



FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Governing Body Symposium on
Decent Work for Women –
The ILO's contribution to *Women 2000:
Gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century*
(New York, 5-9 June 2000)**

Information note

In March 1999 the Second UN Preparatory Committee concerning follow-up on the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) adopted a resolution encouraging all bodies in the United Nations system to be actively involved in preparatory activities and to participate at the highest level in the UN special session entitled *Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century* (New York, 5-9 June 2000), including through the presentation of best practices, the obstacles encountered and a vision for the future to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action and address new and emerging trends.

The ILO has been involved in a range of preparatory activities at the regional level during 1999, in addition to its substantial contribution to the UN's 1999 *World Survey on the role of women in development: Globalization, gender and work*, the main document for *Women 2000*. At its 276th Session (November 1999), the Governing Body decided to hold a symposium on *Women 2000* during its 277th Session in March 2000. The symposium will be an important event highlighting the links between the ILO's global programme on decent work for men and women and the strategic objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

It has been agreed, after consultations with the Government, Employers' and Workers' groups of the Governing Body, that the one-day symposium will be held on Friday, 24 March. The title of the symposium is "Decent Work for Women: The ILO's contribution to *Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century* (New York, 5-9 June 2000)". The symposium demonstrates the Governing Body's strong support for preparations for *Women 2000*.

Purpose

The outcome of the symposium is intended to enhance the ILO's effectiveness in the implementation of its global programme on decent work for men and women and gender mainstreaming, as well as accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Organization of the symposium

The symposium will be opened by the Director-General. The guest speakers will be Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Ms. Bina Agarwal, Professor of Economics, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi, India.

Morning sitting

The importance of promoting decent work for women and men

The morning sitting is expected to focus on the importance of promoting decent work for women as a matter of human rights, social justice and sustainable economic and social development. The following schedule is foreseen:

- Presentation of an overview by the Office:
 - rights-based and development-based approaches;
 - progress and gaps in decent work for men and women.
- Presentations by representatives of the Governing Body groups.
- Discussion.

Afternoon sitting

How to promote decent work for women

The afternoon sitting is expected to focus on how to promote decent work for women through the ILO's means of action, good practices and recommendations for future action.

- Presentation by the Office:
 - promoting women workers' rights;
 - poverty, employment and social protection: a gender perspective;
 - management development and entrepreneurship for women;
 - gender in crisis response and reconstruction.
- Tripartite panel on social dialogue to promote decent work for women.
- Discussion.

Discussion of issues

In order to facilitate preparations for the symposium, the following issues are proposed to allow more focused presentations and discussion.

Issues for the morning sitting

- How does the promotion of decent work help combat gender inequalities in and outside the labour market?
- Can the promotion of decent work lead to a win-win situation for both men and women?
- What are the benefits of decent work for enterprises?
- What are the challenges faced by, and the opportunities for, the promotion of decent work for women in the context of globalization?

Issues for the afternoon sitting

- How to promote the employability of women (in particular through skills development and training and innovative measures to reconcile work and family responsibilities).
- How to extend and improve the social protection of women workers in new labour markets.
- How to enhance women's representation in social dialogue and decision-making bodies.
- What possible roles and strategies are available for social actors to promote decent work for women at the institutional and enterprise level, as well as the national and international levels?

In addition to Governing Body members, representatives of other non-Governing Body member States and non-governmental international organizations having consultative status with the ILO are welcome to attend the symposium. In order to ensure lively discussions and interaction, statements from the floor will be limited to three to five minutes, depending on the number of speakers. Speakers may wish to make suggestions and recommendations for future action. Those who would like to speak at the symposium are requested to complete a registration form.

Background materials

The following documentation will be provided:

- brief report on the ILO's preparations and contribution to *Women 2000*;
- ILO Action Plan on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming and policy statement by the Director-General on gender equality and mainstreaming in the ILO;
- relevant ILO regional reports and studies, including the report of the Asian regional symposium concerning follow-up on the Fourth World Conference on Women.