

Agreed conclusions on the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

1. The following agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission are transmitted to the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with its resolution 2008/29 of 24 July 2008, for adoption and as an input into the annual ministerial review of 2009.

The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS*

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the declaration adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
2. The Commission reaffirms the outcomes of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, the 2000 Millennium Summit, the 2002 World Summit on Children and the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, recalls the 2005 World Summit, and recognizes that their full and effective implementation is essential to achieve the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS.
3. The Commission reiterates that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other conventions and treaties, provide a legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for the promotion of equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.
4. The Commission reiterates the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, which, inter alia, expressed concern that gender inequality increases women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and the overall expansion and feminization of the pandemic, and also acknowledges that women and girls bear the disproportionate burden of caring for and supporting those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
5. The Commission duly notes the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (Convention No. 156) of the International Labour Organization and its corresponding Recommendation (No. 165), which provide a framework for reconciling work and family responsibilities.
6. The Commission recognizes that gender inequalities still exist and are reflected in imbalances of power between women

* For the discussion, see chap. II, paras. 55-61.

and men in all spheres of society. The Commission further recognizes that everyone benefits from gender equality and that the negative impacts of gender inequality are borne by society as a whole, and emphasizes, therefore, that men and boys, through taking responsibility themselves and working jointly in partnership with women and girls, are essential to achieving the goals of gender equality, development and peace. The Commission recognizes the capacity of men and boys in bringing about changes in attitudes, relationships and access to resources and decision-making which are critical for the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women.

7. The Commission recognizes that the full integration of women into the formal economy, in particular, into economic decision-making, means changing the current gender-based division of labour into new economic structures where women and men enjoy equal treatment, pay and power, including sharing of paid and unpaid work.

8. The Commission notes that the costs of unequal sharing of responsibilities include weaker labour market attachment for women (forgone jobs, shorter working hours, confinement to informal work, and lower wages), weaker access to social security benefits, and less time for education/training, leisure and self-care, and political activities.

9. The Commission recognizes that caregiving work at the household, family and community levels includes the support and care of children, older persons, the sick, persons with disabilities, and caring associated with family kinship and community responsibilities, which is affected by factors such as size of household and number and age of children, with significant differences between developed and developing countries in the availability of infrastructure and services supporting caregiving. The Commission also recognizes that gender inequality and discrimination contribute to the continuing imbalance in the division of labour between women and men and perpetuate stereotypical perceptions of men and women. The Commission further recognizes that changes in demographics in ageing and youthful societies, and in the context of HIV/AIDS, have increased the need for, and scope of, care.

10. The Commission further welcomes ongoing partnerships between stakeholders at all levels and the commitments on gender equality and HIV/AIDS announced at the 2008 high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals.

11. The Commission expresses its deep concern over the negative impact of the global economic and financial crisis, which could hamper progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

12. The Commission acknowledges the important role of national machineries for the advancement of women, national human rights institutions where they exist, and civil society,

especially women's organizations, in advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and recognizes their contributions to the work of the Commission.

13. The Commission reaffirms the commitment to the equal participation of women and men in public and political life as a key element in women's and men's equal participation in caregiving.

14. The Commission acknowledges General Assembly resolution 62/277 of 15 September 2008, in particular its gender-specific provisions, and in this context encourages the ongoing work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

15. The Commission urges Governments, including local authorities, to take the following actions, as appropriate, with the relevant entities of the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates, as well as civil society, the private sector, employer organizations, trade unions, media and other relevant actors:

(a) Intensify efforts to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development, and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, and the outcomes of their follow-up processes;

(b) Consider ratifying or acceding to, as a particular matter of priority, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their respective Optional Protocols, limit the extent of any reservations that they lodge and regularly review such reservations with a view to withdrawing them so as to ensure that no reservation is incompatible with the object and purpose of the relevant treaty; and implement them fully by, inter alia, putting in place effective national legislation, policies and action plans;

(c) Consider, as a matter of priority, the ratification and implementation of the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (Convention No. 156) of the International Labour Organization, and the implementation of its corresponding Recommendation (No. 165), which provide a framework for reconciling work and family responsibilities;

(d) Review, and where appropriate, revise, amend or abolish all laws, regulations, policies, practices and customs that discriminate against women or have a discriminatory impact on women, and ensure that the provisions of multiple legal systems, where they exist, comply with international human rights obligations, commitments and principles, including the principle of non-discrimination;

(e) Ensure that women and children have full and equal access to effective legal protection against violations, including

through domestic mechanisms of justice which are monitored and revised to ensure that they function without discrimination, as set out under all conventions related to human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(f) Mainstream gender perspectives into all legislation, policies and programmes and promote incorporation of gender-responsive budgeting processes across all areas and at all levels, and enhance international cooperation to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS;

(g) Establish concrete goals and benchmarks and adopt positive actions and temporary special measures, as appropriate, to enhance women's equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels to further the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men;

(h) Strengthen coordination, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in the United Nations system, including its capacity to support Member States in the implementation of national policies for the achievement of, and to address under-resourcing in, gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(i) Promote understanding between women and men in order to strengthen women's access to resources and decision-making in policies and programmes to support caregiving, including in the context of HIV/AIDS. Ensure that men and boys, whose role is critical in achieving gender equality, are actively involved in policies and programmes that aim to improve the equal sharing of responsibilities with women and girls, so as to foster changes in attitudes and behaviour patterns in order to promote and protect the human rights of women and the girl child;

(j) Take appropriate measures to achieve equal sharing of work and parental responsibilities between women and men, including measures to reconcile care and professional life and emphasize men's equal responsibilities with respect to household work;

(k) Acknowledge the need to address violence against women holistically, including through the recognition of linkages between violence against women and other issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty eradication, food security, peace and security, humanitarian assistance, health and crime prevention;

(l) Make efforts to devise comprehensive social and cultural strategies, including policies and programmes, that acknowledge the societal and individual value of adequate care for all and provide both women and men with full and equal human development opportunities;

(m) Take measures to protect and address the needs of women and girls in situations of humanitarian emergencies, in

particular those carrying a disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities;

(n) Design, strengthen and implement national development plans and strategies, including poverty eradication strategies, with the full and effective participation of women and girls, including in decision-making, that reduce the feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS, to enhance the capacity of women and girls and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts of globalization;

(o) Design, implement and promote family friendly policies and services, including affordable, accessible and quality care services for children and other dependants, parental and other leave schemes and campaigns to sensitize public opinion and other relevant actors on equal sharing of employment and family responsibilities between women and men;

(p) Promote greater understanding and recognition that caregiving is a critical societal function and should be equally shared between women and men within the family and households, and strengthen dialogue and coordination between all relevant stakeholders;

(q) Measure, in quantitative and qualitative terms, unremunerated work that is outside national accounts, in order to better reflect its value in such accounts, and recognize and take necessary measures to incorporate the value and cost of unpaid work within and between households and society at large in policies, strategies, plans and budgets across all relevant sectors;

(r) Measure, in quantitative terms, unremunerated work that is outside national accounts, to accurately assess and reflect its value in satellite or other official accounts that are separate from but consistent with core national accounts;

(s) Adopt, implement and monitor gender-sensitive policies and programmes to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights, social protection, and decent working conditions of both paid and unpaid caregivers;

(t) Adopt, implement, evaluate and, where necessary, review gender-sensitive legislation and policies that promote balance between paid work and family responsibilities, reduce occupational and sectoral segregation, advance equal remuneration, and ensure that workers with flexible arrangements are not discriminated against;

(u) Ensure that women and men have access to maternity, paternity, parental and/or other forms of leave, and consider providing incentives to men to avail themselves of such leave for caregiving purposes, and take measures to protect women and men against dismissal, and guarantee their right to resume the same or equivalent post after utilizing such leave;

(v) Ensure that social protection measures such as health insurance, child and family allowances and information on these

benefits are widely available and accessible, and that these measures do not reinforce gender biases, that workers are not discriminated against when they avail themselves of the benefits available, and that these benefits are regularly reviewed to target all workers, including, as appropriate, in the informal sector;

(w) Develop and improve sustainable and adequate social protection and/or insurance schemes, including pension and savings schemes, that meet basic minimum needs, and recognize leave periods for caregiving in the calculation of respective benefits;

(x) Strengthen efforts to protect the rights and ensure decent work conditions for all domestic workers, including women migrant domestic workers, in, inter alia, their working hours and wages, and to improve their access to health-care services and other social and economic benefits;

(y) Take measures to address the special needs of girls, including migrant girls, employed as domestic workers and caregivers, as well as those that have to perform excessive domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities, and to provide access to education, vocational training, health services, food, shelter and recreation, while ensuring the prevention and elimination of child labour and economic exploitation of girls;

(z) Develop gender-sensitive measures, including national action plans, where appropriate, to eliminate the worst forms of child labour;

(aa) Strengthen education, health and social services and effectively utilize resources to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and ensure women's and girls' rights to education at all levels and the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as quality, affordable and universally accessible primary health care and services, as well as sex education based on full and accurate information in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of girls and boys, and with appropriate direction and guidance;

(bb) Develop and/or expand, and adequately resource, the provision of equitable, quality, accessible and affordable care and support services for all people needing care, including through community-based support systems, while ensuring that such services meet the needs of both caregivers and care recipients, bearing in mind the increased labour mobility of women and men, and, where applicable, kinship and extended family responsibilities, and the importance of adequate nutrition;

(cc) Assess and respond to the needs for integrated human resources at all levels of the health system, in order to achieve Millennium Development Goal 6 and the targets of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, and take actions, as appropriate, to effectively govern the recruitment, training, deployment and

retention of skilled health personnel in prevention, treatment, care and support for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS;

(dd) Ensure that adequate investments are made to strengthen efforts through, inter alia, the allocation of resources to provide quality, accessible and affordable public services, including education, health and other social services which incorporate gender equality as a basic principle;

(ee) Increase the availability, access to, and use of critical public infrastructure, such as transportation, the provision of a safe, reliable and clean water supply, sanitation, energy, telecommunications and affordable housing programmes, in particular in poverty-stricken and rural areas, to reduce the burden of care on households;

(ff) Significantly scale up efforts towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010, and the goal of halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, and ensure that those efforts promote gender equality and take into account the caregiving responsibilities of both women and men;

(gg) Reaffirm that the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is an essential element of the global response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and ensure that in all national policies and programmes designed to provide comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support, particular attention and support is given to women and girls at risk of, infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, including young and adolescent mothers, and recognize that, inter alia, preventing and reducing stigma and discrimination, eradicating poverty and mitigating the impact of underdevelopment are critical elements to achieve the internationally agreed goals in this regard;

(hh) Reaffirm that access to medication in the context of pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS, is one of the fundamental elements to achieve progressively the full realization of the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health;

(ii) Recognize the increased feminization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and ensure that existing HIV/AIDS policies, strategies, resources and programmes at all levels are reviewed and adapted to ensure that they contribute to empowering women and reducing their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS;

(jj) Integrate gender perspectives into national HIV/AIDS policies and programmes, as well as into national monitoring and evaluation systems, taking into account the caregiving responsibilities of both women and men, including in community, family and home-based care, and ensure the full and active participation of caregivers, in particular women, including those living with HIV/AIDS, in decision-making processes;

(kk) Develop multisectoral policies and programmes and identify, strengthen and take all necessary measures to address the needs of women and girls, including older women and widows, infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, and those providing unpaid care, especially women and girls heading households, for, inter alia, social and legal protection, increased access to financial and economic resources including microcredit and sustainable economic opportunities, education including opportunities to continue education, as well as access to health services, including affordable antiretroviral treatment, and nutritional support;

(ll) Emphasize the importance of HIV prevention as a long-term strategy to reduce the number of new HIV infections and, consequently, to reduce the burden of caregiving responsibilities on both women and men through universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support programmes, including sexual and reproductive health and services, and to increase access to voluntary and confidential counselling and HIV testing, investments in HIV/AIDS and sex education and awareness, based on full and accurate information in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, with appropriate direction and guidance, research and development of, and access to, new, safe, quality and affordable HIV/AIDS prevention products, diagnostics, medicines and treatment commodities, including female-controlled methods, and new preventive technologies and microbicides and AIDS vaccines;

(mm) Strengthen, expand, improve and promote the accessibility of quality comprehensive public health care and services, including community-based health services specifically related to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, including for people with disabilities, as well as hospital and hospice-based care, and psychosocial support services, and increase the number of professional health-care providers, especially in rural areas, to alleviate the current burden on women and girls who provide unpaid care services in the context of HIV/AIDS;

(nn) Design and implement programmes, including awareness-raising programmes, to promote the active involvement of men and boys in eliminating gender stereotypes as well as gender inequality and gender-based violence and abuse, and educate men, including young men, to understand their role and responsibility in the spread of HIV/AIDS and in matters related to their sexuality, reproduction, child-rearing and the promotion of equality between women and men and girls and boys, and enable women and men to adopt safe and responsible, non-coercive sexual and reproductive behaviour, including increased access to an appropriate and comprehensive package of prevention programmes and support, to prevent the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, including through increased access to education, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, for young people, and encourage the full participation of men and boys in caregiving,

prevention, treatment, support and impact evaluation programmes;

(oo) Develop and implement appropriate policies and programmes to address stereotypical attitudes and behaviours to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men across the life cycle;

(pp) Develop gender-sensitive education and training programmes, including for educators at all levels, aimed at eliminating discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls and men and boys, to address gender stereotypes in the context of equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS;

(qq) Take measures to increase the participation of men in caregiving both within households and in care professions, such as information and awareness campaigns, education and training, school curriculum, peer programmes and government policies to promote men's participation and responsibilities as fathers and caregivers, and to encourage men and boys to become agents of change in promoting the human rights of women and in challenging gender stereotypes, in particular as they relate to men's roles in parenting and infant development;

(rr) Address gender stereotypes in the context of equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men by encouraging media to promote gender equality and the non-stereotypical portrayal of women and girls and men and boys, and by carrying out and publishing research on views, especially of men and boys, on gender equality and perceptions of gender roles, as well as by assessing the impact of efforts undertaken in achieving gender equality;

(ss) Develop strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes in all spheres of life, including in public and political life, and foster the positive portrayal of women and girls as leaders and decision-makers at all levels and in all areas, to achieve the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men;

(tt) Encourage and support men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence, especially gender-based violence, including by developing strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes and by developing programmes that promote respectful relationships, and rehabilitate perpetrators as part of a strategy of zero tolerance for violence against women and girls;

(uu) Conduct research and collect sex- and age-disaggregated data and develop gender-sensitive indicators, as appropriate, to inform policymaking, conduct assessments in a coordinated manner, and measure progress in the sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including in the context of HIV/AIDS, and identify the obstacles and stereotypes men may face in assuming increased caregiving responsibilities;

(vv) Strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and, when necessary, measurement systems, to effectively

collect comprehensive information on all categories of activities, including through time-use surveys, to inform policy development that facilitates the sharing of unpaid work between women and men;

(ww) Enhance the collection and dissemination of statistics on the relative participation of women and men in leadership roles in public office and in strategic economic, social and political decision-making positions, in order to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in these spheres;

(xx) Adopt appropriate measures to overcome negative impacts of the economic and financial crisis, including on women and girls, and integrate a gender perspective into these measures so that they equally benefit women and men, while seeking to maintain whenever possible adequate levels of funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(yy) Take all appropriate measures to integrate women, on an equal basis with men, in decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies and programmes for sustainable development, including to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, including their displacement from income-generating activities, which greatly adds to unremunerated work, such as caregiving, and negatively impacts on their health, well-being and quality of life, particularly those whose livelihoods and daily subsistence depend directly on sustainable ecosystems;

(zz) Allocate adequate financial resources at the international level for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Plan of Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, in developing countries, especially through the strengthening of their national capacities;

(aaa) Strengthen international cooperation in order to assist in the development of human resources for health, through technical assistance and training, as well as to increase universal access to health services, including in remote and rural areas, taking into account the challenges facing developing countries in the retention of skilled health personnel;

(bbb) Urge developed countries that have not yet done so, in accordance with their commitments, to make concrete efforts towards meeting the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national product to least developed countries, and encourage developing countries to build on the progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help meet development goals and targets and, inter alia, to assist them in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.