

Background Note

Annual Meeting

Thematic Working Group on Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

“Accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals: Emerging issues of critical importance for the SPECA countries”

Held in the margins of the UNECE Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting

Monday 28 October 2019, 15:00 – 18:00

Room XXVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

1. Context

In committing to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, member States recognized the fundamental role of gender equality for achieving a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for all. Recent decades of experience in development policy and practice have further reinforced that addressing gender inequality has a strong impact on all three dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental.

At the 13th session of the SPECA Governing Council in Almaty, Kazakhstan, held on 21 September 2018, 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 for achieving the SDGs. In particular, the Governing Council approved 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 change the Thematic Working Group on Gender and Economy to “SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs”.

The Governing Council further decided that the Working Group on Gender and SDGs should 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.

With the convergence of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25) and the 5-year milestone for the 2030 Agenda, the year 2020 marks a window of opportunity to take stock of global, regional and country-level progress made and actions required to address barriers

to gender equality and by that to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The annual meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs will focus on emerging issues of critical importance for accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ESCAP and UNECE will jointly convene the annual meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs on 28 October, from 15:00 to 18:00 on 28 October 2019, in the margins of the UNECE Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting, which will be held from 29 – 30 October 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland.

2. Objectives

The annual meeting of the *SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs* will serve as a forum 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 within the context of the regional and global reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, thereby further contributing to efforts towards gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Participants will 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.

Specific objectives of the Working Group include:

- Within the context of the Beijing+25 review processes, share lessons learned and discuss the prevalent challenges and national priorities for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls particularly in the thematic priority areas:
 - (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 research- and development sectors; and
 - (d) Policies for building support systems for women entrepreneurship development;
- Identify the necessary actions and best practices to improve the enabling environment for women and girls at country and sub-regional levels, including cross-sectoral measures and institutional coordination, public-private partnerships and active engagement of women's associations and women beneficiary groups into consultative and decision-making processes;
- Identify opportunities for further sub-regional cooperation on the implementation of the SDG 5 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls.

The annual meeting of the *SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs* will consist of two substantive sessions: (a) country presentations by participants (ten minutes each), sharing of best practices and lessons learned on the thematic priority areas for the Working Group, including on issues emerging from the on-going review process of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and (b) a group discussion to identify opportunities for sub-regional cooperation and partnership, review the report of activities in 2018-2019 and agree on a work plan for 2019-2020.

3. Programme

Monday 28 October 2019, 15:00 - 18:00

Room XXVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

14:30-15:00	Registration
15:00-15:10	Welcome remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representative, UNECE• Representative, ESCAP• Ms. Hijran Huseynova, Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan, and Chair of the Thematic Working Group on Gender and SDGs
15:10-16:30	Session 1: Country presentations (10 minutes each) Peer learning and sharing good practices and lessons learned on the thematic priority areas for the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs, including on issues emerging from the reviews of the progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Afghanistan• Azerbaijan• Kazakhstan• Kyrgyzstan• Tajikistan• Turkmenistan• Uzbekistan
16:30-16:45	Coffee break
16:45-17:45	Session 2: Group discussion Review of activities in 2018-2019 Discussion on priorities and future activities for 2020-2021 Under this item, participants will identify opportunities for sub-regional cooperation to accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in SPECA countries and plan activities for 2020.
17:45-18:00	Conclusions and approval of work plan