

## MINUTES OF

### The UN Extended Gender Theme Group 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting

17 February 2011

11:00 – 13:00, UN Conference Hall

#### Participants:

Co-chairs: Ms. Dafina Gercheva, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative/UNFPA Representative  
Mr. Garik Hayrapetyan, UNFPA Armenia Assistant Representative  
Mr. Carel Hofstra, Deputy Head of OSCE Office in Yerevan  
Mr. Filaret Berikyan, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs

**Ms. Agnese Stefanini**, UNV, for WHO  
**Ms. Aida Ghazaryan**, UNFPA NPO/UNFPA Gender Focal Point  
**Ms. Anahit Sarukhanyan**, NDI  
**Mr. Armen Budoyan**, MCA  
**Ms. Armine Badalyan**, ACNIS  
**Ms. Armine Hovhannisyan**, UNDP Programme Associate/DG Portfolio, Gender Focal Point  
**Ms. Armine Tanashyan**, RA MLSI/Head of Division of Women Issues of the Family, Women and Children Department  
**Mr. Arsen Nikoyan**, MCA  
**Mr. Artur Ayyazov**, UNICEF  
**Ms. Astghik Injeyan**, ICHD  
**Ms. Doris Vogl**, OSCE Democratization Programme Officer  
**Ms. Gayane Yenokyan**, GZT GFP  
**Ms. Gohar Shahnazaryan**, Women's Resource Center Co-Founder  
**Mr. Hayk Iskoyan**, MCA  
**Ms. Ilona Ter-Minasyan**, IOM  
**Ms. Jemma Hasratyan**, AAWUE President  
**Ms. Jina Sargizova**, UNFPA "Combating Gender-Based Violence in the South Caucasus" Project Coordinator  
**Ms. Lilit Asatryan**, Armenian Young Women's Association President  
**Ms. Lilit Hovhannisyan**, ACDI/VOCA/Environmental Social and Gender Specialist  
**Ms. Lilit Petrosyan**, NSS  
**Ms. Marie L. Yovanovitch**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the USA to the Republic of Armenia  
**Ms. Naira Ghazaryan**, USAID Social Reform Office  
**Ms. Singrid Anderson**, US Embassy  
**Ms. Susanna Grigoryan**, UNHCR NPO, UNHCR Gender Focal Point  
**Ms. Tamara Hovnatanyan**, "ProMedia-Gender" newspaper Chief Editor  
**Ms. Tsovinar Harutyunyan**, OSCE Senior Democratization Assistant  
**Mr. Vladimir Osipov**, Independent Gender Expert  
**Ms. Yelena Vardanyan**, Public Council/Chair of Committee on Gender and Demography Issues

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#### 1. Opening by the GTG Chair (UNFPA)

Ms. Dafina Gercheva, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative/UNFPA Representative welcomed the participants and went through the agenda of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the UN Extended Gender Theme Group. She encouraged the participants to actively contribute to the meeting by providing inputs and comments to the issues raised during the meeting.

Following Ms. Gercheva, Mr. Filaret Berikyan took the floor and introduced in brief the current state of the government activities in the field of promoting gender equality and combating gender-based violence (GBV). He focused on two legal initiatives (Draft Law on State guarantees on provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women and Draft Law on Domestic Violence) and mentioned the progress made up to date in the field of promotion of the mentioned legal initiatives and development of the National Action Plan on Combating GBV.

## 2. Presentation by Ms. Jemma Hasratyan: Fulfillment of international obligations: Observations of the CEDAW Committee to the RoA combined 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Report: Progress made

Ms. Jemma Hasratyan, AAWUE highlighted the main issues at stake:

- ✓ *Despite Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and Concluding Observations to 3rd and 4th periodic reports, Armenia still lacks national machinery for the advancement of women.*
- ✓ *There is a general lack of awareness on CEDAW and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee Observations concerning CEDAW implementation and low implementation of measures addressing the gaps in the marzes.*
- ✓ *There is also a misunderstanding what constitutes national machinery for the advancement of women (guidance provided in Committee's general recommendation No. 6 and in the Beijing Platform for Action).*
- ✓ *Suggested that the RoA Ministry of Foreign Affairs also reports on the progress made.*
- ✓ *The problem with quotas (that should ensure more active participation of women in political processes (elections) and should contribute to the higher levels of actual representation of women in the National Assembly, beyond the proposed 20%) has to be urgently addressed.*
- ✓ *The process of the government review of the Draft Law on Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Draft Law on Domestic Violence have to be facilitated, especially in view of the recent cases of violence and in line with the RoA President's Decree on the measures to be implemented in Armenia during 2009-2011 within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy.*
- ✓ *High unemployment of women and the persistence of the wage gap.*
- ✓ *Suggested that the Gender Theme Group addresses the appropriate levels with an official letter regarding the above-mentioned outstanding issues.*

Ms. Tamara Hovnatanyan, "ProMedia-Gender", added that:

- ✓ *The problem with quotas concerning women's representation on the electoral lists of the parties and their actual representation in the National Assembly has to be addressed urgently since the National Assembly is currently reviewing the Electoral Code of the RA.*
- ✓ *One of the recent failures resulted from women's low representation in the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Affairs was related to the adoption of amendments to the Law on Temporary Disability Allowances that discriminate pregnant women who receive high salaries. (The new law envisions only 100 days of maternity leave (instead of previous 140 days), cutting out the non-working days that were presumed in the 140 days. Also, the amount of compensation received by pregnant women would change. A ceiling of compensation would be set at 150,000 drams (about \$420) a month, even if the mother's salary exceeded that amount.*
- ✓ *In favor of Ms. Hasratyan's suggestion the GTG should become more active in lobbying for promotion of quotas and women's higher representation in the National Assembly. This could probably be done by means of addressing the National Assembly in an official open letter presented on behalf of the GTG.*

Ms. Yelena Vardanyan also supported the issues of concern on quotas raised by Ms. Hasratyan and joined the suggestions of Ms. Hovnatanyan. She further stated that changes need to be made in the law on political parties with regard to quotas.

Mr. Osipov made a few additional comments on Ms. Hasratyan's speech by reminding that the concluding observations of the CEDAW committee request the state parties to provide, within two years, written information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations on establishment of a national machinery for the advancement of women and comprehensive measures to address all forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence. Time has expired and the GTG would like to request the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide updates. He also mentioned the CEDAW General Recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures and the state's obligation to ensure that there is no direct or indirect discrimination against women and that women are protected against discrimination, and to improve the de facto position of women through concrete and effective policies and programmes. Also according to the Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%. 8 years have passed since then and the women's representation in the Armenian Parliament is still well below that level. Moreover, the draft Convention of the Council of Europe on violence against women has been transmitted to the Committee of Ministers and is planned to be signed by the Committee of Ministers in May 2011.

The above-mentioned comments received support on behalf of the majority of the participants. Mr. Hayrapetyan also commented that as per the GTG work plan the MFA will report in the 2nd quarter with a mid-term progress report on the implementation of CEDAW recommendations/national machinery.

Concluding this part of the meeting, Ms. Armenuhi Tanashyan, MLSA, took the floor and reflected on the activities implemented by the RA MLSA in the field of raising awareness on gender equality throughout the year and GBV issues, as well as promotion of legal initiatives (Draft Law on Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Draft Law on Domestic Violence). The issue of quotas will become more visible upon the adoption of the Law on Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. As for the establishment of the national machinery the MLSA has advanced the issue and has identified obstacles of legislative nature.

### **3. Presentation by Lilit Hovhannisyan, ACDI/VOCA ES Expert: Gender Approaches of MCA – Armenia “Water to Market” activity**

During the presentation the MCA experts shared their concerns regarding the level of women’s involvement in MCA “Water to Market” activity. According to them, widely spread gender stereotypes in some rural communities prevented women from actively engaging into this activity but results varies across the regions. They also noted that MCA observes women’s economic empowerment as a gateway towards greater participation of women at local decision-making processes. It was noted that out of the total number of women-participants of “Water to Market” activity, 4-5 % of women took decisions on their own concerning participation in the activity. In the rest of the cases women were encouraged to participate by male family members. ACDI/VOCA also called for cooperation as they wish to ensure that the successor Foreign Financing Projects Management Center follows continuous application of gender approaches and if necessary MCA – Armenia and ACDI/VOCA are ready to provide the developed approaches and used tools, as well as to organize trainings for the professionals. Following the presentation of the project, the issue of high micro-credit interest rates for Armenian women was raised by the GTG members.

### **4. Presentation by Lilit Asatryan, Armenian Young Women’s Association**

Ms. Lilit Asatryan took the floor and shared information concerning two projects of Armenian Young Women’s Association funded by UN Women to carry out a set of activities in support of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution N 1325.

She presented two groups of activities envisaged under this project: capacity-building seminar: Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Armenia and Women’s Participation in Peace process in the Caucasus.

The first group focuses on promotion of women’s socio-economic and political participation and their empowerment on local levels. Under this activity it is envisaged to conduct a 4-day national consultation/workshop in Armenia with participation of women from marzes. Under the second group of activities that focus on peace-building processes in the Transcaucasia region it is envisaged that women’s groups in all four countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey) will elaborate and implement local Action Plans aimed at promotion of peace-building processes in the region. Under this activity it is also planned to conduct a regional 6-day regional consultation/workshop for the group of 40 women representing women’s groups from all 4 countries with participation of UN Women representatives. She concluded her speech with suggesting involvement of other members of GTG group (there are a few unfunded components in the project that need additional support) and joint implementation of the project.

Mr. Garik Hayrapetyan and Ms. Jemma Hasratyan raised questions concerning the deadlines. Ms. Asatryan noted that initially it was envisaged to complete project activities in March 2011 prior to the regional seminar that would close up the project. However, the timeframe can be adjusted to the outcome of today’s meeting and new partnerships, if any. Mr. Hayrapetyan suggested that support can be provided to coordinate and facilitate the organization of the meeting of organizations interested in partnering on any of the two projects funded by the UN Women.

Ms. Tamara Hovnatanyan addressed a question to Ms. Dafina Gercheva concerning representation of UN Women in the region and in Armenia in particular as well as possible prospects of cooperation of this new UN entity with Armenian NGOs and Government. Ms. Hasratyan added that the presence of such an entity in Armenia would greatly contribute to the further promotion of peace building processes and women’s movement in the country. No continuity of the successful activities under UNIFEM in Armenia was also raised. Ms. Hasratyan also asked Ms. Gercheva to hold a special meeting with the leaders of women organizations in Armenia.

Answering the questions, Ms. Gercheva mentioned that she could present the above stated issues to the RoA MFA and UN Women. At same time she stressed that presence of a new UN entity has to be very well grounded and justified. To the comment of Ms. Hasratyan who stated that the women’s movement in Armenia has been greatly weakened due to the poor financing of women’s NGOs, Ms. Gercheva noted that strong dependence of civil society sector on external donor funding is not welcomed since it does not provide for sustainable development of civil society sector and this factor is always considered by donor organizations prior to extending their donor support. Mr. Hayrapetyan also added that the UN Women has recently started to fully operate as an entity and the decision on presence of UN Women in any country is made also in view of the budgetary availability.

## **5. Ms. Jina Sargizova, UNFPA CGBV Project coordinator: “The Butterfly” documentary screening**

Prior to screening “The Butterfly”, a documentary movie on the topic of domestic violence in Armenia that was shot in a memory of the recent victim of domestic violence Zaruhi Petrosyan, and was prepared within the framework of UNFPA CGBV project, Ms. Sargizova presented recently published report on activities implemented in 2010 within the scope of “16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence” and “White Ribbon” campaigns in Armenia by different organizations working in the field of women’s rights and combating GBV.

After the movie screening, Ms. Gercheva suggested holding a minute of silence in memory of Zaruhi Petrosyan

After that Ms. Yelena Vardanyan noted that screening of the movie on the national TV as well as dissemination and further demonstration of the movie during awareness-raising and educational activities implemented by the GTG member organizations should greatly contribute to acknowledgement of GBV problem in Armenia. Particularly, the importance of screening the movie for policy makers was stressed. Ms. Sargizova also announced that copies of the movie are available upon request. .

## **6. Mr. Garik Hayrapetyan: Concluding remarks**

Mr. Hayrapetyan summed up the results of the day’s discussions.

### ***It was agreed that:***

- Joint effort of GTG member donor organizations and deeper cooperation with the National Assembly are essential to ensure effective introduction and further promotion of quotas measures;
- A possibility of drafting an official letter addressed to the National Assembly regarding ongoing review of the Electoral Code and quotas has to be further discussed within the GTG;
- GTG members will further share ideas regarding possible activities and events that could be jointly implemented with Armenian Young Women’s Association project funded by UN Women.

Prepared by UNFPA, GTG co-chair  
02.21.2011