



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

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SPECA WORKING GROUP ON GENDER AND SDGs

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was established by the Tashkent Declaration on 26 March 1998, signed by the Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan joined the Programme later.

2. The SPECA participating countries are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific provide overall support to the Programme.

3. The SPECA Working Group on Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter referred to as “the Working Group”) is a subsidiary body of the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia. The Working Group on Gender and Economy (WG on Gender) was established in compliance with the proposal of the Special session of the SPECA Regional Advisory Committee (Astana, Kazakhstan, 27 May 2005) of setting up a Working group on gender and held its first session in Geneva on 5 – 9 December 2005. At the 13th session of the SPECA Governing Council (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 21 September 2018), the SPECA participating countries reiterated their commitment to the Programme as a platform for promoting subregional cooperation in the SPECA region and for achieving the SDGs, including the fundamental role of the attainment of gender equality in all areas – SDG 5. In particular, the Governing Council adopted the recommendations of the session of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy held on 19 September 2018 in Almaty, including the recommendation to rename the SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy to the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs.

II. OBJECTIVES

4. In line with the overall objective of the Programme to facilitate economic cooperation in the countries of the SPECA region as well as integration of the SPECA participating countries into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Working Group on Gender and SDGs shall continue to work in the area of gender mainstreaming and transformative policies as follows:

- (a) Non-discriminatory labour market policies in the course of hiring and work environment free of discrimination and exploitation;
- (b) Policies to promote the participation of women in public and private companies;

- (c) Policies to prevent stereotypes in education and research to advance the participation of women in R&D sectors; and
- (d) Policies for building support systems for women entrepreneurship development.

III. PARTICIPANTS

- 5. The Working Group shall comprise National Representatives, nominated by the Governments of the SPECA participating countries. The National Representatives shall be senior officials involved the formulation and implementation of national policies in their respective countries and able to effectively follow up the recommendations and decisions of the Working Group.
- 6. Each participating country shall also nominate, on a permanent or an ad hoc basis, experts on Gender and respective areas of activities of the Working Group.
- 7. Relevant regional organizations implementing programmes on Gender are invited to nominate their representatives to participate in the activities of the Working Group.
- 8. Other United Nations bodies as well as other bilateral and multilateral agencies and organizations operating in the area of Gender and SDGs in the SPECA region are invited to participate in the work of the Working Group on Gender and SDGs.
- 9. Representatives of the member States of UNECE and ESCAP, representatives of United Nations Funds, international financial institutions, and donors as well as representatives of the private sector and academic community may be invited to participate in the work of the Working Group.

IV. MODALITIES OF OPERATION

- 10. The SPECA participating countries elected Azerbaijan as the Chair country of the Working Group on Gender and SDGs.
- 11. Governments of the SPECA countries nominate Focal points for the Working Group to ensure successful delivery of programmes of work, according to the adopted Terms of reference.
- 12. The UNECE and ESCAP secretariats shall provide substantive support to the activities of the Working Group by:
 - (i) Providing expertise as well as assistance to activities implemented by the Working Group; and
 - (ii) Providing secretariat support to the preparation and organization of sessions and meetings of the Working Group, including preparation of documents and maintenance of records.
- 13. The Working Group shall hold its annual sessions at a date and venue agreed by the participating countries any time before or concurrent to the annual sessions of the SPECA Governing Council.
- 14. The Working Group shall draw important policy issues to the attention of the SPECA Governing Council.
- 15. The working languages of SPECA are Russian and English.

V. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND ACTIVITIES

16. The annual sessions of the Working Group serve as a platform for policy dialogue, capacity-building and networking for concerned government stakeholders from relevant key ministries and agencies in SPECA countries to discuss critical and key emerging issues related to gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants share advances made and challenges encountered with respect to the implementation of SDG 5 on gender equality and will further discuss strategies to forge ahead on key issues to advance gender equality, including women's full economic and political empowerment.

17. The Working Group shall develop, agree upon and approve its Terms of reference and submit them to the Governing Council session for adoption.

18. The Working Group shall develop, agree upon, approve and implement its annual work programmes and prepare its annual reports to the Governing Council on progress made in their implementation.

19. The Working Group shall draw up its biennial work programmes which are integrated into SPECA Work Plans.

VI. FUNDING

20. The Tashkent Declaration calls upon other United Nations agencies, donor countries, international financial organizations as well as the private sector to provide financial and other types of assistance to SPECA.

21. The costs of participation of the experts in the sessions of the SPECA Working Group shall, as a rule, be borne by the Governments of the participating countries. In addition, the UNECE and ESCAP shall provide financial support, within their available resources.

22. SPECA participating countries are invited to provide financial and other types of support to the implementation of the programmes of work of the Working Group on Gender and SDGs.

23. The Working Group shall also seek funds and technical assistance from multilateral and bilateral donors for the implementation of specific capacity-building projects falling under the scope of the approved work programmes.

VII. OTHER MATTERS

24. The Terms of Reference shall be reviewed in 5 years or sooner if the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs so decides.

25. These Terms of Reference were adopted by the Governing Council on 21 November 2019.
