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**First Meeting of the Team of Specialists on Women's Entrepreneurship
Geneva, 12 and 15 February 2002**

SUMMARY REPORT

The first meeting of the Team of Specialists on Women's Entrepreneurship was held at the Palais de Nations, Geneva on 12 and 15 February 2002. It was organised by the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

The meeting was attended by more than 40 participants from 18 countries, the majority being women. The meeting drew from the expertise of representatives of Governments, NGOs and private sector.

The Team elected its Chairperson Ms. Marsha Gannon (USA) and Vice-Chairpersons Ms. Roni Dolev (Israel) and Ms. Saida Iskakova (Kazakhstan). On behalf of the UNECE the Team's work is coordinated by Ms. Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, the Regional Adviser on Gender and Economy.

The Team works within the framework of the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development (WP.8), which reports to the Committee on Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development, main subsidiary body of UNECE.

The following issues were discussed:

I. Terms of Reference

- This was discussed and adopted as a general framework.

II. Perceived Barriers to Women's Entrepreneurship

i) Lack of know-how and information on start-up and development issues

The following responses were provided in relation to this:

- The establishment of sub-regional training centres to help women with:
 - start-up issues (e.g. how to set up, draft a business plan, etc.);
 - development of business skills and plans; and
 - seminars on the changes in regulations and laws governing business activities (e.g. taxation, quality assurance, etc.)

(Ms. M. Allazova, Azerbaijan)

- Development of a University Internship programme – universities to sponsor interns to travel to various countries to train women and youth in computer literacy and entrepreneurship.

(Ms. M. Gannon, United States of America)

- Establishing of a roster of experts willing to work on a no-fee basis, who will visit a country in need to assist in the assessment of priorities and the development/implementation of an action plan. The role of these experts was underlined in the context of bilateral agreements widely used by the Ministry of Industry in Italy.

(Ms. D. Fiori, Italy)

This response was reaffirmed by participants from of Azerbaijan who attributed high profitability growth to the input of experts in advertising for the duration of a month:

- Creation of a register of requests for assistance in specific areas, which will then attempt to be matched with the roster of experts *(Ms. E. Ruminska-Zimny, UNECE)*
- Creation of Internet programmes to help women with required skills. Programmes should be developed to cater for different levels of computer literacy. *(Ms. O. Politova, Russian Federation)*
- Development of a website for transition countries containing lectures from developed countries on the challenges and solutions to developing an enterprise. *(Ms. O. Politova, Russian Federation)*
- Establishment of a women's mentoring network on the internet so that ideas and advice can be exchanged.

(Ms. M. Gannon, United States of America)

- Establishing E-business Training Centres equipped with Minibus, which would serve as a mobile information and training centre spreading knowledge about Internet and facilitating its usage among small and medium businesses run by women.
(Ms. E. Lisowska, Poland)
- Preparation of a methodology “blue print” for a feasibility study on the type of potential businesses that could be created under the specific local conditions (i.e. human resources available, climatic and historical conditions, historical market links and current infrastructure)
(Ms. M. Knothe, Poland)
- Creation of a structured work plan that outlines the general steps to be followed for the creation and development of an enterprise. The ILO currently uses a 4 step work plan which involves collecting base line data, developing women’s advocacy, developing required services and developing strategy. This has been used successfully in countries such as Albania and Bulgaria.
(Ms. G. Mackie, ILO)

ii) Lack of funding to start up and develop an enterprise

- Those in associations could charge their members a low annual fee (e.g. \$10). Funds generated could be injected into 3 or 4 projects in various countries per year. This may be given to countries in the form of non-interest loans so that the money could be regenerated for different projects.
(Ms. C. Schreiber, FCEM, France)
- Creation of a sub-regional fund to support women-entrepreneurs in the South Caucasus, which could also have a leasing agency.
(Ms. M. Allazova, Azerbaijan)

(iii) Lack of structural framework and/or coherent set of laws that incorporate gender issues in entrepreneurship

Responses:

- Evaluate the existing national frameworks and the situation of women-entrepreneurs to identify gaps and the need for assistance
(Ms. A. Perkov, Croatia, and Ms. A. Putnova, Czech Republic)
- The Italian Ministry of Industry has had experience in drafting laws in Bulgaria concerning entrepreneurship. The Team of Specialists could draw from this experience and act on incorporating issues of women’s entrepreneurship within SME legislation.
(Ms. D. Fiori, Italy)
- The introduction of a Ministry of Women in Economy in transition countries to formulate policy recommendations on reforms and creation of laws on enterprise.
(Ms. A. Perkov, Croatia)