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Committee on Women
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Implementation of activities on women's issues under the ESCWA programme plan and of recommendations made by the Committee at its tenth session

Summary

The present document reviews the activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) as part of its programme plan on women's advancement and in implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Women at its tenth session.

The Committee on Women held its tenth session in Beirut on 16 and 17 November 2021. It discussed recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving gender equality, and adopted at the end of its session a set of recommendations, some addressed to member States and others to the ESCWA secretariat. Recommendations to the secretariat included issuing publications and studies, conducting research, organizing conferences and expert meetings, holding training courses, and strengthening partnerships with relevant international and regional organizations.

The Committee on Women, at its eleventh session, is invited to take note of what has been implemented and to discuss the way forward.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-4	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. Progress in supporting States to fulfil their international obligations	5-11	3
II. Progress in gender equality and combating violence against women.....	12-20	4
III. Progress in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda	21-24	5
IV. Progress in gender justice.....	25	6
V. Progress in women’s economic empowerment	26-31	6
VI. Progress in supporting national women’s machineries and integrating the concept of equality at the national level.....	32-35	7
VII. Implementation of recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its tenth session	36	8

Introduction

1. At the end of its tenth session in Beirut on 16 and 17 November 2021, the Committee on Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) issued a set of recommendations, some addressed to member States and others to the ESCWA secretariat.
2. The present document sets forth the actions taken by the secretariat from December 2021 to October 2023 to implement the recommendations addressed to it, as well as the activities it carried out to implement the ESCWA programme plan on women's advancement, which included publishing studies, conducting research, organizing conferences and expert meetings, holding training courses and issuing informational materials.
3. The ESCWA programme plan on women's advancement aims to reduce gender disparity and promote women's empowerment in line with international conventions and conferences. The programme addresses the following themes: (a) combating violence against women; (b) women, peace and security; (c) gender justice; (d) enhancing women's economic participation; and (e) integrating gender equality concepts into national institutions.
4. In implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Women at its tenth session, ESCWA has expanded its partnerships with United Nations agencies, regional organizations, civil society organizations and academia to ensure that efforts are consolidated at the regional level, and has carried out many of its activities within the framework of these partnerships. Examples of such partnerships include working closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); as well as with regional actors such as the League of Arab States; and with academia, such as the Lebanese American University and the American University of Beirut.

I. Progress in supporting States to fulfil their international obligations

5. In preparation for the national reviews of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 30 years, which begin in November 2023 and continue until the end of 2025, ESCWA developed an action plan covering the period until 2025. Within the framework of implementing the plan, ESCWA held a series of regional events aimed at supporting Arab Governments in preparing their national and regional reports on progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in fulfilling their commitments to advancing the status of women, as set forth in the [Arab Declaration on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years](#).
 - (a) [Interactive regional workshop](#) on policies and policy tools that support regional priorities for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beirut, 1–2 March 2023). The workshop focused on five priority areas identified in the regional review of the implementation of Beijing+25 in 2020, including the elimination of violence against women; women's political participation; equality and non-discrimination in the law and justice systems; right to work, decent work environment and leadership opportunities; and support for national machineries;
 - (b) [Workshop](#) on the "Index Simulator for Policymakers in the Arab Region" (ISPAR) tool and how to use it (Beirut, 17–18 May 2023). This tool, developed by ESCWA, allows countries to increase their rankings in more than 11 international indicators, as well as to compare their rankings with those of other countries, identify strengths and weaknesses in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment, and develop a practical plan to improve the performance of these indicators.
6. In the same context, and in order to support national statistical offices in Arab countries, ESCWA issued a technical paper entitled "[SDG vulnerability frameworks to leave no one behind](#)". The paper aimed at

identifying statistical indicators that could be obtained through periodic national surveys, so as to contribute to the production of gender-disaggregated statistics in line with the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

7. As part of its work to promote the exchange of information on the work of national statistical offices, ESCWA released four issues of the e-newsletter [Ensaf](#), which highlights the latest national publications in Arab countries on gender equality issues.

8. Also in the statistical field, ESCWA teamed up with the national statistical offices of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan to issue the [National Gender Lens Pocketbook 2022](#). The pocketbook captures a gender-disaggregated statistical picture at the level of Governorates in five statistical areas: population, education, inequality, health and employment.

9. During 2021–2022, ESCWA worked on updating the "[United Nations Arab Region Data and Policy Support Hub](#)". The hub offers a gender statistics dashboard that provides an overview of gender statistics and highlights the differences and inequalities between both genders. It also supports the measurement of gender equality, is a reliable source for formulating and monitoring policies that benefit both men and women, and facilitates appropriate decision-making towards advancing gender equality.

10. ESCWA, in cooperation with 19 United Nations agencies, held [49 webinars](#) on SDG indicators from 7 April 2021 till 31 July 2022. The webinars focused on under-produced and under-disseminated indicators in the Arab region with the aim of increasing data availability and enhancing the flow of national data to national policymakers and regional users, including indicator custodian agencies. The webinars covered 115 indicators, of which 54 were gender-related.

11. In the framework of cooperation with Arab countries, and on the sidelines of the work of the [Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-seventh session in March 2023](#), ESCWA held a series of side events on the achievements of Arab countries in empowering women and promoting their status. It held a side event with Lebanon on women's economic participation, and another with the State of Palestine. ESCWA also held a side event with the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion and Family of Morocco on the care economy amid technological changes. Finally, in partnership with Jordan and the State of Palestine, ESCWA held a side event on the economic cost of violence against women in both countries.

II. Progress in gender equality and combating violence against women

12. ESCWA issued a study entitled "[An essential pathway: service provider coordination and referral systems in the Arab region to address violence against women and girls](#)". The study explored domestic violence referral systems in the Arab region, compared good practices and developed recommendations to enable Arab countries to create or enhance their referral systems with the aim of providing comprehensive, survivor-centred and empowering services to combat violence against women and girls.

13. ESCWA, in partnership with UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN-Women, produced a study entitled "[The cost of child marriage over the life cycle of girls and women: evidence from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia](#)". The study focused on four Arab countries, using a variety of household and labour market surveys. The cost of early marriage for girls was estimated using the life-cycle skills model, which addressed the process of skills formation at all stages of human life.

14. ESCWA will soon release a study entitled "Estimating the economic cost of child marriage in the Arab region", in partnership with UNFPA and UNICEF. The study builds on the previously mentioned study (para. 13), expanding its findings to include 13 Arab countries where data are available. The study aims at determining the economic cost of child marriage in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) loss in Arab countries and concludes that reducing instances of child marriage in the Arab region would boost the economy by 3 per cent each year, equivalent to more than three trillion dollars during 2021–2050. The study also

discusses the multiple ways in which child marriage affects women and girls individually, as well as its family and nationwide impact. It addresses the actions that countries should take to prevent child marriage and mitigate the associated demographic, health and economic impacts.

15. ESCWA issued a policy brief entitled "[Key policy directions in the Arab region for ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)", in which it presented a number of key policy messages and recommendations for building a better future after the COVID-19 pandemic. It also adopted a comprehensive and integrated approach to social policies and human development, and strengthened governance and institutional frameworks at all levels based on a life-cycle approach.

16. ESCWA also issued a policy brief entitled "[Mainstreaming gender in climate action in the Arab region](#)", which addressed the varying effects of climate change on gender in the Arab region and explored opportunities for women as agents of change. The brief also discussed the way forward in terms of public policy, namely mainstreaming gender in national adaptation plans on climate change and mainstreaming climate issues in gender equality frameworks.

17. In the same context, ESCWA issued, as part of its periodic conference on equality, a factsheet entitled "[Her land. Her rights. Equal land rights: a pathway to combating desertification in the Arab region](#)". The factsheet addressed the impact of desertification, land degradation and drought on women in the Arab region, and drew attention to the positive impact of women's empowerment, including equal opportunities for women and men to access land and associated assets, improve livelihoods in rural communities and combat desertification.

18. In line with global activities on women, ESCWA celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March 2022 with a virtual event under the theme "[Women on the front lines in the Arab region](#)". The event focused on the capacities of women who had been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response and contributed to mitigating its impact. On the same occasion in 2023, a social media video on "[innovation and technology for gender equality](#)" was launched to highlight women's initiatives in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in the Arab region.

19. On the occasion of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence in 2021 and in collaboration with the Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University in Beirut (LAU), ESCWA launched a social media campaign and a regional youth arts competition under the theme "[virtual spaces, real consequences: ending online violence against women and girls](#)". Online harassment was chosen as the theme because it was one of the most frequently reported types of violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also constitutes a human rights violation that forces women and girls who experience it to limit their online presence, increasing the digital divide and reducing digital literacy. The winners' works were showcased during a virtual event on 10 December 2021 that included a webinar on online violence against women and girls in the Arab region.

20. In the same framework, ESCWA collaborated with the Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, to launch the annual regional arts competition for youths in October 2022 entitled "[Ending violence against women and climate change: what does environmental equality look like?](#)". The competition aimed at raising awareness of the contents and objectives of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence" campaign, and at encouraging young men and women under the age of 30 to submit their artwork on combating violence against women.

III. Progress in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda

21. ESCWA issued a report on [implementing the women, peace and security agenda in the Arab region](#). The report reviewed Arab countries' responsiveness to the women, peace and security agenda and its four main axes, whether through national action plans developed within the framework of the agenda or through the

various programmes provided by countries in the fields of prevention, participation, protection and reconstruction.

22. ESCWA continued to monitor the economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls and issued its periodic report entitled "[Social and economic situation of Palestinian women and girls July 2020–June 2022](#)", which is the tenth report in a series that ESCWA has been preparing since 2003 to document progress in gender equality, empower Palestinian women and contribute to understanding progress in the legal, political, development and humanitarian sectors in the State of Palestine under the Israeli occupation. The report showed that Palestinian women and girls continued to face deep-rooted discrimination and human rights violations. It also found that, despite the number of actions implemented by the Government of the State of Palestine during the reporting period, including the launch of the Second National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security, violence against women and girls remained widespread, and there were still several barriers to women's full political and economic participation. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and ESCWA launched the report at a side event during the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2023.

23. The Ministry of Women's Affairs of the State of Palestine, with the support of ESCWA, organized the international conference on [the status of Palestinian women in the aftermath of the May 2021 offensive](#) on 26 November 2021, aimed at shedding light on the impact of the conflict on women and girls in the State of Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip. The conference focused on the experiences of women and girls in the State of Palestine in general, and in Gaza in particular, and discussed ways to hold perpetrators accountable. It also discussed the measures needed to support Palestinian people and their institutions in achieving sustainable development in the occupied Palestinian territory from a gender-sensitive perspective, highlighting it as a condition for achieving justice, security and lasting peace.

24. ESCWA issued a technical paper entitled "[The status of Syrian refugee women in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon and their priorities for voluntary repatriation](#)". The paper addressed the needs of Syrian refugee women in the three countries, highlighting the priorities they deemed necessary for their voluntary return to the Syrian Arab Republic.

IV. Progress in gender justice

25. A total of 17 national reports were prepared by ESCWA, UNDP, UN-Women and UNFPA. A participatory validation process of the reports was conducted at the national level, and the preparation process included a review of national legislation in terms of their harmonization with international standards in Arab countries based on 74 indicators inspired by the SDGs, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and other international conventions, including conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The reports addressed areas related to comprehensive legal frameworks and public life, the elimination of violence against women, employment and economic benefits, family and personal status, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights. These reports complement the work being implemented since 2018 as part of the ESCWA initiative "[Gender Justice and the Law](#)". The completed country reports on gender justice and the law were launched during a [webinar](#) held virtually on 13 February 2023.

V. Progress in women's economic empowerment

26. ESCWA is leading regional and national efforts to address women's exclusion from labour markets and ensure their full participation by strengthening the care economy on one hand and identifying the reasons for women's weak economic participation and lack of involvement in entrepreneurship on the other.

27. In this context, ESCWA issued a set of guidelines related to care policies in the report "[Women economic empowerment in the Arab region: Guidelines to advance care policies](#)", with the aim of assisting policymakers in Arab countries and non-governmental partners in strengthening their efforts in this regard. The guidelines set out different approaches and patterns of care policies and the questions that need to be

answered before care policies are developed and implemented, with examples of successful approaches in other countries.

28. ESCWA also released a study entitled "[Leaving women and girls further behind or a potential opportunity for strengthening gender equality? Lessons from the COVID-19 crisis in the Arab region](#)". The study provided an overview of gender equality priorities and lessons learned from previous economic crises in this area, as well as an overview of gender inequality in the Arab region, and key fiscal and social policy measures adopted by Arab countries to respond to the pandemic. The study also set forth recommendations to improve the inclusion of women and girls in responses to future crises, and to promote the achievement of SDG 5.

29. ESCWA released a study entitled "[Women's entrepreneurship in the Arab region: Assessing the impacts of land and property ownership](#)", in which data on Egypt and Jordan showed that women's access to land and property ownership enhanced their participation in the labour market and entrepreneurship. However, despite legislative amendments, the percentage of land and property ownership remained very low, due to social expectations that pushed women to give up their rights in favour of male relatives.

30. In connection with the above-mentioned study, ESCWA convened an expert group meeting on [property and land ownership and women's entrepreneurship](#), held virtually on 13 December 2021, with the aim of gathering expert opinions on a draft study prepared on this topic, validating its findings, and working together to draw recommendations for member States.

31. ESCWA, in collaboration with the Association of Banks in Jordan, also developed a working paper entitled "[Investigating the gender gap: loan provision and property ownership in Jordan](#)". The paper found that patterns and forms of lending for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) showed vast disparities based on gender and property ownership among loan applicants. The collected data constituted a starting point for conducting a thorough investigation into the direct and indirect practices that could contribute to closing gender gaps.

VI. Progress in supporting national women's machineries and integrating the concept of equality at the national level

32. In support of national efforts to mainstream gender equality and integrate persons with disabilities into national institutions, and in line with its commitment to integrate these concepts into internal programmes, procedures and policies, ESCWA issued a technical paper entitled "[White paper on inclusive research: Gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion](#)". The technical paper provided researchers with a range of tools and mechanisms for integrating gender equality and disability issues into research papers.

33. In order to enhance the exchange of information and knowledge among national women's machineries, ESCWA developed an [online platform dedicated to national women's machineries in the Arab region](#). The platform is one-stop shop for relevant information and allows for the comparison of policies and strategies in one country with those of neighbouring countries. The platform is also linked to ISPAR, allowing access to multiple global evidence on gender equality and the comparison of rankings within the region and beyond. It also offers an interactive tool to analyse the potential impact of specific policies on national rankings in selected international indices, including the Gender Gap Index.

34. As part of the ESCWA Regional Initiative to Promote Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region (REGEND), ESCWA paid particular attention to the participation of youths and rural women through a range of knowledge products, including the [Business Models Toolkit](#), which promotes the principles of social inclusion and gender equality to address challenges to natural resources in the Arab region, such as energy poverty and water scarcity.

35. Finally, the [ESCWA e-learning portal](#) includes a range of selected and specialized courses and provides access to training on gender statistics.

VII. Implementation of recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its tenth session

36. The ESCWA secretariat worked on implementing a number of activities referred to in chapters II to VI of this document, in accordance with the recommendations addressed to it by the Committee on Women at its tenth session. The table shows each of these recommendations and the materials published or the meetings held for their implementation. Paragraph numbers refer to the present document and are provided as a reference for more information on each activity.

Recommendations	Related activities
<p>(a) Continue to prepare studies and technical papers that contribute to the work of national women's machineries in the areas of competence of the ESCWA secretariat, namely combating violence against women, estimating the economic costs of various forms of violence, implementing the women, peace and security agenda, promoting gender justice, and protecting older women and women with disabilities;</p>	<p>Study entitled "An essential pathway: service provider coordination and referral systems in the Arab region to address violence against women and girls" (para. 12).</p> <p>Study entitled "The cost of child marriage over the life cycle of girls and women: evidence from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia" (para. 13).</p> <p>A study on estimating the economic cost of child marriage in the Arab region (para. 14).</p> <p>Policy brief on "Mainstreaming gender in climate action in the Arab region" (para. 16).</p> <p>Factsheet entitled "Her land. Her rights. Equal land rights: a pathway to combating desertification in the Arab region" (para. 17).</p> <p>Report on "Implementing the women, peace and security agenda in the Arab region" (para. 21).</p> <p>Technical paper on "The status of Syrian refugee women in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon and their priorities for voluntary repatriation" (para. 24).</p>
<p>(b) Support national observatories in their efforts to develop indicators for the advancement of women and gender equality based on international conventions and declarations and country reports, and establish the necessary mechanisms to monitor and follow up on gender equality indicators;</p>	<p>Technical paper on "SDG vulnerability frameworks to leave no one behind" (para. 6).</p> <p>An online platform dedicated to national women's machineries in the Arab region, and the "Index Simulator for Policymakers in the Arab Region" (para. 33).</p> <p>"ESCWA United Nations Arab Region Data and Policy Support Hub", including the gender statistics dashboard (para. 9).</p> <p>"National Gender Lens Pocketbook 2022" (para. 8).</p> <p>Four issues of the Ensaf e-newsletter (para. 7)</p> <p>ESCWA e-learning portal, which includes a range of courses on gender statistics (para. 35).</p>
<p>(c) Provide technical support to countries according to their needs and in various areas, including the following:</p>	<p>The document E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/4 on technical cooperation activities submitted to the Committee can be reviewed under agenda item 5.</p>

Recommendations	Related activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing national strategies and policies related to gender equality, economic empowerment, women's political participation, and their protection from violence; • Preparing, evaluating and following up on the implementation of national plans for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the women, peace and security agenda; • Estimating the economic cost of different forms of violence against women and girls; • Providing support in using the tools developed by the ESCWA secretariat in the field of women's empowerment; • Providing support to countries affected by armed conflicts, crises or wars, and to countries in post-conflict situations, while taking into account their special needs; • Mainstreaming the concept of gender equality in public institutions. 	
<p>(d) Continue to organize regional or subregional workshops and meetings to learn about the achievements of countries and to promote the exchange of experiences and expertise between countries with common priorities;</p>	<p>Interactive regional workshop on policies and policy tools that support regional priorities for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beirut, 1–2 March 2023).</p> <p>Workshop on the "Index Simulator for Policymakers in the Arab Region" (ISPAR) tool and how to use it (Beirut, 17–18 May 2023).</p> <p>A total of 49 webinars in cooperation with 19 United Nations agencies on SDG indicators (from 7 April 2021 till 31 July 2022).</p> <p>A side event in partnership with a number of Arab countries to exchange achievements and promote the exchange of experiences during the work of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-seventh session.</p> <p>Launching a video on social media on the topic of innovation and technology for gender equality.</p> <p>The annual regional arts competition for youths under the theme "ending violence against women and climate change: what does environmental equality look like?"</p> <p>Social media campaign and regional arts competition under the theme "virtual spaces, real consequences: ending online violence against women and girls".</p> <p>The document E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/4 on technical cooperation activities submitted to the Committee at its eleventh session can be reviewed under agenda item 5.</p>

Recommendations	Related activities
<p>(e) Continue to provide support to Palestinian people in their struggle to access their rights as stipulated in international law, including CEDAW; continue to monitor the economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls under occupation, and continue to prepare the periodic report on the repercussions of the Israeli occupation for Palestinian women and girls;</p>	<p>International conference on "the status of Palestinian women in the aftermath of the May 2021 offensive" (para. 23).</p> <p>Periodic report entitled "Social and economic situation of Palestinian women and girls July 2020–June 2022" (para. 22).</p>
<p>(f) Continue to issue technical papers that contribute to developing knowledge and mechanisms, and develop training programmes for members of the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in the areas of its expertise, including a focus on SDG 5 and other related Goals;</p>	<p>Policy brief on "Key policy directions in the Arab region for ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (para. 15).</p> <p>Regional workshop under the theme "Women's economic empowerment and welfare economies and policies"</p> <p>Sixth regional workshop on voluntary national reviews.</p> <p>For more information on activities related to the development of knowledge and training programmes for Subcommittee members, see document E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/5 on supporting the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals under agenda item 6.</p>
<p>(g) Continue to implement the gender justice programme; provide a platform that allows countries to view the legislative achievements of other countries to facilitate learning and the transfer of experiences; and work with countries on annual periodic reports on legislative developments in the region, to be submitted to the ESCWA Committee on Women;</p>	<p>Launching of 2022 country reports on the initiative "Gender Justice and the Law" (para. 25).</p> <p>The document E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/4 on technical cooperation activities submitted to the Committee at its eleventh session can be reviewed under agenda item 5.</p>
<p>(h) Provide support to member States in areas such as preparing studies, developing analytical tools to identify differences in the needs of households headed by women and those headed by men, and formulating policy options to bridge the gap between them;</p>	<p>A study entitled "Women's entrepreneurship in the Arab region: assessing the impacts of land and property ownership" (para. 29).</p> <p>Study entitled "Women economic empowerment in the Arab region: Guidelines to advance care policies" (para. 27).</p> <p>The document E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/7(Part V) on advancing care policies in Arab countries submitted to the Committee can be reviewed under agenda item 8(e).</p> <p>Expert group meeting on property and land ownership and women's entrepreneurship (para. 30).</p> <p>Working paper entitled "Investigating the gender gap: loan provision and property ownership in Jordan" (para. 31).</p> <p>Training materials on the "Business Models Toolkit" (para. 34).</p>

Recommendations	Related activities
	Launch of the " White paper on inclusive research: Gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion " (para. 32).
(i) Continue to monitor and evaluate the response of member States to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on women and family stability;	A virtual event under the theme " Women on the front lines in the Arab region " (para. 18). Study entitled " Leaving women and girls further behind or a potential opportunity for strengthening gender equality? Lessons from the COVID-19 crisis in the Arab region " (para. 28).
(j) Continue to expand partnerships with international and regional organizations working in the field of gender equality to maximize benefits for member States.	Expanding partnerships with United Nations agencies, regional organizations, civil society organizations and academia to ensure that efforts are consolidated at the regional level, and implementing activities within the framework of these partnerships.
