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UNDESA Mission Report

**Najet Karaborni, Senior Interregional Adviser,
UN-NGO-IRENE Project Coordinator
NGO Section/OESC**

**Pakistan (Islamabad, Karachi)
2-13 October 2004**

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I. Purpose of the Mission

As follow-up to the ECOSOC Coordination Segment of July 2004 on gender issues, and the request of “All Pakistan Women Association (APWA)”, the Director of the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Mr. Sarbuland Khan sent the Senior Interregional Adviser of UNDESA and Project Coordinator of the UN-NGO-IRENE / NGO Section, Ms. Najet Karaborni for an advisory mission to Pakistan from 2 to 13 October 2004. The main purpose of the mission was to support APWA in coordinating an International Conference on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development, and conduct a capacity building workshop to launch the UN-NGO-Informal Regional Network (UN-NGO-IRENE) in Pakistan.

More specifically, the UNDESA mission aims:

1. To provide substantive support and assist APWA, an NGO in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1951, in the preparatory work for an International Conference on the theme of Gender Equality and Sustainable Development;
2. As the International Conference will be held in February 2005 to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the birth of the founder of APWA, to advise APWA on how the Conference could also contribute to the ECOSOC High Level Segment (HLS) of July 2005 in Geneva;
3. To provide substantive support to APWA and "Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP)" in order to do the preparatory work to launch a High Level Consultation and Capacity Building Workshop on UN-NGO-IRENE in Pakistan with relevant interested and committed national and grassroots NGOs.

II. International Conference on "Gender Equality and Sustainable Development" Islamabad, Pakistan, 22-24 February 2004

A. Main Activities Undertaken During the Mission

1. Brainstorming on 3 October 2004 with APWA representatives, Begum. Meher Kermani and Begum Najma Mahmoodullah and the Conference coordinators in Islamabad: Ms Rabya Nizam and Ms Mehreen Saeed in order to link the conference to all MDGs and their implementation for gender equality and sustainable development as suggested by Ms Karaborni
2. Draft of the Aide Memoire and Programme of the Conference with the Conference coordinators and Ms. Sumaira Khan, Secretary General of APWA Liaison Branch, Islamabad
3. Meeting chaired by Mr. Onder Yucer, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Pakistan with the focal points of the Conference on 6 October 2004 in the UNDP Office, Islamabad
4. Adoption of the Aide Memoire and Programme of the Conference by the UN agencies on 6 October 2004
5. Meeting with the Ministry of Women Development on 7 October 2004
6. Meeting with UNESCO, Pakistan on 6 October 2004
7. Website content finalized, launch expected shortly
8. Discussions in Karachi on 8 October 2004 with Begum Laila Safaraz, Executive Vice President of APWA of the practical modalities of the Conference: Number and level of speakers (national and international), content, website, programme, papers, timeframe, guidelines to succeed the event, post conference strategy especially for an enhanced role of APWA in ECOSOC HLS of July 2005 and the implementation phase of the Conference outcomes
9. Press Conference in Karachi on 11 October 2004 with Begum Laila Safaraz and Begum Meher Kermani.

B. Main Results/Conclusions

1. The Conference is hosted by the Ministry of Women Development and coordinated by APWA in collaboration with the following UN agencies: UNICEF, UNDP, UNDESA and UNFPA (See Aide Memoire of the conference attached in **Annex 1**).
2. The current and potential main donors of the conference are: UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNESCO, Swiss Development Cooperation, US Department of State
3. The Conference will focus on Gender Equality and MDGs' implementation as well as Human Rights and Peace to take into account all MDGs and the major challenging issues for women as proposed by the Mission

4. To fulfill its leading role, APWA appreciated very much the help of the Mission and stressed its crucial need for a continuous substantive support of DESA before, during and after the Conference
5. The Ministry of Women Development (MoWD), represented by the Additional Secretary, Mr. Suhail Safdar reiterated the commitment and support of the MoWD to the Conference. Mr. Safdar emphasized the Prime Minister's political will and personal commitment to Women Empowerment in Pakistan and stressed that this Ministry is the only Ministry in the region dealing exclusively with women empowerment and gender issues. He also confirmed the Opening of the Conference by the Prime Minister. On behalf of MoWD, Mr. Idris Baig will act as focal point for the Conference
6. UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Onder Yucer expressed strong support to the Conference organization, proceedings and outcomes. He appreciated very much its new linkage to all MDGs and their implementation. He expressed his concern about government funding and proposed that Dr. Sadik Nafis discuss this issue with the Government during her October mission in Islamabad. He committed to follow-up on UN Agencies' funding for the Conference. Specifically, the two UNDP Units: Gender Unit and Sustainable Development Unit will actively contribute to the Conference workshops and outcomes
7. UNICEF focal point in the Conference, Ms Julia Spry-Leverton, welcomed the extension of the conference focus to all MDGs in addition to Education and Health sectors and highlighted the importance of this new drive and its impact on the outcomes of the Conference.
8. The Conference Aide Memoire and Programme were adopted by the meeting participants (See **Annex III: Programme of Meetings and Agenda**)
9. In a separate meeting with UNESCO, Mr. Hasan Keynan, Programme Specialist, stated that in principle UNESCO supports the Conference and will provide comments on the proposed Conference Agenda shortly, considering its extended Agenda to include all MDGs
10. The expected outcome of the Conference " Islamabad Plan of Action" will serve as basis for a statement that APWA will draft with the advice and technical support of the NGO Section and present on behalf of the NGO participants to the ECOSOC HLS of July 2005

C. Main Recommendations of the Mission regarding the International Conference on "Gender Equality and Sustainable Development" Islamabad, Pakistan, 22-24 February 2004

1. Distribute the Conference Aide Memoire and Programme to all stakeholders
2. Finalize the list of potential participants including the UN-NGO-IRENE Coordinators
3. Finalize the list of potential speakers taking into account the selection criteria outlined in the Aide Memoire and the advice of DESA
4. Expedite invitation letters to speakers/ resource persons and participants as soon as possible

5. Launch Conference website without delay
6. Provide confirmed speakers with a detailed outline for their papers to ensure consistent format and facilitate the recommendation report
7. Follow-up on funding with all potential donors including the corporate sector
8. Follow the guidelines and timeframe provided by Ms. Karaborni
9. Prepare a mailing list of key persons including DESA representative for regular dissemination of all Conference updated information and promotional materials for quick interaction and comments
10. Consider the outcomes of the upcoming related conferences/summit such as the Beijing +10 preparatory meetings; Asia/Pacific Women, Girls and HIV-AIDS Conference (Islamabad, October 2004); World Family Summit (Sanya, China, December 2004) as valuable inputs to the International Conference
11. The outcome of the conference should be presented as NGO statement to the ECOSOC HLS of July 2005 in Geneva. This will enhance APWA contribution to the ECOSOC work in implementing the MDGs and the recommendations of the major international conferences and Summits in this field
12. The outcome of the Conference should also contribute to the Fifth year review of the MDGs' implementation and feed the report of the United Nations Secretary General to the 60th General Assembly on this item
13. The post conference strategy requested by the US State Department should be comprehensive. It should strengthen the new role of APWA as National coordinator of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Pakistan. This will help APWA in enhancing the civil society contribution to gender equality, women empowerment and human rights in Pakistan as well as to the ECOSOC work in achieving the MDGs and the major UN conferences' outcomes
14. DESA should pursue its substantive and technical assistance to the Conference before, during and after the Conference to ensure all conditions of its success. At least two weeks before the Conference, a UNDESA advisory mission should be sent to Pakistan to help the Conference coordination team in Islamabad in finalizing the organization of the Conference as requested by Begum Laila Safaraz, the Chairperson of the International Conference and Executive President of APWA.

III. Capacity Building Meeting To Launch UN-NGO-IRENE/Pakistan in Karachi

A. Conduct of the Capacity Building Workshop in Karachi, 11 October 2004

All Pakistan Women Association "APWA", a leading NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC since 1951, organized with the support of the Mission and hosted the Workshop to launch the UN-NGO-IRENE / Pakistan in Karachi, Pakistan on 11 October 2004 in partnership with the NGO Section of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of UN DESA (OESC).

The President of APWA, Begum Tazeen Faridi, opened the Meeting. In her opening address, she welcomed the participants focusing on APWA work towards health, legal and educational empowerment of Pakistani women for over 50 years. Essentially the brainchild of Begum Raa'na Liaquat Ali, the wife of Pakistan's first Prime Minister, founded APWA to oversee, consolidate and co-ordinate women's activity for their empowerment and involvement in political, economic and social development. She also emphasized the strong support of Mr. Sarbuland Khan and Ms Hanifa Mezoui to their Organization to enhance its leading role of the Pakistani civil society as well as the prosperous conducive environment in Pakistan to promote the NGO Sector and its contribution to development efforts at all levels (local, national, regional and international).

In her opening statement Begum Laila Safaraz, Executive Vice President of APWA focused on the objectives of the capacity-building programme for Pakistan and the importance of the workshop outcome for the preparatory work of the International Conference on gender equality and human development that her organization is holding on 22 – 24 February 2005 in Islamabad to commemorate the centenary celebrations for Begum Raa'na Liaquat Ali Khan, as a tribute to her memory and her unceasing efforts for the empowerment of women. She also emphasized that the outcome of the conference will be brought by APWA on behalf of participant NGOs to the high-level segment of ECOSOC Session of July 2005 in Geneva. This is why the NGO involvement and active participation in the Conference is highly appreciated not only by APWA but also by the United Nations and especially UNDESA which strongly support the Conference and sent an advisory mission led by Ms Karaborni to assist APWA in the preparatory work of the Conference to ensure all conditions of its success.

The Executive President of APWA also underlined the new orientation of the work of NGOs within ECOSOC and their expected role in the framework of the implementation of the MDGs

Thirty three participants attended the Meeting representing 16 Pakistani NGOs including NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC and other leading and dynamic NGOs; Partners and Sponsors representing the Press, the business community and donors and the UN representative. (See **Annex IV**: list of participants)

The United Nations representative, Mrs. Najet Karaborni conducted the workshop that was coordinated by Begum Maher Kermani and Begum Yasmin Dastur. Mrs. Karaborni made the following three PowerPoint presentations:

- ◆ ECOSOC and its relationship with NGOs: NGO Consultative status with ECOSOC
- ◆ The Millennium Development Goals
- ◆ UN-NGO-IRENE and NGO Capacity Building within Participatory Governance

She presented the key issues and challenges of the third millennium and the role of NGOs in achieving the MDGs and contributing to the ECOSOC work. She explained the work of the NGO Section/ECOSOC and its outreach programme, the UN-NGO-IRENE.

For the Asia region, the Network was already established in China, India and Japan and it will be today also established in Pakistan in order to strengthen the positive impact of the civil society in Pakistan and also contribute to the launching of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Asia High-Level Consultation and Capacity-Building Workshop in 2005

In her intervention, the UNDESA representative also emphasized the importance of strengthening and building human capacities for NGOs in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in order to meet the challenges of the coming decades, especially in poverty alleviation, economic growth, gender equality, women empowerment, peace and sustainable development.

Begum Tazeen Faridi, President of APWA closed the Workshop. She underlined the important role of NGOs as well as the work of the United Nations in empowering NGOs and the civil society in general. The participants emphasized that the workshop was very important and useful, as it contributed effectively to strengthening the Pakistani NGOs' work within the ECOSOC. They all expressed thanks to DESA representative for her clear and comprehensive presentations.

B. Main Results/Conclusions of the Meeting

The Meeting succeeded to establish the UN-NGO-IRENE in Pakistan with APWA as National Coordinator

Taking into account the fact that Pakistan has more than 56 000 registered NGOs and that only 13 NGOs have the consultative status with ECOSOC, it was agreed that as national coordinator of the UN-NGO-IRENE, APWA will work with the support of seven NGO thematic focal points and five regional representations as follows:

Thematic Focal Points at national level:

1. **Poverty Alleviation and Hunger (MDG 1):** SEVA in collaboration with Ladies' Forum, Pakistan Association for Women Entrepreneurs and the First Women's Bank Limited
2. **Education (MDG 2)** : BUNYAD in collaboration with BEHBUD
3. **Gender Equality /Women Empowerment:** AURAT in collaboration with Tehrik-e-Niswan
4. **Health (MDGs 4, 5 and 6)** : Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP) in collaboration with Geriatrics Care Foundation of Pakistan
5. **Environment (MDG 7)** : SCOPE in collaboration with Shirkat Gah, Women's Resource Centre
6. **Partnerships (MDG 8)** : Federation of Business and Professional Women in collaboration with Business, Professional and Agriculture Women Association and First Women Bank Limited

7. **Peace, Security and Human Rights** : Karachi Women Peace Committee in collaboration with World Muslim Congress and Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child

Regional Representations of the Network:

1. **Sind Region:** Scientific and Cultural Society of Pakistan
2. **North west Frontier Province:** Afghan Development Association
3. **Islamabad:** Rural Development Foundation of Pakistan
4. **Punjab:** FPAP
5. **Balochistan:** Rural Support Program

For more details, please see **Annex II:** Report of the Capacity building Meeting of Karachi

C. Main Recommendations regarding the UN-NGO-IRENE/Pakistan

The leading Pakistani NGOs agreed to establish the UN-NGO-IRENE in Pakistan, taking into account its potential impact on NGO sector development. Based on substantial and positive discussions, the following recommendations were also made:

1. The need to mobilize additional resources to realize the Network's potential and undertake its main activities was underlined by the participants
2. To strengthen partnerships between the United Nations, NGOs, sub regional and regional coordinators as well as partners including the private sector;
3. To build needed capacity among NGOs as well as reinforce existing skills and developing human resources through training workshops;
4. to build a sound resource base, including strengthening the networking among NGOs, notably the use of ICT;
5. To establish a permanent dialogue and direct contacts among NGOs, the NGO Section/DESA and the United Nations in general;
6. To strengthen relationships among Pakistani, Asian and NGOs worldwide;
7. To reinforce a conducive environment for NGOs to operate;
8. The General Voluntary Trust Fund should be operational immediately to make appropriate funding available to supplement the national resources in order to implement the MDGs in the region;
9. UN-NGO-IRENE/Pakistan should actively participate in the International Conference and each one of its seven thematic focal points should lead and bring valuable contribution and inputs to the respective concurrent workshop of the Conference
10. UN-NGO-IRENE/Pakistan should actively participate in the upcoming Regional Meeting to launch UN-NGO-IRENE/Asia in 2005. During the International Conference, informal consultations with other IRENE national coordinators of Asian countries could be held to prepare the High Level Consultation/Capacity Building Meeting to establish the UN-NGO-IRENE /Asia.

IV. Meeting chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan

The UN delegation had a meeting chaired by Mr. Onder Yucer, Resident Representative of UNDP and Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Pakistan. The Meeting was briefed on the purpose and programme of the Mission as well as on the role of the NGO Section of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of DESA in strengthening the NGOs' capacity through the UN-NGO-IRENE. She also presented the Aide Memoire of the International Conference that was drafted during the Mission with the coordination team of the Conference. She explained that the Conference will focus on the implementation of the MDGs and gender equality in order to make a significant contribution to the fifth year review of the MDGs' implementation and to the High Level Segment of ECOSOC of July 2005 in Geneva as mentioned in the proposed Aide Memoire: IV Expected Outputs of the Conference. As the International Conference on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development will take place in 22-24 February 2005 in Islamabad, Pakistan, its outcome - the Plan of Action of Islamabad - will serve to the statement of APWA to the ECOSOC and will feed the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration. This will efficiently enhance the NGOs' contribution to the ECOSOC work in implementing the MDGs in partnership with governments, the private sector and the United Nations. This will constitute an outstanding pilot partnership initiative between several UN agencies and the other main stakeholders (government, civil society and corporate sector). Mr. Yucer expressed his appreciation for the delegation's visit to Pakistan and his full support to the Conference. UNICEF focal point also expressed her satisfaction for the new evolution of the Conference which was extended to cover all MDGs besides Education and women empowerment. The Aide Memoire was adopted by the Meeting.

V. Meeting with the Ministry of Women Development (MoWD)

The Mission had a very fruitful meeting with Mr. Suhail Safdar, Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Women Development to present to him the Aide Memoire of the Conference and the purpose of the UNDESA Mission in Pakistan. Mr. Safdar expressed his appreciation for the UN visit as well as the strong support of the Government of Pakistan to the International Conference. He confirmed the Opening of the Conference by the Prime Minister and gave instructions to Mr. Idris Baig to act as focal point of MoWD for the Conference.

He also expressed his support to the UN-NGO-IRENE and its activities towards a reinforced NGO sector in Pakistan focusing on an enhanced NGO contribution to the ECOSOC work and to the MDGs in Pakistan, Asia and worldwide.. He provided the Mission at her request with a list of leading Pakistani NGOs in the field of women empowerment.

VI. Informal Consultations and Visits to NGO Headquarters and Projects

The UN delegation undertook field visits to several NGO Headquarters and relevant projects designed and implemented by NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC and by NGOs seeking status as well. All these NGO activities represented an illustration of the major achievements in ensuring human security for the population in most need. Their aim is first of all to improve human well being as well as local eco-systems through innovative partnership initiatives with the private sector, governments and donors. She made recommendations that would help strengthen the capacities of the Pakistani NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC and promote tri or multi-sector partnership initiatives (NGOs, governments, private sector, the United Nations and donors) to enhance their contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and MDGs. (For more details, see **Annex VI**)

VII. General Conclusions

1. During the mission, the UN delegation had several meetings and informal consultations with government High Officials, United Nations Agencies' representatives and non-government agencies (see list of persons met in **Annex V**). After intensive interactions with each of them, the UN delegation was strongly convinced that all of them are supporting the NGO sector development in Pakistan and that NGOs are extremely eager to participate in the UN-related activities, especially the areas which are related to the eight MDGs. In fact, most of them have already engaged themselves in these areas.
2. The NGOs that DESA representative met have expressed their interest to participate in UN-NGO-IRENE, and have shown their willingness to apply for the Consultative Status with ECOSOC especially as only 13 Pakistani NGOs have the consultative status with ECOSOC (see list in **Annex IX**). They firmly believe that the role of the NGOs in the national economic development should be further strengthened, and their participation in global forums addressing major issues and shared concerns should be encouraged.
3. They highly appreciated the visit of the UN delegation which offered them a great opportunity to share useful information concerning their future work and constructive suggestions to enhance their contribution to the ECOSOC work in implementing the MDGs. They also hope that this type of capacity-building mission could be repeated in the future.
4. The timely International Conference will be the first ever International Gender Conference in Pakistan resulting from a remarkable joint effort of all stakeholders: hosted by the Ministry of Women Development, Government of Pakistan; coordinated by APWA, in collaboration with several UN Agencies, including UNICEF, UNDP, UNDESA, UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA and

UNIFEM, as well as other donors and partners. It will strengthen result-oriented partnership initiatives between the United Nations and NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC and enhance their concrete and efficient contribution to the ECOSOC HLS of July 2005 particularly with the help of the newly established UN-NGO-IRENE/Pakistan. The Conference will be also instrumental in the review of the five-year implementation of MDGs of 2005 especially as the Conference is critical for reflection, advocacy and positive practical steps for the future.

5. The established UN-NGO-IRENE in Pakistan with APWA as National coordinator in collaboration with a great number of leading Pakistani NGOs covering all MDGs and the crucial issues of Pakistan and developing countries in a globalized world will significantly help bridge grassroots concerns and needs, and policy issues; and bring lessons learned from operational activities and success stories to the international scene and the United Nations analytical and normative work.
6. The participants and persons met expressed their appreciation for the strong support of the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and its NGO Section to APWA as national coordinator of UN-NGO-IRENE/Pakistan. This will help APWA to efficiently coordinate the Conference and effectively increase concrete civil society contributions to the ECOSOC work in implementing the MDGs, the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the UN Conferences (See **Annex 7**).

VIII. Thanks

The UN delegation would like to express its sincere thanks to:

The Government of Pakistan for its commitment for a strengthened civil society and empowered women in Pakistan, the Ministry of Women Development, Government of Pakistan for hosting the International Conference and the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations for its help in facilitating the UNDESA Mission in Pakistan;

The Resident Representative of UNDP and Resident Coordinator of UN System in Pakistan, Mr. Onder Yucer and his team for the sponsorship of and the strong support to the Conference as well as all the UN agencies, donors and partners involved in the Conference;

All Pakistan Women Association for its excellent organization of the Capacity building Meeting to launch the UN-NGO-IRENE in Pakistan, for its leadership towards a strengthened civil society in Pakistan and an enhanced role of women in political, economic and social life in Pakistan and for its commitment to reinforce its continuous and effective contribution to the ECOSOC work;

All NGOs met and especially the Family Planning Association of Pakistan and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry for receiving the UN delegation in their headquarters and expressing their goodwill to participate in the International Conference as well as in the UN-NGO-IRENE in Pakistan and worldwide;

All APWA members and staff as well as the coordinators of the International Conference for their teamwork, dynamism and professionalism to ensure full success to the Conference;

All those who helped the UNDESA Mission in Pakistan in achieving more than expected results.

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