along with improved service delivery and accountability mechanisms.

18. Gender audits to be promoted of line ministries, including of their budgetary processes and allocations, in close collaboration with finance ministries.

19. Coordination to be facilitated with relevant national planning agencies for gender review and monitoring of programmes of key line ministries, for example through the setting up of a high-level multi-agency body.

20. National capacities to be developed and strengthened around key issues (e.g. violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting), through the establishment of national networks of experts and trainers in order inter alia to strengthen policy analysis and formulation.

21. Gender focal point networks to be established or strengthened, and made responsible for regular reporting of actions for gender mainstreaming and other related actions being taken by their ministries.

22. Multi-stakeholder mechanisms such as a parliamentary committee to be promoted for monitoring and reporting on CEDAW compliance, with national women's machineries serving as a secretariat.

23. Active input to be provided into the design, implementation, review and accountability of social protection strategy and programmes.

24. Active and close collaboration to be promoted with law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary to ensure the implementation of women-related laws, also providing support services to women affected by violence, for example help lines.

25. Active collaboration with national statistics organizations and other relevant agencies to be developed/strengthened to ensure that comprehensive and accurate data bases on violence against women as well as women's ownership of land, livestock and other productive assets are in place and effectively used for policy development, programme design and public awareness raising.

B. Decision

Adoption of the recommendations

26. The Workshop-cum-Expert Group Meeting adopted the above recommendations as a basis for priority follow-up actions by relevant UN entities, particularly ESCAP and UN-Women, and by Governments and NWMs, during the period January 2011- January 2013.

II. PROCEEDINGS

27. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the Institutional Strengthening of National Women's Machineries in South and South-West Asia aimed to review and identify common subregional priorities and ways forward for the institutional strengthening of national women's machineries in South and South-West Asia. It was conducted back-to-back with the Subregional Workshop which aimed to strengthen the capacity of national women's machineries in South and South-West Asia.

A. Opening of the Workshop-cum-EGM

28. The Workshop was opened by Ms. Nanda Krairiksh, Director of the Social Development Division, ESCAP and Ms. Sushma Kapoor, Deputy Regional Programme Director, South Asia Subregional Office, UN-Women.

29. In her opening remarks, Ms. Krairiksh recalled the Bangkok Declaration for Beijing + 15 adopted in November 2009, in which Governments from the region had committed "to strengthen the role of national machineries and other institutional mechanisms that work towards the advancement of women and gender equality through, among other things, definite commitment of financial and other appropriate assistance, and ensuring adequate and appropriate staff and resources".

30. Ms. Krairiksh stated that ESCAP had made the creation of active partnerships in support of the critical role of NWMs a top priority, highlighting their role both in supporting women to take on the role as leading change agents in societies and in promoting gender balanced and gender sensitive policies within national governance structures. Ms. Krairiksh acknowledged the many challenges facing NWMs in moving forward, including the need for sufficient political will, ensuring adequate resources and expertise, and locating NWMs at a level within governmental structures that would enable them to make a difference. Ms. Krairiksh concluded by stating that as NWMs enhance their strategic positioning and ability to effectively advocate and negotiate gender mainstreaming across all areas of national policy, budget and programmes, all members of society would stand to benefit.

31. In her statement, Ms. Kapoor noted that the workshop marked the start of a two-year collaboration between UN-Women and ESCAP to institutionally strengthen NWMs in the region. Ms. Kapoor highlighted the continued challenges faced by NWMs as well as the huge strides made in almost all countries present at the Workshop.

32. Ms. Kapoor subsequently reflected on the evolving role of NWMs and pointed out that their mandate ideally should include development of policies; policy advocacy and policy coordination; monitoring policies for gender related impacts, and; reviewing legislative and policy proposals from all ministries to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective. Ms. Kapoor also underscored the need for gender audits to be carried out to ensure the implementation of relevant policies and legal reforms. Ms. Kapoor further highlighted the outcome of the Seventh South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference Commemorating Beijing held in Dhaka in October 2010, which focused among other things, on critical challenges to gender equality in the region, such as women's economic security and rights, violence against women, unsafe migration and human trafficking, and challenges emerging out of continuing conflict and post-conflict situations. Ms. Kapoor

emphasized the importance of creating synergies between the resolution adopted in Dhaka and the workshop. To conclude, Ms. Kapoor advised that a follow-up workshop, similar to the current one, was likely to be organized in India three or four months later, which would bring together state-level women's departments and commissions. She stated that the learning and recommendations from the present workshop would be valuable for that subsequent activity.

B. Role and function of national women's machineries and mechanisms --reflection and institutional analysis

33. The proceedings commenced with participants making presentations on their experiences as NWMs. These included: (a) the structure, roles and responsibilities of the NWM institution, (b) an instance in which their institution had yet to make a significant impact despite considerable efforts, and (c) a significant instance which had had a positive effect on women's rights.

34. The structure, roles and responsibilities of NWMs differed considerably across the region and included advocacy and mobilization of resources, coordination with other government sectors and ministries, and establishment of institutional mechanisms for the consideration of women's issues. One participant indicated that the emerging democracy would continue to influence the development and strengthening of the NWMs.

35. Areas in which substantial progress had yet to be made included the involvement of women in decision-making, the revision/drafting of related laws and acts pertaining to gender equality, access to justice, roles of women in society, individual-level consciousness and deeply engrained patriarchal norms and prejudices prevalent in many societies.

36. Successes were noted in a number of areas including gender budgeting, the establishment of institutional mechanisms for the consideration of women's issues and the enactment of legislation to promote women's rights, particularly in the area of violence against women. With regard to gender budgeting, one delegation noted that since 2004, in connection with each mid-term budget, each ministry had reported to the Ministry of Finance through established mechanisms on measures taken to address gender. Another delegation informed that the establishment of institutional mechanisms, such as committees dealing with gender equality, were evidence of a significant advancement of women's issues. In addition, the increase in the representation of women in Parliament and in the civil service had had a positive impact on the advancement of women's rights. Some delegations highlighted that their respective Governments had taken measures to further enhance the judicial system both in terms of improving legislation pertaining to women's issues and sensitizing the court system.

37. Following group discussions aimed at identifying common challenges and opportunities among NWMs in the advancement of women's rights and gender equality, participants reported back on their discussions in plenary.

38. Ms. Rashmi Singh (India) presented the outcomes from the first working group consisting of delegates from Bhutan, India and Nepal. The group identified aspects of the social framework of countries, cultural barriers and structural issues (with respect to the location of NWMs within governmental systems) as key determinants of the ability of NWMs to work effectively. With respect to the latter, issues concerning a lack of independence and low prioritization within a wider government framework were cited. The group further highlighted constraints in some cases resulting from the lack of a supportive civil society and engrained patriarchal and discriminating social attitudes. Emphasis was

given to the importance of developing and identifying effective and efficient strategies for NWMs, as well enhance networking and build stronger relationships with other ministries, in order to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of NWMs

39. The conclusions from the second working group were presented by Mr. A.Y.M. Golam Kibria (Bangladesh). The group consisted of delegates from Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The group highlighted that women were disadvantaged by their limited political involvement and decision-making power, which reinforced their marginalization within patriarchal societies. The group emphasized that NWMs were adversely affected by internal institutional factors such as understaffing, limited capacity, knowledge and technical expertise as well as external issues such as weak linkages with other ministries, women's forums and other relevant partners. The challenges faced by NWMs with respect to access, and ability to effectively spend, funds was also raised. The group called for structural and systematic barriers to be addressed, and noted that strategies to strengthen NWMs need to include enhanced programmatic resources and better leveraging capacities at field level.

40. Synthesizing the conclusions reached by the working groups, Ms. Kalyani Menon-Sen presented a conceptual framework for the analysis of national women's machineries and mechanisms based on institutional culture, organizational politics, programming interventions and organizational processes. Ms. Menon-Sen noted that, in a number of countries, NWMs take on the full responsibility for enhancing gender equality but questioned whether it was feasible for one single ministry to initiate, coordinate and oversee this monumental task. She also noted the need to take a different perspective upon "capacity-building" of NWMs, including redefining "capacity" if necessary. NWMs also need to undertake a self-examination, including analysing exclusionary biases within their own policies and operations. Greater clarity is needed amongst NWMs themselves on the impacts they are hoping to achieve. This will enable them to reflect upon the internal institutional changes required to become more effective as well as considering how these institutional changes might be formalized. Ms. Menon-Sen noted that more effective monitoring processes on progress and implementation were needed to further promote the visibility and effectiveness of NWMs.

C. Strengthening partnerships for national gender equality goals

41. The proceedings commenced with plenary reflections on discussions held the previous day and topics to be considered for further discussion.

42. Several delegations stressed the importance of strengthening the NWMs as institutions. Currently, NWMs often lack clear mandates as well as institutional resources such as capacity, networks and ability to increase their effectiveness. Delegations noted that in general governments do not display the high level of commitment necessary to fully support the work of NWMs. One delegation expressed the need for an external mechanism to critically analyse the institutional framework and effectiveness of NWMs and urged UN agencies to support the NWMs in a more holistic manner.

43. Another delegation noted that discussions continued to focus on challenges and all too often ignored the progress made. Over the past 30 years women have become more visible in the public sphere, more girls have been enrolled in schools and the number of women in the armed forces and the police has been increasing. Also, the nature of discussions had changed since the early 1990s to focus more on gender rather than exclusively on women. However, more progress was required to include the rights of families in such areas.

44. Some delegations expressed concern about the elevated expectations regarding the pace of change. One delegation stressed that it may take generations to change cultural realities and mindsets. In order to work towards such change, NWMs should not work in isolation but in close collaboration with key government and civil society partners and thereby play a key role as instigator and facilitator of change.

45. Following the plenary discussions all country delegates made presentations pertaining to: (a) identification of other actors and potential long-term partners, and (b) institutionalization of partnerships between NWMs and other key stakeholders.

46. In identifying key partners, most delegations mentioned various line ministries as essential to promote gender equality including Ministries of Education, Justice, Finance and Planning. Also, UN agencies and bilateral donors were mentioned as key partners. Several delegations stressed the importance of a strong National Women's Commission or equivalent body, and the role of NGOs and civil society as partners in advocating gender equality at all levels in society.

47. One delegation noted the importance of a Parliamentary Women's Committee, supported by the Parliament, as a significant NWM partner. However, a balance of power had to be attained in that a very strong Parliamentary Committee could be counterproductive and hinder the work of a government.

48. A number of delegations highlighted the important role played by the media in sensitizing the public to gender equality and in maintaining the pressure on Governments, for example in promoting their drafting or review of legislation in favour of gender equality. In addition, it was also noted that judiciary institutions, such as the courts and the police, were essential partners, though efforts had to be made to further sensitize them to gender equality. The institutionalization of a strong system to support the already existing protection officers should be supported by the Ministries of Women, Planning and Finance.

49. Following the country presentations and plenary discussions, Ms. Shireen Lateef (Asian Development Bank (ADB)) made a presentation that identified areas for partnership and strategies for joint action.

50. Ms. Lateef described ADB's four key strategies for joint action with the NWMs namely: (a) Linking NWMs to sector/line agencies, (b) Contracting NWMs to implement loan components, (c) Direct loan projects with NWMs, and (d) Capacity development of NWMs through technical assistance. Ms. Lateef illustrated the models with examples from Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan.

51. A number of issues were raised in the ensuing discussion, in particular pertaining to conditionalities and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). One delegation noted that progress towards women's rights may be difficult to assess in the context of an instrumental approach (namely, when the involvement of women is promoted to further a wider socio-economic goal). They enquired about the monitoring of gender conditionalities under which ADB loans are provided. Ms. Lateef responded that the loans were provided with conditionalities that were discussed with civil society and NWMs (and were not conceived as external impositions), thus enhancing national ownership.

D. Engendering macroeconomic policies

52. The session commenced with a short film entitled “Power, Voice and Rights” about gender-based violence, women’s representation and participation in public life, reflecting gendered stereotypes, as well as legal reforms.

53. Subsequently, Ms. Anuradha Rajivan (UNDP) presented findings from the 2010 Asia-Pacific Human Development Report (HDR) on gender equality “Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific”. Ms. Rajivan noted that, regardless of the rapid economic growth and years of advocacy for change in the region, gender equality remained a challenge. Despite positive trends and opportunities, gender disparities are still apparent in areas such as, inter alia, information technology and health and education indicators.

54. Ms. Rajivan noted that the HDR identified three strategic windows through which specific gender policies could bring about significant change, namely, economic power, political voice, and legal rights. Women’s lack of access to, and control of, assets as well as the economic costs of discrimination should also be further addressed within broader economic development planning. Women’s political participation have continued to be low in the region, in Parliament, the civil service and the judicial system, and policy efforts are required to further improve the level of women’s participation in these areas. In terms of legal rights, Ms. Rajivan noted that the legal frameworks pertaining to gender equality were insufficient and at times even discriminatory, such as, for example, in terms of legislation related to inheritance. In addition, women’s access to justice was limited by their lack of economic independence and physical mobility outside the home as well as discrimination within the judicial system. Hence, further efforts were required in the area of legal rights.

55. Ms. Rajivan noted that the positive steps already initiated in various countries should be widely shared and regarded not merely as women’s issues but rather complementary to a broader social and economic discussion. A number of other essential issues were also highlighted including gender sensitized education, maternal health, migration of women, and women’s political representation.

56. Following Ms. Rajivan’s presentation, Ms. Govind Kelkar (UN-Women, South Asia Subregional Office), made a presentation on “Engendering National Economies” in South Asia. Highlighting key poverty reduction approaches, Ms. Kelkar provided an overview of key sectors in which women are primarily engaged in the subregion. These included the agricultural, informal and private sectors including small enterprises and microcredit businesses, as well as the textile and IT sectors. Ms. Kelkar noted that factors such as patriarchal definitions of gender and the role of women, the educational status of women, and sociocultural factors affect women’s ability to enter into the workforce. Women’s gender identities are a factor in determining the relative economic value given to different types of work in which women and men are involved, in particular in terms of the devaluation of women’s work and in relation to the working environments of women (including whether they are likely to face implicit threats of gender violence in such environments). Thus, key areas where policy maximizing efforts are needed to combat these issues include changing gender norms, combating gender discrimination, plugging legal loopholes and implementing relevant legal frameworks.

57. In response to the presentation, participants shared a number of issues affecting women in the economy based on their own country experiences. One delegation highlighted that while microcredit could play a role in women’s empowerment, it remained essential to address systematic and structural barriers that persisted for women at the macroeconomic

level. Exclusionary biases also existed in women's employment leading delegations to note that macroeconomic and social policies must be developed that provide employment guarantees and more holistic strategies for strengthening women's involvement. The intervention of NWMs was also regarded as crucial in particular with regards to the negotiation of free trade agreements where women's voices remain largely unheard despite the significant impact free trade has had on many women's lives.

E. Gender budgeting: country strategies

58. This session commenced with reflections on the presentations and discussions of the previous day. Delegates agreed that while overcoming gender discrimination and barriers may take a long time, it is essential to draw upon the successes of the past decades and to identify success models. It was therefore noted that a combination of strengthening the capacity of institutions for gender equality and the implementation of functional activities to empower women was needed. Crucial linkages such as those between macroeconomic and social policies, women's leadership and empowerment strategies, and economic matters and domestic violence should also be identified. In addition, delegations highlighted the need to redefine capacity, both in terms of form and content. In this connection, it was questioned whether NWMs need to house extensive internal capacity themselves, or whether a more effective strategy would be to better draw on capacities already available in wider society, for example, through civil society organisations and academic institutions.

59. In providing an overview of gender responsive budgeting (GRB), Ms. Yamini Mishra (UN-Women, South Asia Subregional Office) highlighted the progress made in the region in recent years, citing specific cases and models from India and Nepal. Ms. Mishra reflected on three key achievements, namely: (a) that large numbers of trainings and workshops had been conducted to build the capacity in gender-responsive budgeting, (b) the implementation of gender budgeting statements, and (c) the increased level of gender-responsiveness in a number of budgets and policies in the region. Ms Mishra stressed a number of key constraints and challenges faced in the actual implementation of gender budgeting. Placing GRB in a broader political context, Ms. Mishra emphasized that budgets were part of a political process and that more effective means were necessary to ensure a comprehensive consideration of gender dimensions.

60. Subsequently, Mr. Sajjad Ahmad Shaikh (Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, Pakistan) presented the experience of gender budgeting in Pakistan. Mr. Shaikh noted the diversity of gender budgeting initiatives ranging from full budget to selected sector-based, expenditure-based or revenue-based initiatives, or even problem-targeted initiatives. The Government of Pakistan first committed to undertake GRB in 2003 and has since initiated a number of gender budgeting related initiatives including time use surveys, a gender-aware beneficiary assessment survey, gender-aware policy analysis and gender budget statements. Some of the lessons learned from Pakistan included: (a) the importance of government ownership of gender budgeting initiatives, and (b) the possibility of achieving gender-sensitive amendments in the budgetary processes.

61. Following the presentations, participants exchanged further country experiences and concerns with regards to gender budgeting. The delegate from Nepal advised that his Government had initiated gender-responsive budgeting in 2005 and it was formally implemented in the 2007-2008 biennium through the establishment of a six-member Gender-Responsive Committee under the Budget Commission. Some delegations noted that it was crucial to ensure that the benefits of gender budget allocations were actually reaching women. The importance of linking policy responses to gender budget allocations was also highlighted. Some gender budget allocations, for example, are primarily targeted at

microcredit schemes. However, this should not constitute a substitute for the Government's macrolevel commitments to lower gender inequalities or shift attention from crucial budgetary issues such as women's labour and wages. Thus, NWMs should consider how gender-responsive budgets could play a role in changing the macroeconomic and other key government priorities.

F. Violence against women: Issues and policy responses

62. This session was introduced by Ms. Madhubala Nath (UN-Women, South Asia Sub-Regional Office) who underscored the magnitude of the issue, describing violence against women as a "silent epidemic" occurring in a wide range of forms and settings. In Asia, the prevalence of violence was estimated to range from 30 to 75 per cent, depending on the survey cohorts used and the type of violence. The profound impact of this pervasive violence was highlighted, along with the need to undertake reforms to address inadequate jurisprudence and develop multisectoral preventive strategies. The important role of NWMs in stimulating and monitoring such strategies was also noted.

63. Engaging men and boys in prevention efforts was also discussed, based on presentations made by the United Nations Partners for Prevention Regional Support Programme for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. James Lang and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), Mr. Shiv Khare. Primary prevention was highlighted as a necessary complement to response and support rendered to survivors of violence, being required across different levels of society and over a long period of time. The strategic engagement, undertaken along other transformative actions targeting laws, institutions and norms should strive to bring about more just, peaceful and equitable societies, as well as forms of masculinity that are non-violent, benevolent and respectful. Political commitment to eliminate violence against women was also highlighted as critical for broad-based change.

64. Ensuing discussions and working sessions looked closely into developing strategies to scale up efforts to eliminate violence against women at regional, national and community levels. Among other things, participants identified networking, partnership and knowledge sharing, including for bridging gaps on data and definitions, as critical modalities to be applied.

65. Subsequently, Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren, (UN-Women East and Southeast Asia Regional office), provided an introduction to CEDAW-based legal reviews. Ms. Darisuren highlighted CEDAW principles and norms and provided an assessment of CEDAW compliance of laws through an overview of legislative indicators. Ms. Darisuren further stressed that good practices in gender equality laws are characterized by their coverage of the 13 substantive areas of CEDAW as well as monitoring and implementation in the following areas: harmonization, positive obligations, mechanisms for monitoring, complaints process, collection of statistics, review process, and funding mechanisms.

66. Ms. Hasna Cheema, (lawyer and Member of the Lahore Bar Association of Pakistan), made a presentation on the experience of five Asian countries in benchmarking national legislation for gender equality. Ms. Cheema highlighted that, while signs of positive change are evident, legal exclusion on the basis of gender still persisted across the region and violence against women remained pervasive. Legal barriers existed in visible forms, such as overtly discriminatory legal provisions, as well as in less visible ways, such as legal inconsistencies which also reflected discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes. On

the basis of findings from an assessment of national laws conducted from a CEDAW perspective, Ms. Cheema presented recommendations for redressing gender barriers in national laws in the region, including related to the elimination of customary practices that promote gender stereotypes and discrimination against women in areas of political and public life.

G. Climate change and renewable energy: Gender implications and policy responses

67. Ms. Feri Lumampao (ENERGIA) made a presentation on gender and climate change issues, particularly commenting upon the latest developments and ongoing debates. Ms. Lumampao stated that: "Where women and men enjoy equal rights, women and men suffer equally from disasters but, where women are unequal, they suffer disproportionately". A number of delegations complemented the statement, but also stated that disasters differ and should be dealt with accordingly. Other delegations agreed with the statement noting that women might not be affected disproportionately by the disaster itself but rather during the post-disaster phase, for example in terms of access to food, shelter and other necessities.

68. Ms. Lumampao continued by stating that climate change had an impact on women's ability to care for children, as well as women and children's health and livelihoods that rely on local resources. However, there was a need to further strengthen gender analysis in climate change to ensure a comprehensive overview.

69. One delegation added that women were not only the end users of energy but also the managers and suppliers of energy within households and small enterprises. Women should therefore also be involved as agents of change in this regard.

70. Ms. Lumampao continued by noting that no level of planning or scientific investigation could completely avert disasters. Consequently, issues of women's needs, improved capacities and the achievement of gender equality in the area of climate change should be further analysed and mainstreamed in the relevant debates. Ms. Lumampao stressed that NWMs need to understand how to best achieve gender equality in the area of climate change, including in the selection and use of champions.

H. Expert Group Meeting

71. Moving into the Expert Group Meeting, delegates discussed and identified priorities for subregional cooperation. On the basis of discussions during the preceding workshop, a set of recommendations on regional priorities and subregional strategies for women's national machineries was proposed for consideration. Participants reviewed and discussed the recommendations and made preliminary commitments to the priorities established pending final consultation with their Governments. It was agreed that the secretariat would further refine the recommendations and circulate them to meeting delegates for finalization and adoption in the final meeting report (please refer to recommendations for priority follow-up actions adopted by the Workshop-cum-EGM in section I).

72. In closing the Workshop-cum-EGM, Mr. Donald Clarke (ESCAP) thanked participants for the rich and substantial contributions they had made to sharing good practises, lessons and information on the critical and strategic role of NWMs in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in their diverse national contexts.

73. Mr. Clarke reaffirmed the commitment of ESCAP and UN-Women to work with NWMs in South and South-West Asia to strengthen their institutional capacity to play

strategic and influential roles within their own governmental contexts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Mr. Clarke noted that a number of key priority areas for follow-up action at subregional and national levels had been identified and that these would guide the ongoing work by ESCAP and UN-Women.

III. Organization

A. Attendance

74. The Workshop was attended by participants from the following countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

75. In addition, representatives of the following offices of the United Nations bodies, and specialized agencies and related organizations attended the Workshop: Jointed United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Non-Governmental Organization Asia Indigenous People's Pact (AIPP) also sent an observer to the Workshop.

B. Agenda

76. The Workshop-cum-EGM adopted the following agenda:

- A. Opening
- B. Role and function of national women's machineries and mechanisms- reflection and institutional analysis
- C. Strengthening partnerships for national gender equality goals
- D. Engendering macroeconomic policies
- E. Gender budgeting: country strategies
- F. Violence against women: issues and policy responses
- G. Climate change and renewable energy: gender impacts and policy responses
- H. Ways forward and national-level follow-up
- I. Expert Group Meeting
 - a) Review of subregional priorities
 - b) Identification of common subsregional strategies and ways forward
- J. Closing

ANNEXES**ANNEX 1.****LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****BANGLADESH**

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