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INTRODUCTION

The year 2000 marks the fifth anniversary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. The Conference, held in Beijing in September 1995, was the largest UN conference ever to be organised with 189 governments participating. A forum of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) bringing together 30,000 women from around the world was held in parallel with the intergovernmental conference. The World Conference in Beijing, like its predecessors in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi, was an event of major significance for women and throughout the world.

A Platform for Action (PFA) and a Declaration were adopted by consensus at the Conference. The Platform for Action calls upon Governments, the international community and civil society to take strategic action in 12 critical areas of concern. The Declaration addresses three principles: the empowerment of women; the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and the reaffirmation of women's rights as human rights; and the promotion of equality through mainstreaming.

The European Community was involved in the formulation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the preparatory process and at the Conference. The European Community has observer status at the UN, and therefore participated at the Conference and in its preparation as an observer. The Community's work helped the Member States to agree on a common position for the European Union, which served as a crucial tool during the conference and adoption of the PFA.

The success of the Platform for Action agreed at Beijing requires a strong political commitment from all concerned. It needs implementation at all levels by governments, international organisations, social partners and NGOs. Primary responsibility for the advancement of women, however, lies with the governments. The role of regional and international organisations is increasingly relevant in a globalised society but their main purpose must be to support efforts at national level.

Essential for achieving gender equality is success in establishing a new partnership between women and men, entailing equal sharing of power and responsibility in the public and private domains. Such a partnership requires the acknowledgement of women's fundamental rights, the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life.

on 22-27 November 1999 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), ESCWA (Economic Commission for Western Asia) in Beirut (Lebanon) on 12-15 December 1998 and 29 November - 1 December 1999, ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean)

The Commission expressed its intention of *“mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality, by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effect on the respective situations of men and women (gender perspective).”*

Equality between women and men, it stated, is one of the basic principles of democracy and respect for humankind. To make it a reality, it is time to build *“ a new partnership between men and women to ensure that both participate fully on an equal footing in all areas and that the benefits of progress are evenly distributed between them.”*

To bring about such a transformation, the Commission stated that not only changes in legislation, attitudes and collective practices were required but also “nothing short of a cultural transformation of individual behaviour” and “determined political action based on the broadest political mobilisation.”

Progress reviewing gender mainstreaming in European Union activities and policies

The first progress review of the European Commission’s gender mainstreaming efforts, was published in a report in 1998³. The Commission stated in it that “considerable” progress had been made within the Commission’s own services although many barriers and shortcomings remained.

The main results were achieved in the European Employment Strategy, and the European Structural Funds. The gender dimension was also being successfully promoted in development co-operation and in the Commission’s education, training and youth as well as its personnel and information policies.

From the very beginning of the launch of the European employment process at the Luxembourg Summit in 1997, gender equality has been integrated into the employment policy agenda. (*see also area of concern F. Women and the Economy*). Reinforcing equal opportunities policy for women and men has been formulated as one of the four Pillars in the 1998 Employment Guidelines. This pillar included guidelines on tackling gender gaps, reconciling work and family life and facilitating reintegration into the labour market.

The need to mainstream equal opportunities across all pillars of the Guidelines was accepted by the Council as a new guideline in the 1999 Employment Guidelines. In the Helsinki European Council conclusions (10-11 December 1999), equal opportunities for women and men was singled out as an area for particular attention in the labour market. The conclusions of the Lisbon Council (23-24 March 2000) strengthened the Luxembourg process significantly and added the ambitious target of increasing women’s employment rate from an average of 51 % today to more than 60 % by 2010 as well as enforcing all aspects of equal opportunities, including reducing occupational segregation, facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, in particular by establishing a new benchmark for improved childcare provision. Since 1997, this whole process has brought about a new dynamic to gender equality policy in the Member States.

³ Progress report from the Commission on the follow-up of the communication: “Incorporating equal

- **co-operation structures** between services to ensure an integrated policy approach and to ensure that equality between women and men appears regularly on the agendas at policy management level;
- **assignment of responsibilities** and appointment of officials to oversee the mainstreaming process at sufficiently high levels so that they can influence policy;
- development of **gender expertise** to carry out gender impact assessments and gender proofing. Gender mainstreaming officials are key to this process and to fulfil their tasks they need the support of management including the necessary time, human and budgetary resources as well as specific training for this work;
- **monitoring and evaluation** to ensure progress, evaluate results and introduce the necessary adjustments to the strategy whenever necessary.

The Amsterdam Treaty

The new Treaty, which came into force on 1 May 1999, represents a new ae5t

The new title on employment (Title VIII, articles 125 to 130) also provides for the promotion of equal opportunities in this field.

Other legislative developments

Since 1995, a number of Directives, recommendations and resolutions have been adopted which have a direct impact on gender equality.

The Directives adopted during this period were:

- A Directive on parental leave which implements a framework agreement negotiated and concluded by the social partners at European level. It provides that both working fathers and mothers shall have the individual right to take at least three months' parental leave on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child until a given age of up to eight years⁷.
- A Directive providing for equal treatment for women and men in occupational social security schemes, amending a Directive adopted in 1986, in order to take into account the case-law of the Court of Justice⁸.
- A Directive, also implementing a framework agreement between social partners, guaranteeing equal treatment for part-time and temporary workers, the majority of whom are women⁹.
- A Directive on the burden of proof in cases involving claims of discrimination based on sex, making it easier for claimants to have their right to equal treatment applied effectively in courts. The burden of proof must shift back to the respondent when evidence of such discrimination is brought¹⁰.

Other legislative developments included:

- a 1996 Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process¹¹
- a 1996 Council Resolution on the mainstreaming of gender equality in the European Structural Funds¹²

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- a 1995 Council Resolution on improving the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media¹³
- a 1998 Council regulation on integrating gender issues in development co-operation.¹⁴
- a 1998 Commission Recommendation concerning the ratification of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention No. 177 on Homeworking of the 20 June 1996. Member States are invited to ratify the ILO convention which aims at improving the situation of homeworkers¹⁵.
- A 1999 Council resolution on women and Science¹⁶

Monitoring of the Beijing Platform at EU level

Soon after the adoption at Beijing of the Platform for action, the European Council of Madrid, decided in December 1995 to follow up on its implementation on an annual basis. The first evaluation report covering 1996 was global in scope. The 1997 evaluation focussed on the integration of gender mainstreaming into national policies, best practices in positive action and measures undertaken in the struggle against violence against women.

For the 1998 review, the EU Presidency in turn prepared a paper on the development of indicators and benchmarks at EU level for monitoring the implementation of the different areas of the Beijing PFA. This document was agreed by Council and served as starting point for a new promising process. At the 1999 review, Council agreed, on a set of indicators for the area of women in power and decision making. For 2000, in addition to the EU internal preparations for the five years review at the UN, the Council will discuss, and hopefully agree upon, a set of indicators and benchmarks for measuring the reconciliation for women and men of work and family responsibilities.

The European Commission has monitored, since 1996, the EU-wide progress in the field of equal opportunities through the publication of best practice reports on family responsibilities.

The European Commission will continue to monitor and report on progress in the field of equal opportunities through the publication of best practice reports on family responsibilities.

women accompanied by actions that seek to integrate a gender perspective in all policies and measures.

The Council decision formulated six specific aims: achieving gender mainstreaming; mobilising all actors to achieve equality; promoting equality in a changing economy, reconciling work and family life; promoting a gender balance in decision-making and creating optimum conditions for the exercise of equality rights.

The interim report on the programme's implementation²⁰, covering the first two years, hailed it as a success with regard to the creation of a common agenda for gender equality in Europe."

The European Parliament, in its resolution on the interim report²¹, said the Programme constituted the European Union's major instrument for the implementation of the obligations laid down in the Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing conference.

The Commissioner in charge of Equal Opportunities (Mrs. Diamantopoulou) has announced that she will be shortly proposing a new action programme (2001-2005) to promote gender equality which builds on the achievements of the current one and which will draw heavily on the mainstreaming strategy developed to date. The Council of Ministers welcomed this intention stating that the existing programme had a positive impact at all levels and especially at regional and local levels.

The Role of NGOs in Community level follow-up to the Platform for Action

Liasing with NGOs is an important feature of EU gender-equality policy. In addition, in a number of key policy areas, co-financing is provided by the European Commission for action projects and information activities led by NGOs to promote gender equality.

At Community level, the largest grouping of women's organisations, bringing together some 2700 organisations across the European Union is the European Women's Lobby (EWL). Its main task is to lobby the European Institutions to improve the status of women. It submits position papers on Community policy and is formally consulted in certain instances. WIDE (Women in Development Europe) is a European network of development NGOs which share an active interest and commitment to promoting the integration of a gender perspective into EU and Member State development co-operation and external relations.

The EWL, WIDE and other NGOs play an important role in planning and shaping the follow-up activities to the Beijing Conference. The EWL has drawn up an NGO Platform for Action on the basis of the concept of a "gender contract". The Commission channels its support for the follow-up to the Platform for action through WIDE in Latin America, UNIFEM in Western Asia and through APDC in Asia.

In the field of external relations, support is provided to NGOs active in promoting and protecting the human rights of women around the world. As part of its development co-operation policy, the Commission channels financial support for follow up to the Platform for Action through WIDE in Latin America and through UNIFEM in Western

²⁰ COM (98) 770 final

²¹ European Parliament Resolution A4-0194/99, 04.05.1999

Asia. Support is also provided to other NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, South and Central America, Cuba and Asia.

Development co-operation

As preparations were under way for the Beijing conference, the Commission was concurrently examining the introduction of a new approach to equal opportunities in its development co-operation. By September 1995, it outlined this new strategy in a communication on integrating gender issues in development co-operation.²²

In the Communication, the Commission reiterated the dual approach to achieving gender equality, which combines specific action for the empowerment of women with gender mainstreaming.

In a Council Resolution in December 1995 on integrating gender issues in development co-operation²³, the key principles and strategies for gender-sensitive development co-operation were set out.

When formulating development co-operation, the Council of Ministers recommended that the EC and Member States should be “guided” by the following principles:

- Gender analysis should be included in the conception, design and implementation of all development policies and interventions as well as in monitoring and evaluation;
- Women and men should participate in and benefit from the development process on an equal basis;
- Reducing gender disparities is a priority for society as a whole;
- Analysis of differences and disparities between women and men must be a key criteria for assessing the goals and results of development policies and interventions;
- Changes in attitudes, structures and mechanisms at political, legal, community and household level should be encouraged and supported to reduce gender inequalities, particularly through:
 - political power sharing and full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels
 - strengthening economic empowerment and equal access to and control over economic resources
 - fostering equal access to and control over social development opportunities

This resolution was the beginning of the adoption of a number of key policy documents focusing on gender issues.

By December 1998, agreement was reached in the Council to set aside a specific budget to promote gender issues through technical assistance, training, research and projects in development co-operation²⁴.

Gender Country Profiles have been prepared and gender impact assessment is used on a regular basis including financing proposals.

²² COM (95) 423

²³ Council Resolution of 20 December 1995 on integrating gender issues in development co-operation

²⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No. 2836/98 of 22 December 1998 on integrating gender issues in development co-operation - OJ L 354, 30.12.1998

The Standard Project Cycle Management for development projects financed by the Commission has been modified in order to reflect women's and men's needs, priorities and potentials.

Mainstreaming of gender issues is part of the activities carried out within the framework of the Lomé Convention between the European Community, the Member States and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. In the mandate for the negotiations underway for a new partnership agreement with these countries, gender equality has now become one of the stated objectives of the talks alongside poverty reduction, environment conservation, world-wide market integration and private-sector development.

women and men equally as individuals, and supports the reconciliation of work and family life.

In 1999, a further Commission Communication on social protection systems takes on board the gender dimension of this issue²⁶. The modernisation of the social protection systems aims at supporting participation in the labour market through appropriate incentives for work and activation programmes, and thus help people to get a better income through work instead of staying on benefits.

The Amsterdam Treaty, under Article 137, empowers the Community to act to combat social exclusion.

Measures have also been taken to develop a gender mainstreaming approach in the European Community's Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (1998-2002).

A Commission Communication entitled "Women and science: mobilising women to enrich European research"³⁰ was published in 1999. It aims at increasing the number of women involved in research under the programme and sets out the main principles and proposals for promoting women and gender issues in research and technology. The Commission's aim is to achieve at least a 40% representation of women in the scholarships, advisory groups and assessment/monitoring panels under the Fifth Framework Programme.

The Commission is in the process of modifying the guidelines for support to education sectors in partner countries so that the gender situation in each partner country and each programme area can be taken into account. Girls' participation in the education system is not only dependant on the education itself, but also family economies, local society's attitude, transport and sanitation facilities and protection against violence.

Through contributions from the Community's budget, a great number of projects on all continents are financed by the Comm0002 Tc0.06029volnd t029vol10(t)-3.7(hy)8.anescu5(ts 10(0(t)-3e5(

screening for communicable diseases, in particular among pregnant women. Since 1996, the programme has supported several projects specific to women. In 1998, it initiated a network for AIDS prevention among women in Mediterranean countries.

In its development co-operation policies, the Commission is also paying particular attention to women's health needs and has become a major partner in resourcing the world's response to population, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS issues. Key areas in which it supports work in developing countries include: greater access to family-planning services; ensuring women have the possibility of safe pregnancy and childbirth; limiting the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS and caring for those who live with the virus; tackling gender-based violence and sexual abuse, especially of young women and children; building a partnership with civil society.

D. Violence against women

addresses women and men. It shows that violence against women has serious consequences for the victim, those around her (including children who witness scenes of violence) and society as a whole. A survey on domestic violence against women and children³⁸ shows the need for further awareness raising.

Combating violence against disabled people was the theme chosen for the conference on the European Day of Disabled People, on 3 December 1999. The theme's specific pertinence to women with disabilities was underlined.

Aid to combat violence against women is also made available through development co-operation and in the framework of the EC human rights programmes. Such programmes have been funded in Central America, in the Mediterranean region, in Central and Eastern Europe and in the CIS.

Sexual harassment at work

In a 1990 resolution³⁹

provision is designed among other things to protect women who entered a Member State for the purpose of family reunification and who have suffered domestic violence.

F. Women and the economy

To promote women's economic rights and independence means tackling questions of access to employment, career advancement, appropriate working conditions, markets and resources; the elimination of occupational and sectorial segregation, income differentials and employment discrimination; and the promotion of a reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

These key issues form the core of the different strategic objectives of the Platform for Action to improve women's economic capacity. They are also central to the European Union's employment strategy in the recognition that women's full participation in the labour market is necessary for Europe's economic and social development and its ability to grow and prosper.

Women constitute the largest reserve of non-employed and under-employed skilled labour in the European Union and thus constitute a major underused workforce. Women's unemployment rate is also higher than men's in almost all Member States ranging from 3% to 12% in some countries.

This is despite the fact that since 1994, female employment has grown four times faster than male employment in the European Union. By the year 2010, it is estimated that female employment rates will rise over 2.5 percentage points for the 15 Member States confirming women's attachment to employment.

Over the last 20 years, the European Union has become a largely service sector economy, with major declines registered in both manufacturing and agriculture. This has been accompanied by a move away from full-time to part-time jobs and from permanent to temporary ones. This transformation of the labour market offers one explanation for the rise of women's employment.

Despite the continued entry of women into the labour market, gender segregation remains and in some cases has been reinforced. The employment rate for women in the EU remains considerably lower than male employment (20 percentage points). Pay differences between women and men remain a stubborn feature of the labour market in all Member States even though long-standing equal pay legislation exists.

Recent and continuous transformation of the labour market which impact women is the emergence of the information society. Significant differences exist between women and men in terms of access to information society professions due to the under-representation of women in IT education and research. This is a critical issue in terms of economic empowerment of women in the developing knowledge economy. In its recent communication 'Strategies for Jobs in the Information society' the Commission has made a specific recommendation to the member States to maintaining gender balance in IT education.

Women also remain greatly under-represented amongst the self-employed. Only one quarter of the self-employed in the EU in 1997 were women. The Commission has taken a number of measures to encourage more women to set up and manage their own businesses, with some success. To balance the gender representation in business start-

up, the Commission continues to promote female entrepreneurship and the strengthening of support services targeted at women entrepreneurs.

The European Employment Strategy

With equal opportunities firmly written into the Amsterdam Treaty, it also became a core element of the European Employment Strategy launched in 1997. This is one of the best and clearest examples of the impact of gender mainstreaming on European Community policies.

Equality of opportunity was identified as one of the four areas of action to combat unemployment and improve Europe's employment. It stands alongside measures to promote entrepreneurship, employability and adaptability of the labour force and workplace. The Employment Strategy also adopts a gender main-streaming approach for the four areas of action.

Every year employment guidelines are adopted. These guidelines are then used by the Member States to draw up their National Action Plans (NAPs) explaining in which fields and how they will act so as to achieve the stated goals. The implementation of the employment guidelines is then examined and recommendations to individual Member States can be issued. On the basis of that examination a joint report is produced annually, by the Council and the Commission, on the employment situation in the EU.

This means that every year, progress in equal opportunities in the labour market comes under the scrutiny of the European institutions and the Member States at the highest level as it is examined by heads of government at their annual end of year summit meeting.

The European Structural Funds

The Structural Funds are the European Community's most important instrument for achieving economic and social cohesion. Together, the four funds provide financial assistance for development in EU social, regional, agricultural and fisheries fields and have become one of the main tools available to support the European employment strategy. The overall budget for the years 1994 – 1999 was 163 billion euro. This will be increased to 195 billion euro for the period 2000 – 2006.

In 1991, the NOW (New Opportunities for Women) initiative ⁴⁴was set up with a Community contribution of 156 million euro. Its aim was to promote equality for women on the labour market. By 1994, the NOW initiative was integrated into a larger Employment Initiative for the period 1995-1999. The new NOW initiative had an community budget of 496 million euro over 1994-99, increased to almost 1 billion euro with the contribution of the Member States.

By the end of the NOW employment initiative in 2000, 1750 projects across the European Union will have been funded. More than half address business creation by women, a third focus on the desegregation of the labour market and others are looking at sectors traditionally dominated by women such as health and care to develop professional profiles and qualification and so put more value on these jobs.

⁴⁴ JO C 372 of 29.12.1990

In the latest proposed reform of the Structural Funds to cover the years 2000 – 2006, gender equality has been strengthened through a twin track approach where the application of gender mainstreaming is accompanied by specific actions for women. The Member States gave their backing to the proposed reforms in June 1999⁴⁵.

The Commission is currently analysing European research on effective policies to facilitate work and family life and assess policy trends. Diverse issues such as quality in care services, improving the status of care work, family leave and employee and employer participation in family-friendly policies are under consideration. A report on this subject entitled, "Care in Europe"⁵¹, has been published.

In February 1998, the Commission published a report on how Member States have implemented the 1992 Council Recommendations on childcare. This report complements the publication in 1996 of a guide to good practice on work and childcare⁵².

G. Women in power and decision-making

Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that better reflects the composition of society and is needed to strengthen democracy. This is why the Platform for Action made this issue one of its critical areas of concern.

Women's equal participation in decision-making and leadership, and especially political decision-making, is a demand for justice or democracy. The Platform for Action goes further saying that this is a necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account.

In December 1996, the Member States adopted a Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process⁵³. The Commission has examined how this recommendation has been implemented and its findings are presented in a report adopted by the Commission on 7th March 2000⁵⁴.

In April 1999, in a Paris declaration⁵⁵, Ministers from the Member States again committed their governments to undertake measures to bring about a gender balance in decision-making.

A number of research studies have been undertaken as part of the Medium Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (1996-2000) to look more closely at women's position in sectors such as health, finance, the law and politics⁵⁶. Projects which aim to achieve a gender balance in decision-making have also been co-financed under the Programme.

With a view to encouraging women's participation, as voters and as candidates, in the European elections of June 1999, the European Commission supported organisations by providing campaign material. In addition, a brochure entitled "Europe for Women and Women for Europe" was published and widely disseminated.

⁵¹ Joint report of the Commission's "Gender and Employment" and "Gender and Law" Group of Experts, European Commission, Directorate of Employment and Social Affairs

⁵² "Work and Child-care; A guide of good practice." Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, ISBN 92-827-6318-8

⁵³ Council Recommendation 96/694/EC - OJ L 319, 10.12.1996

⁵⁴ Com(2000)120 final of 07.03.2000

⁵⁵ Declaration of Paris, 17 April 1999

⁵⁶ Available at Employment and Social Affairs DG, Unit Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Legislative and regulatory measures (including quotas and targets) have also proved

They include several references to equal opportunities, non-discrimination and the promotion of women in their article 2: ‘the promotion and protection of the human rights of those discriminated against’ - ‘the promotion of equality of opportunity and non-discriminatory practices’ - ‘promoting the equal participation of men and women in civil society, in economic life and in politics’ - ‘promote the participation of specific groups, particularly women, in the electoral processes’.

The regulations provide a legal basis for the European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy which brings together under one budget Chapter the 11 human rights budget lines (budget of € 100 million for activities world-wide in 1999). All these refer explicitly to women as a target group. Under this initiative, gender issues have received priority. A number of human rights projects have been co-financed in this context under sections on violence against women and women in decision-making, namely in Central and Eastern European countries, in Latin-America, Asia, the Mediterranean (MEDA-Democracy programme) and ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries.

J. Women and the media

The increasing number of women in the media does not seem to have influenced media policy where there is a continued failure to eliminate gender based stereotyping in media communications.

The strategic objectives call for change on two fronts. The first concerns the increased participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and the new technologies of communication. The second focuses on media content and calls for the promotion of a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

In October 1995, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution calling for changes in the portrayal of women and men in advertising and the media⁶⁰. The resolution also gave backing to the Commission’s work in this field and called for a strengthening of measures.

The European Commission has financed the Prix Niki. This prize, was awarded to programmes which provided insight into the situation of women today and which focused attention on women's efforts to play an equal and active part in society.

Following the Council Decision of 22.12.1995⁶¹, the Training Programme for Professionals in the European Audiovisual Programme Industry (Media II-Training) has to be implemented by taking equality between women and men into account.

In September 1998, the Council adopted a recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity in audio-visual and information services⁶². It is the first instrument concerning the content of on-line audiovisual and information services made available on the Internet.

The Commission also funds projects dealing with women’s information and equal opportunities and projects on how to improve the image of women in the media.

⁶⁰ Council Resolution OJ C 296, 10.11.1995

⁶¹ OJ L 321, 30.12.1995

⁶² Council Recommendation OJ L 270, 07.10.1998

K. Women and the Environment

The European Commission acknowledges that women have a vital role to play in sustainable development (both within the European Union and in the less developed countries) in particular in relation to consumption and production patterns and in light of their influence on and education of future generations.

The Platform for Action calls for a greater involvement of women in environmental decision-making at all levels. It also wants to see gender concerns and perspectives integrated in all policies and programmes for sustainable development and the introduction of strengthening of mechanisms to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women. For example, the Sustainability Impact assessment of multilateral trade negotiations carried out by the European Commission includes a gender dimension.

The European Commission actively promotes a wide variety of environmental initiatives such as urban development, air quality, water and nature protection. It also supports education and training in sustainable resource use in local and rural communities. In addition, the Treaty of Amsterdam, and in particular Article 6, will help reinforce the integration of environmental concerns into all Commission policies.

There is increased awareness of gender equality issues in the development of environmental policies. In addition, women benefit from specific projects although they are not the main focus.

L. The girl-child

In many countries, the girl-child is discriminated against from the earliest stages of life, through to her childhood and into her adulthood. The Platform for Action calls for active policies to promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential. This means ending discrimination, economic exploitation and violence against them.

There is no specific Community competence on child or family policy. However, a number of actions targeting children are supported under the European Community's education and youth programmes, both mentioned earlier.

As part of development co-operation and human rights programmes, actions targeted at the girl-child are supported especially with regard to education and health.

The EC actively combats violence against children in the DAPHNE initiative and trafficking and sexual exploitation of children under the STOP programme (see above).

The extent and seriousness of the problem of child sex tourism led the European Commission, on 27 November 1996, to adopt a communication on combating child sex tourism⁶³. The Communication set out the framework for Community action over the medium and long-term to tackle this problem and reflected both the Commission's concerns and increasing sensitivity towards the issue amongst the general public and the tourism industry.

⁶³ COM (96) 547 final, 27.11.1996

During 1999 a budget on 'Actions against child discrimination' was created, with the main objective to fight against child discrimination. This budget is used as a tool to mainstream the issue of children into EU development, rehabilitation and humanitarian aid policies and programmes, and to build local NGO capacity

The European Parliament and the Council gave their broad agreement on the principle lines of the communication.

CONCLUSION

Considerable progress has been made in the area of gender equality at the European Community level since the Beijing conference.

In this short period, it has been transformed from a policy area concentrating on specific actions in favour of women in the social and employment sectors to being a central