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**Advancement of women: implementation of the outcome
of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the
twenty-third special session of the General Assembly**

Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/132, provides a review of the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In particular, the report focuses on the extent to which gender perspectives are reflected in selected intergovernmental processes of the United Nations. The report concludes with recommendations for further measures to enhance the implementation of gender equality mandates.

* A/67/150.



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I. Introduction

1. In 1995, world leaders, assembled at the Fourth World Conference on Women, adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, committing their Governments to ensuring that a gender perspective was reflected in all policies and programmes. They also urged other stakeholders, including the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Five years later, in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Platform for Action was reaffirmed and new areas of focus and action were highlighted.

2. In its resolution 66/132, the Assembly reaffirmed gender mainstreaming as a globally accepted strategy for promoting the empowerment of women and achieving gender equality by transforming structures of inequality. In paragraph 14 of the resolution, the Assembly called upon all bodies of the United Nations to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration and within their mandates, as well as in all United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions and in their follow-up processes, including the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in 2012.

3. The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 66/132, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to report annually to it on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of its twenty-third special session, with an assessment of progress in gender mainstreaming, including information on key achievements, lessons learned and good practices, and recommendations on further measures to enhance implementation. The report assesses progress in gender mainstreaming and in particular provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the extent to which selected intergovernmental processes of the United Nations integrate a gender perspective.¹ In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, the report also includes an assessment of the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women to discussions within the United Nations system.

4. Of particular relevance to the focus and methodology of the present report is paragraph 19 of resolution 66/132, in which the General Assembly requested that reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies systematically address gender perspectives through qualitative gender analysis and the provision of sex- and age-disaggregated data and, where available, quantitative data, in particular through concrete conclusions and recommendations for further action on gender equality and the empowerment of women, in order to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development.

¹ The present report complements the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (see E/2012/61) and his annual reports to the Commission on the Status of Women on actions of Member States for gender mainstreaming at the national level, with a particular focus on the Commission's priority theme (see E/CN.6/2012/3 and E/CN.6/2012/4, which both reflected good practices by Member States).

5. The findings of the analysis suggest that intergovernmental processes, including high-level events, continue to provide many opportunities for strengthening global norms and policies on gender equality and the empowerment of women, but that these opportunities remain underutilized. Further efforts are needed to mainstream gender perspectives into all areas of the work of intergovernmental bodies. Greater uptake by intergovernmental bodies and processes of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women could help accelerate progress.

II. Integration of a gender perspective in selected intergovernmental bodies

6. The methodology and findings of a content analysis of the reports of the Secretary-General to, and the resolutions of, the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly and the 2011 sessions of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions are presented below.

A. Methodology

7. The documents reviewed were examined for evidence of the incorporation of a gender perspective, as determined by the presence of the words: gender, sex, woman, man, girl, boy, female, male, sexual, reproductive and maternal (including their plural forms). Documents with at least one occurrence of a keyword were considered to have included a gender perspective. False positive results, for instance “man-made disaster” or “sexual exploitation” with no mention of the sex of the victims/survivors or of the perpetrators, were discounted.

8. While the list of words selected excludes others that could be argued to reflect a gender perspective, the selected words are those most often found in reports and documents that address gender equality issues. To ensure that the assessment of the inclusion of a gender perspective went beyond the mere mention of these keywords, documents that passed this first filter were analysed in more depth to assess the extent to which a gender perspective was indeed reflected.

9. Resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General available in the Official Document System of the United Nations as at 15 June 2012 were examined. These documents were considered, even if they belonged to an agenda item or sub-item which focused specifically on gender equality issues. Where documents were submitted to more than one intergovernmental body, each occurrence was counted, since consideration by each body was considered an additional opportunity for mainstreaming gender equality issues into the intergovernmental process.

B. Quantitative findings

10. There were multiple opportunities for the incorporation of gender perspectives into the work of intergovernmental bodies. The General Assembly alone considered 249 reports of the Secretary-General and adopted 259 resolutions at its sixty-sixth session.² The Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2011

² Based on documents available in the Official Document System of the United Nations as at 15 June 2012.

reviewed 24 reports of the Secretary-General and adopted 40 resolutions. The functional commissions — excluding the Commission on the Status of Women, owing to its exclusive focus on gender equality issues — considered 53 reports of the Secretary-General and adopted 46 resolutions at their sessions in 2011.

11. A number of these resolutions have an exclusive focus on gender equality issues. Consideration by the General Assembly of agenda items or sub-items dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women led to the adoption of six resolutions during the sixty-sixth session. These included resolutions on violence against women migrant workers (66/128), improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (66/129), women and political participation (66/130), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (66/131), women in development (66/216) and the annual resolution calling for the present report (66/132). In addition, under other agenda items, the Assembly adopted two resolutions specifically on girls: the girl child (66/140) and International Day of the Girl Child (66/170).

12. The Economic and Social Council, likewise, adopts annual resolutions on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (resolution E/2011/6) and on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (resolution E/2011/18). In addition, at its 2011 substantive session, it also adopted a resolution on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women (resolution E/2011/5).

13. While it is crucial that intergovernmental bodies address gender equality issues through dedicated resolutions, it is equally important that they mainstream a gender perspective into resolutions dealing with other questions and thus integrate gender equality considerations as a cross-cutting issue in all areas under discussion. The findings of the present report reveal that while a number of the documents reviewed reflected a gender perspective, many remained as untapped potential to catalyse the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session by promoting gender mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system.

1. General Assembly

Resolutions

14. The analysis of resolutions of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly revealed a gender perspective in nearly one third of all resolutions (see table 1). The resolutions adopted on the reports of the Third Committee, which focuses on social, humanitarian and cultural issues, were the most likely to integrate a gender dimension, with nearly two thirds including references related to gender. Nearly half of the resolutions adopted without reference to a Main Committee reflected gender perspectives. A gender perspective was found in one of every three resolutions of the Second Committee, responsible for economic and financial matters, and in one of every four resolutions of the Fourth Committee, which examines special political and decolonization issues.

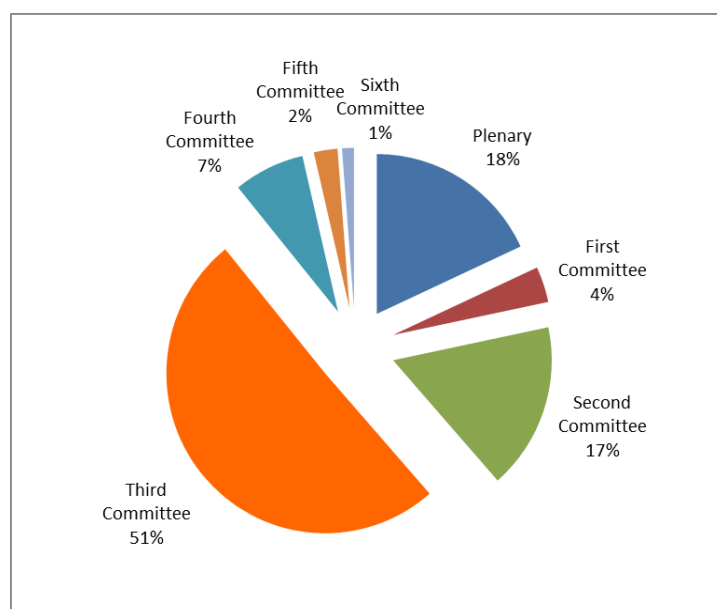
15. The First, Fifth and Sixth Committees, which respectively handle disarmament and international security, administrative and budgetary matters, and legal questions, seldom adopted resolutions that integrated references to gender equality issues.

Table 1
Number and percentage of General Assembly resolutions that include a gender perspective

<i>Originating body</i>	<i>Total resolutions</i>	<i>Number including a gender perspective</i>	<i>Percentage including a gender perspective</i>
Plenary	34	15	44
First Committee	47	3	6
Second Committee	42	14	33
Third Committee	66	42	64
Fourth Committee	23	6	26
Fifth Committee	25	2	8
Sixth Committee	22	1	5
Total, General Assembly	259	83	32

16. Figure I below indicates the distribution of General Assembly resolutions that have a gender perspective across the Main Committees. Although the Third Committee was responsible for a quarter of all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, it accounted for half of the resolutions of the Assembly that reflected a gender perspective. In contrast, 18 per cent of all Assembly resolutions originated in the First Committee, but only 4 per cent of Assembly resolutions that include a gender perspective can be attributed to this Committee. The breakdown by Committee is consistent with the findings from past years and shows that, despite repeated calls by the General Assembly for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed into all issues, gender equality issues continue to be reflected little in resolutions dealing with issues other than social, economic and political matters.

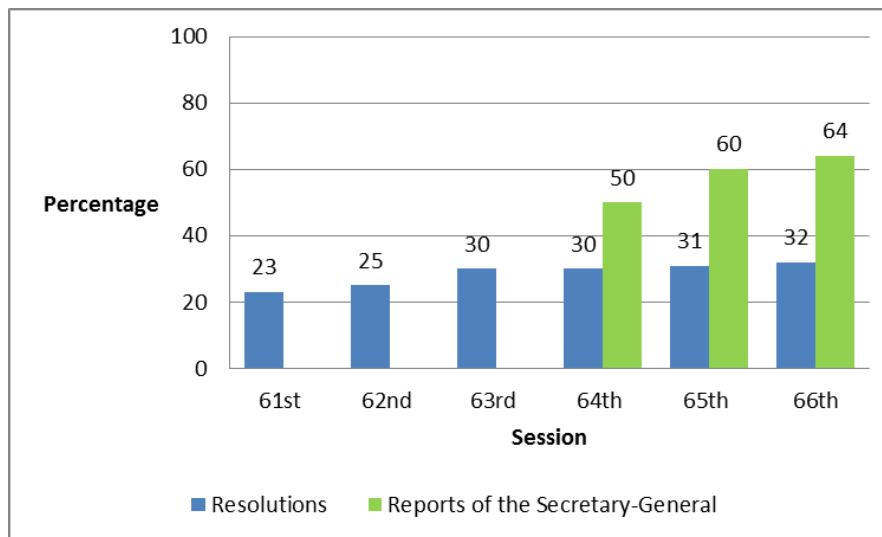
Figure I
Origin of all General Assembly resolutions that reflect a gender perspective



17. With respect to trends,³ there has been little growth in the overall share of General Assembly resolutions that integrate a gender perspective (see figure II below). This share has remained fairly low across sessions of the General Assembly.

Figure II

Trends in the percentage of General Assembly documents that include a gender perspective



Reports of the Secretary-General

18. A gender perspective was more likely to be found in reports of the Secretary-General than in resolutions: 64 per cent of reports included a gender perspective (see table 2).

Table 2

Number and percentage of reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly that include a gender perspective

<i>Body to which report is allocated</i>	<i>Total reports</i>	<i>Number including a gender perspective</i>	<i>Percentage including a gender perspective</i>
Plenary	55	42	76
First Committee	23	9	39
Second Committee	36	26	72
Third Committee	49	41	84
Fourth Committee	20	9	45

³ These earlier findings are based on the analysis carried out for previous reports of the Secretary-General (A/62/178, A/63/217, A/64/218, A/65/204 and A/66/211). It must be noted that the results of the analysis carried out up to the sixty-third session of the General Assembly are not fully comparable, as the content analysis relied on a smaller list of words (gender, sex, woman, girl, female and sexual).

<i>Body to which report is allocated</i>	<i>Total reports</i>	<i>Number including a gender perspective</i>	<i>Percentage including a gender perspective</i>
Fifth Committee	87	44	51
Sixth Committee	14	8	57
Total, General Assembly	249	159	64

Note: Of the 249 reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly, some were considered under more than one agenda item and some agenda items were allocated to more than one Committee. The breakdown by committee thus adds up to more than the total number of reports submitted to the Assembly.

19. Most reports submitted to the Third Committee, and over two thirds of reports submitted to the General Assembly meeting in plenary and to the Second Committee included a gender perspective. In contrast, only about half of the reports considered by the Fourth and Fifth Committees and, in particular, only two out of every five reports reviewed by the First Committee integrated a gender perspective.

20. With respect to trends, between the sixty-fifth and the sixty-sixth sessions of the General Assembly, there was a 4 percentage point increase in the number of reports of the Secretary-General that included a gender perspective (see figure II above). This points to a growing recognition of the relevance of gender equality issues across a range of substantive areas and may demonstrate the growing implementation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system.

2. Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions

Resolutions

21. A gender perspective was reflected in over a quarter of the resolutions of the 2011 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (see table 3). The functional commissions of the Council together, excluding the Commission on the Status of Women, display fairly similar results, with nearly a quarter of their 2011 resolutions reflecting a gender perspective. While there are wide variations among the functional commissions, the small size of the sample makes it difficult to interpret the data.

Table 3

Number and percentage of resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions that include a gender perspective

<i>Originating body</i>	<i>Total resolutions</i>	<i>Number including a gender perspective</i>	<i>Percentage including a gender perspective</i>
Economic and Social Council	40	11	28
Functional commissions ^a	46	11	24
Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	18	4	22
Commission on Narcotic Drugs	19	1	5
Commission on Population and Development	1	1	100
Commission on Science and Technology for Development	2	1	50

<i>Originating body</i>	<i>Total resolutions</i>	<i>Number including a gender perspective</i>	<i>Percentage including a gender perspective</i>
Commission for Social Development	5	3	60
Commission on Sustainable Development	0	–	–
Statistical Commission ^b	0	–	–
United Nations Forum on Forests	1	1	100

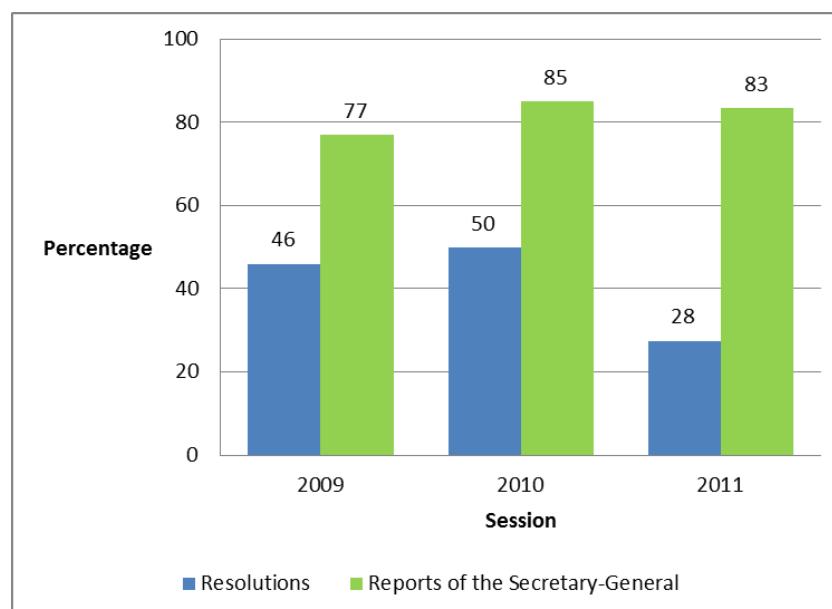
^a These results do not include the Commission on the Status of Women, owing to its exclusive focus on gender equality issues.

^b The Statistical Commission traditionally adopts decisions. At its session in 2011, the Commission adopted decision 42/102 on gender statistics.

22. With respect to trends (see figures III and IV), a comparison with previous years⁴ reveals a decrease in the share of resolutions that included a gender perspective, for both the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. The decrease is particularly sharp for the Council, whose share of resolutions that reflect a gender perspective was nearly halved in 2011. It should be noted that over one third of the resolutions adopted by the Council were initially drafted by the functional commissions.

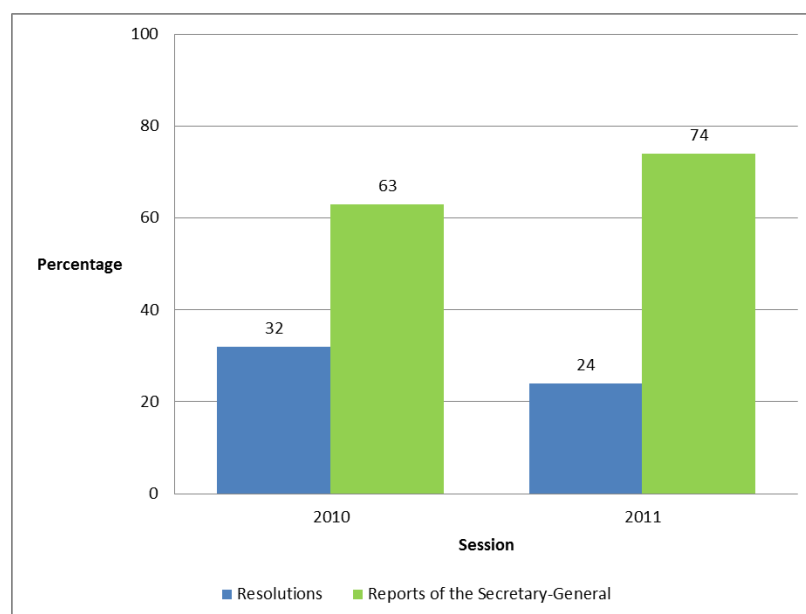
Figure III

Trends in percentage of Economic and Social Council documents that include a gender perspective



⁴ These earlier findings are based on the analysis carried out for previous reports of the Secretary-General (A/65/204 and A/66/211).

Figure IV
Trends in percentage of functional commission documents that include a gender perspective



Note: These results do not include the Commission on the Status of Women, owing to its exclusive focus on gender equality issues.

23. A review of the resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive sessions of 2011 and 2010 reveals a comparable proportion of biennial, annual and new resolutions (see table 4). The percentage of resolutions that included a gender perspective was lower in each of these three categories of resolutions in 2011 than in 2010. It decreased from 57 to 21 per cent for new resolutions, from 53 to 42 per cent for annual resolutions and from 29 to 0 per cent for biennial resolutions. It is thus not possible to explain the decrease by, for instance, a higher proportion of new resolutions than in the past, or by a drop in a category of resolutions. However, an examination of the topics of resolutions adopted in 2011 reveals that a number of them, particularly among the new resolutions, had a procedural or organizational focus, rather than a focus on substantive issues.

Table 4
Periodicity of resolutions of the Economic and Social Council that include a gender perspective

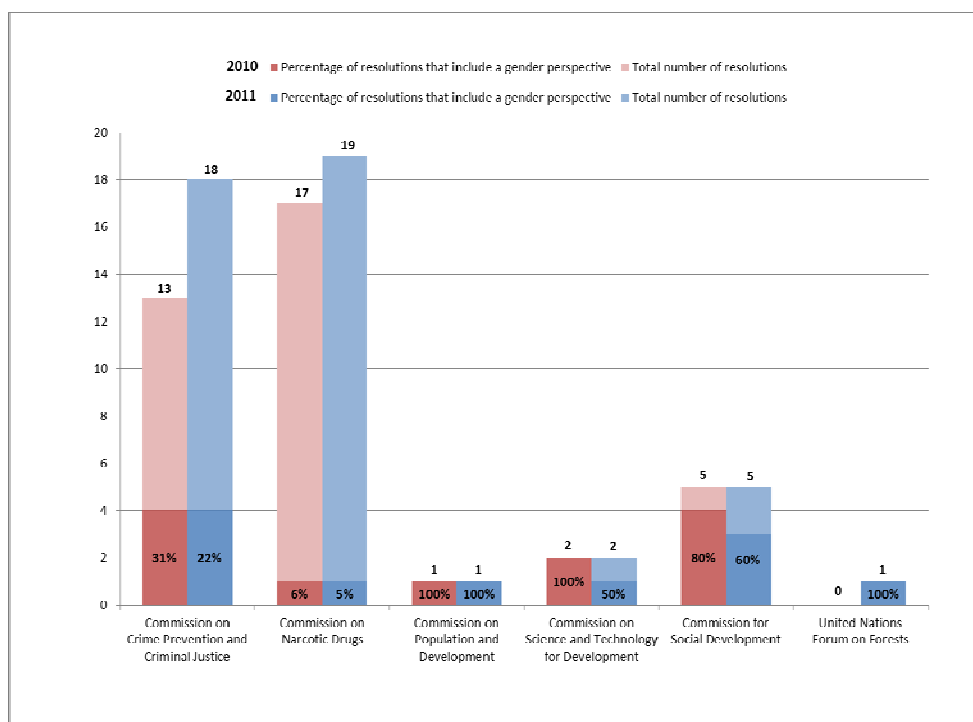
Periodicity	2010		2011	
	Number of resolutions	Percentage including a gender perspective	Number of resolutions	Percentage including a gender perspective
New	14	57	14	21
Annual	17	53	19	42
Biennial	7	29	7	0
Total	38	50	40	28

24. Closer attention to the functional commissions also helps to explain the decrease in resolutions including a gender perspective observed in the Economic and Social Council. The work of the Council is closely linked to that of the functional commissions, with over one third of the resolutions adopted by the Council at its substantive sessions being drafted by the functional commissions (37 per cent in 2009, 39 per cent in 2010 and 38 per cent in 2011).⁵ In the three years reviewed, these resolutions were more likely than those of the Council as a whole to include a gender perspective. However, while in 2009 and 2010, 54 per cent and 67 per cent respectively of the resolutions drafted by the functional commissions for adoption by the Council included a gender perspective, this proportion declined to 33 per cent in 2011. Thus, the work of the functional commissions has contributed to the decrease observed in the proportion of Council resolutions that include a gender perspective. These findings point to the need for continued advocacy on the relevance of gender equality issues to the range of matters considered by the Council and the functional commissions, including discussions on procedural and organizational questions.

25. While the previous paragraph discusses the 15 resolutions of the functional commissions that were adopted by the Economic and Social Council, it is also important to examine all the resolutions of the functional commissions, in order to understand the downward trend in resolutions of those bodies which include a gender perspective. These decreased from 32 per cent in 2010 to 24 per cent in 2011 (see figure IV above). Figure V below presents a breakdown of resolutions by functional commission for 2010 and 2011. It excludes the Commission on the Status of Women and the functional commissions that did not adopt resolutions. As figure V reveals, the overall number of resolutions increased from 38 in 2010 to 46 in 2011, mainly driven by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. This helps explain the decrease observed in the percentage of resolutions that include references related to gender: the increase in the number of resolutions was not accompanied by a similar increase in the number of resolutions reflecting a gender perspective. The number of resolutions that include a gender perspective can thus be considered stable, as there were 12 such resolutions in 2010 and 11 in 2011.

⁵ These figures include the Commission on the Status of Women.

Figure V
Trends in resolutions of the functional commissions which include a gender perspective



Reports of the Secretary-General

26. In a similar way to findings for the General Assembly, reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions were more likely than resolutions to include a gender perspective (see table 5). Most (83 per cent) reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council and over two thirds (74 per cent) of reports to the functional commissions, included a gender perspective.

Table 5
Number and percentage of reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions that include a gender perspective

<i>Body to which report is submitted</i>	<i>Total reports</i>	<i>Number including a gender perspective</i>	<i>Percentage including a gender perspective</i>
Economic and Social Council	24	20	83
Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council ^a	53	39	74
Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	9	6	67
Commission on Narcotic Drugs ^b	3	—	—
Commission on Population and Development	5	5	100

<i>Body to which report is submitted</i>	<i>Total reports</i>	<i>Number including a gender perspective</i>	<i>Percentage including a gender perspective</i>
Commission on Science and Technology for Development	3	3	100
Commission for Social Development	6	6	100
Commission on Sustainable Development	6	5	83
Statistical Commission	12	6	50
United Nations Forum on Forests	9	8	89

^a These results do not include the Commission on the Status of Women, owing to its exclusive focus on gender equality issues.

^b The Commission on Narcotic Drugs considers reports of the Secretariat, which were analysed in lieu of reports of the Secretary-General.

27. There is a trend towards an increased reflection of a gender perspective in reports of the Secretary-General that were submitted to the functional commissions, with an 11 percentage point increase compared with the previous year. This finding is consistent with the trend identified for reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly. While the share of reports to the Economic and Social Council that include a gender perspective decreased slightly (by 2 percentage points compared to 2010), the overall level remains high and stable.

C. In-depth analysis

28. While reports and resolutions may reflect a gender perspective, as defined for the present report, they often vary greatly in the level of attention they give to gender equality issues. The positioning of references within reports and resolutions that included a gender perspective and the qualitative strength of the language in those references are examined below.

1. Positioning

29. The positioning of references to gender issues within intergovernmental documents determines their prominence and could influence the likelihood of follow-up actions. The reports of the Secretary-General draw more attention to gender equality issues when they are mentioned not only in the body of the report, but also in the conclusions and recommendations. The emphasis on gender equality issues in resolutions is stronger when these issues are referred to in both preambular and operative paragraphs. By addressing gender equality issues in both parts, the issue is first framed in such resolutions and then a specific action or recommendation to address it is indicated.

30. References to gender issues were included in the preamble only of 22 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively, of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly⁶ and the Economic and Social Council, with no recommendation related to gender made in the operative paragraphs. About 50 per cent of resolutions (46 per cent for

⁶ The findings on preambular and operative paragraphs pertain to 79 resolutions of the Assembly; the analysis did not include resolutions in which a declaration or an outcome document from a high-level event was adopted or endorsed.

the Assembly and 55 per cent for the Council) included references related to gender in both the preambular and operative parts. While this figure is similar to that of the previous session of the Assembly, it reflects a 6 percentage point decrease for the Council in comparison with 2010.

31. Reports of the Secretary-General continue to vary in the positioning of gender equality issues, reflecting a pattern similar to that of the previous year. Of the 135 reports to the General Assembly that included conclusions and/or recommendations for further action, only 28 per cent combined a gender perspective in the body of the report with a reference in the conclusions and/or the recommendations. This percentage is similar to that of the previous session of the Assembly. With respect to reports submitted to the Economic and Social Council, there was a sharp decline, in comparison with the 2010 session, in the share of reports that included gender equality issues in both the body of the report and the conclusions and/or recommendations. This share was 64 per cent in 2010 but dropped to 35 per cent in 2011, or 6 of the 17 reports to the Council that had a section for conclusions and/or recommendations.

32. The weakness in the positioning in reports of references related to gender may help to explain the decrease in Economic and Social Council resolutions that integrate a gender perspective. Through his recommendations, the Secretary-General flags to Member States the matters that require their most pressing attention, thus the absence of references related to gender in the conclusions and/or recommendations of reports to the Council probably reduced the likelihood that gender equality issues would be integrated in corresponding resolutions.

2. Qualitative assessment

33. Although gender equality issues may be incorporated in key sections of a report or resolution, their impact depends on the strength of the language used in the reference. In an attempt to capture this dimension, intergovernmental documents were reviewed against qualitative variables. Reports of the Secretary-General were assessed qualitatively against two variables: “coverage” of gender equality issues, and the “quality” of the gender discussion. The analysis was carried out only on General Assembly documents, because there was an adequate number of them to support it.

34. Reports that included a specific section on gender equality issues, as well as several references throughout the rest of the report, were considered to have high coverage. A single reference or a few short references were defined as low coverage. Medium coverage fell somewhere in between. The quality analysis of reports characterized cursory references such as “including women” as low quality, while reports that provided precise facts, including sex-disaggregated quantitative data, and/or gender analysis ranged from medium to high quality.

35. For example, the following excerpt from a report on conflict-related sexual violence was considered high quality, as it specifies the sex of victims/survivors, in contrast with many reports that adopt a gender-neutral approach: “Sexual violence, and the long shadow of terror and trauma it casts, disproportionately affects women and girls. However, recent information underscores that the situation of male victims and the plight of children born as a result of wartime rape require deeper examination.” (A/66/657-S/2012/33, para. 6). Another example considered to be of high quality, drawn from one of the reports of the Secretary-General on budgetary

matters, is the following indicator of achievement: “Incorporation of gender-specific indicators in the constitutional reform process” (A/66/691, following para. 51).

36. Resolutions, which tend to be shorter than reports, were analysed against one variable only and categorized as having a low, medium or high focus on gender equality issues. Resolutions that included a single, superficial reference were considered to reflect a low focus. Resolutions with a high focus on gender equality issues were identified by the occurrence of a keyword in more than one paragraph and/or with specific language on the situation and needs of women and girls and/or men and boys.

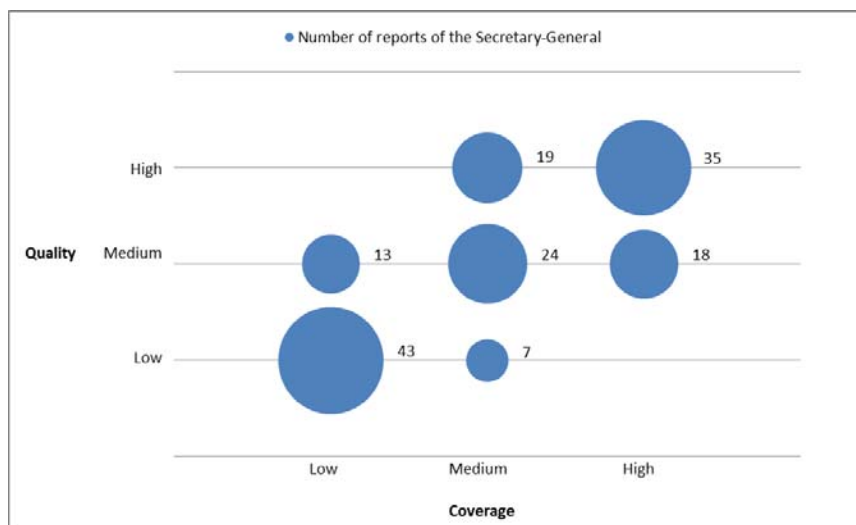
37. One example is General Assembly resolution 66/217 on human resources development, which contains references to gender in five paragraphs. In paragraph 16 for instance, the Assembly calls for “steps to integrate gender perspectives into human resources development, including through policies, strategies and targeted actions aimed at promoting women’s capacities and access to productive activities, and in this regard emphasizes the need to ensure the full participation of women in the formulation and implementation of such policies, strategies and actions”.

38. While the approach to the qualitative assessment used in the present section undoubtedly has limitations, these findings constitute an important step in understanding progress in incorporating a gender perspective into the work of intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations as a whole.

Reports of the Secretary-General

39. The distribution of the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly across the two variables, coverage and quality, are illustrated in figure VI below. Twenty-two per cent of the reports (35 out of 159) were of high coverage and quality, while 27 per cent were of low coverage and quality. While the reports varied widely both in the coverage of gender equality issues and in the characteristics of these inclusions, there tended to be a general correlation between coverage and quality. Overall, reports were more likely than not to have high coverage and/or quality of gender equality issues: 45 per cent of reports were rated as high/high or medium/high, compared with 40 per cent of reports considered as low/low or medium/low. While these percentages are closer to one another than those found in the previous session of the General Assembly (49 per cent and 30 per cent), reports remain more likely to rank high than low on one or both variables, and thus to give adequate attention to gender equality issues.

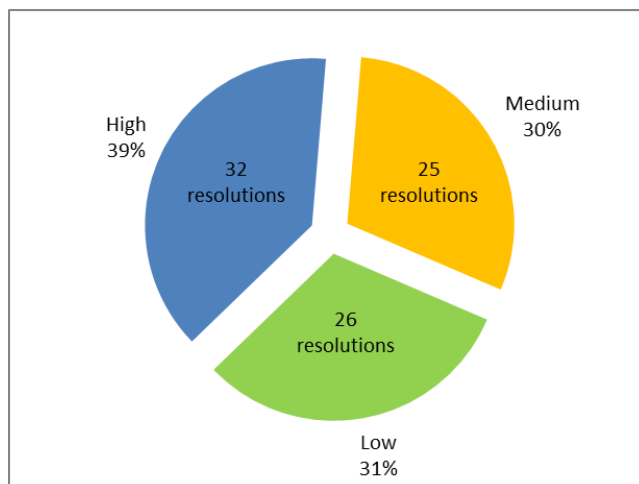
Figure VI
Coverage and quality of gender references in reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, by frequency



Resolutions

40. While only one third of General Assembly resolutions included a gender perspective, the 83 resolutions that did include one tended to do so in a fairly clear manner. Nearly 70 per cent of those resolutions integrated a high or medium focus on gender equality issues (see figure VII below). This means that the keywords indicating a gender perspective were found in more than one paragraph and/or there was specific language on the situation and needs of women and girls, and/or men and boys. While the percentage is lower than that found in the previous year (nearly 80 per cent), it remains at a high level, confirming that most resolutions of the General Assembly that include references related to gender reflect a genuine commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Figure VII
Extent of focus on gender equality issues in General Assembly resolutions that include a gender perspective



41. Many of the medium- and high-focus resolutions included paragraphs expressing recognition of the specific contribution and situation of women and girls and containing proposals for actions to take into account their needs. For example, in resolution 66/195 on agricultural technology for development, the General Assembly stressed the critical role of women in the agricultural sector and called upon Member States and others to mainstream gender into agricultural policies and projects and to focus on closing the gender gap to achieve equal access for women to labour-saving technologies, agricultural technology information and know-how, equipment, decision-making forums and associated agricultural resources.

III. Integration of a gender perspective in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

42. Apart from the resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General, which are products of the regular sessions of intergovernmental bodies, the United Nations also holds a number of high-level events each year. These events provide important opportunities to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, illustrates how a sectoral intergovernmental process can successfully integrate a gender perspective. The efforts of key stakeholders to ensure a positive outcome are outlined below.

43. Important gains were achieved at the Conference. The outcome document adopted by world leaders (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex) recognizes the leadership role of women and the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment for the realization of the three pillars of sustainable development — economic development, social development and environmental protection. It includes a recommitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, not only in the context of gender equality and women's empowerment, but as key components of the normative framework of sustainable development.

44. Importantly, one of the priority areas of the framework for action is dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Recognizing women's potential as drivers of sustainable development, Governments committed to equal rights and opportunities for women in political and economic decision-making and resource allocation, and to removing any barriers that prevent women from being full participants in the economy. The document specifically acknowledges the role of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in promoting and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, including in the context of sustainable development, and in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in this regard. In addition, it calls on donors, international organizations, international financial institutions, regional banks and the private sector, among others, to fully integrate commitments and considerations on gender equality and women's empowerment in their decision-making and programming cycle and to support the efforts of developing countries to do the same.

45. Gender equality and the empowerment of women is also reflected as a cross-cutting issue in many of the other priority areas. For instance, in the section on health and population of the outcome document, world leaders call for the full and

effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The section on the green economy clearly states that green economy policies should enhance the welfare of women, including through job creation, and mobilize the full potential and ensure the equal contribution of both women and men. Other sections, including on poverty eradication, agriculture, water, energy, employment and education, make explicit references to gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition, the outcome document recognizes the value of gender-sensitive indicators in accelerating and measuring progress in implementing sustainable development commitments.

46. This positive outcome is the result of sustained efforts on the part of many stakeholders, including Governments, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academia. The early engagement of UN-Women proved critical in catalysing political will among Governments and in building partnerships among the various stakeholders.

47. UN-Women contributed actively to the negotiation process that preceded the Conference and that concluded with the adoption of the outcome document. The input of UN-Women to the initial compilation document, the broad dissemination of key messages and the proposals for references related to gender in an early draft of the outcome document helped to highlight the linkages between the goals of gender equality and sustainable development.

48. In addition, multi-stakeholder events held prior to and during the Conference contributed to raising the political profile of the issue among negotiators. Two high-profile events were organized by UN-Women in collaboration with a variety of partners.⁷ Civil society engagement was bolstered by the Leaders' Forum on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development. This day-long event amplified the voice of women's organizations and enabled a critical dialogue among various stakeholders. It was followed by the Leaders' Summit on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development, which resulted in a much-publicized call to action, signed by the seven women Heads of State and Government present at the Conference.

49. The focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women enjoyed strong support from other United Nations entities. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) issued statements on the upcoming Conference in October 2011 and in April 2012, both of which identified gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority. In addition, CEB held an event during the Conference at which the Secretary-General and other principals affirmed the priority they attached to this area of action.

50. The participation of civil society groups active in promoting women's rights can be a decisive element in the inclusion of a gender perspective in high-level events, as recognized by the General Assembly. In paragraph 17 of its resolution 66/132, the Assembly called upon Governments and the United Nations system to encourage women's groups and other non-governmental organizations specializing

⁷ These events were sponsored by the Governments of Australia, Brazil, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway; the Rockefeller Foundation; the Ford Foundation; DANIDA International Development Corporation; Itaipu Binacional; and Petrobras.

in gender equality and the empowerment of women to participate in intergovernmental processes, including through increased outreach, funding and capacity-building.

51. The Conference formally engaged with nine recognized major groups, one of which is women. This helped ensure the participation of women's organizations in the preparatory process as well as in the Conference. Women's groups and other non-governmental organizations advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women were well represented. Recognizing the crucial role they play, UN-Women facilitated the participation of 36 representatives of civil society organizations, with funding from Governments and foundations.

52. The Conference also provided an opportunity to strengthen private sector commitment towards the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The United Nations Global Compact, the Global Compact Local Network Brazil and UN-Women jointly organized three events during the Corporate Sustainability Forum to highlight the ways in which businesses can maximize their contribution to sustainable development by placing women at the heart of corporate sustainability efforts. The outcome document of the Forum, presented to the Secretary-General during the Conference, contained multiple references to gender equality issues and to the key role of women in sustainable development.

53. The Conference carries important implications for the post-2015 development framework. Governments committed to developing a set of sustainable development goals, whose themes, while not identified in the outcome document, should be focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development. The inclusion in the outcome document of gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority area, along with the commitment on gender-sensitive indicators, puts this issue in a good position to feature prominently in any intergovernmental discussion on sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development framework, both as a self-standing sustainable development goal and as a cross-cutting issue in other sustainable development goals.

54. The positive outcome attained at the Conference complements gains achieved in other important sectoral areas, including climate change and trade and development. For instance, the outcome of the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 9 December 2011, included specific references to gender equality issues, including in the guidelines of the Green Climate Fund. At its Thirteenth Ministerial Meeting held in Doha in April 2012, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was mandated to reinforce its work on the links between gender equality, women's empowerment and trade and development. The inclusion of a gender perspective in the outcome documents of such high-level events is an important step towards expanding the normative framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women in all sectoral areas considered by intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations.

IV. Contribution of the Commission on the Status of Women

55. In paragraph 3 of resolution 66/132, the General Assembly acknowledged the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, based on the full implementation of the

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session, and in promoting and monitoring gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. While the Commission was not included in the content analysis undertaken for the present report to avoid biasing the results, given the Commission's exclusive focus on gender equality issues, this body has primary responsibility for the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and continues to play a major role in promoting the strategy of gender mainstreaming.

56. At its fifty-fifth session, in 2011, the Commission considered the access to and participation in education, training, science and technology of women and girls, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work, and adopted a set of agreed conclusions on this theme. The Commission transmitted its agreed conclusions, as well as summaries of its high-level round table and of two panel discussions, to the Economic and Social Council as an input to the annual ministerial review on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education.

57. The 2011 ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council recalls the agreed conclusions of the fifty-fifth session and pays significant attention to the situation and needs of women and girls. For instance, it calls for closing the gender gap in education by promoting access for girls and women to quality education at all levels, particularly the secondary level, and in all disciplines, particularly science and technology. It also highlights the need to develop gender-sensitive curricula for educational programmes at all levels and to take concrete measures to ensure that educational materials portray women, men, youth, girls and boys in positive and non-stereotypical roles. The work of the Commission thus positively influenced the extent to which a gender perspective was incorporated in the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council.

58. The Commission on the Status of Women also engaged with the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. In its agreed conclusions, the Commission on the Status of Women looked forward to actions by United Nations bodies, especially the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, to compile and share good practice examples and lessons learned in mainstreaming a gender perspective into science, technology and innovation policies and programmes. In response to this call, participants in the fourteenth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development called upon the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to provide a forum, in collaboration with its Gender Advisory Board, to share good practice examples and lessons learned in integrating a gender perspective into policymaking and implementation in science, technology and innovation. The Commission on the Status of Women heard a report by the Gender Advisory Board on its activities and recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a decision to extend the mandate of the Board for a further three years, beginning in January 2012, in order to allow it to complete its programme of work. The Council endorsed this proposal in decision 2011/235.

59. Other contributions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session to the work of other intergovernmental bodies included an interactive panel discussion on gender equality and sustainable development, organized to provide an input to the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as the first-ever resolution on mainstreaming gender equality

and promoting the empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies (Commission resolution 55/1). The Commission thus continues to play an important role in expanding and deepening attention to gender equality issues in the United Nations system.

V. Opportunities for strengthening a gender perspective in intergovernmental outcomes

60. As the previous sections demonstrate, intergovernmental bodies integrate a gender perspective into some of the issues under their consideration, particularly those related to social, economic and political matters. There remain many untapped opportunities to ensure that gender equality issues are mainstreamed into all areas, including in the field of disarmament and related international security questions, administrative and budgetary issues and international legal matters. This section highlights opportunities for strengthening the attention paid to gender equality issues in the work of the General Assembly, using the First Committee as an example. It also considers how the work of the Commission on the Status of Women could help strengthen the attention given to gender equality issues in the Economic and Social Council.

61. At the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, 3 of the 47 resolutions of the First Committee integrated references related to gender. These included mentions of the sex of victims of anti-personnel mines (resolution 66/29), the need to strengthen the gender component of meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa relating to disarmament and international security (resolution 66/55) and the first course specifically for women that was conducted by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (resolution 66/54).

62. The sixty-seventh session provides opportunities for deepening the focus of such references, as well as for integrating a gender perspective into a greater number of resolutions of the First Committee. The provisional agenda of the sixty-seventh session includes an agenda item entitled “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control”, as decided in resolution 65/69, the first-ever General Assembly resolution on this topic. While no advance documentation is expected, this agenda item provides an important opportunity for the First Committee to refine the recommendations and expand the scope of this resolution. In addition, the attention given to women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control under this agenda item can act as a catalyst to increase the attention paid to gender equality issues in other items on the agenda of the First Committee.

63. A greater focus on gender equality issues would also be needed in the Fifth and Sixth Committees in order to implement General Assembly resolution 66/132 and its call for “all bodies of the United Nations to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration”. While the argument could be made that resolutions with a procedural or organizational focus are less amenable to integrating a gender perspective than resolutions centred on substantive issues, the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly demonstrates that opportunities exist regardless of the focus of resolutions. For instance, resolution 66/234 on human resources management, drafted by the Fifth Committee, refers to the goal of gender

balance in the United Nations system. In resolution 66/102, the Sixth Committee called upon the United Nations system to systematically address, as appropriate, aspects of the rule of law in relevant activities, including the participation of women in rule of law-related activities. Resolution 66/55, drafted by the First Committee and referred to in paragraph 61 above, calls upon the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa to integrate a focus on gender equality issues in its work. These examples show that a range of options exist for furthering the goal of gender mainstreaming through the work of intergovernmental bodies.

64. Opportunities also exist for the Economic and Social Council to integrate a stronger focus on gender equality issues into its work. A number of resolutions that are adopted on an annual basis by the Council and that do not currently integrate a gender perspective, focus on themes that the Commission on the Status of Women has considered extensively. For example, the agreed conclusions of the Commission on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the review of progress in the implementation of those agreed conclusions that was held in 2012, provide a strong basis for integrating a gender perspective in the annual resolution of the Council on follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development. Similarly, Council resolution 2011/37 entitled “Recovering from the world financial and economic crisis: a Global Jobs Pact” could draw on the agreed conclusions of the 2011 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, as those conclusions include several action-oriented recommendations on the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

65. **Intergovernmental processes continue to provide many opportunities for contributing to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women is integral to all three pillars of work of the United Nations, that is, development, peace and security and human rights. It is thus crucial that a gender perspective be reflected in the work of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations and in all issues under their consideration.**

66. **In the General Assembly, some areas of work do tend to satisfactorily integrate a gender perspective. The reports of the Secretary-General and resolutions related to social, economic and political matters are likely to reflect a gender perspective. However, there is little evidence of the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the Assembly in the areas of disarmament and related international security questions, administrative and budgetary issues and international legal matters. In addition, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions should more systematically integrate a gender perspective.**

67. **The Commission on the Status of Women continues to strengthen and expand global norms and policies on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Its work provides a firm foundation for integrating gender equality issues in the work of other intergovernmental bodies.**

68. **In view of the progress made and the gaps noted in the present report and taking into account the critical role of intergovernmental bodies in promoting**

and monitoring progress in the achievement of global commitments on gender equality, the General Assembly may wish:

(a) To reiterate its call to all intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration and within their mandates, as well as in all United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions and in their follow-up processes. Areas where least progress was observed are those of disarmament and related international security questions, administrative and budgetary issues and international legal matters;

(b) To bring the present report to the attention of intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, including the main organs, their main committees and subsidiary bodies, so as to encourage further progress in the integration of a gender perspective in their work;

(c) To reaffirm the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and encourage intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations to incorporate into their work the outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women;

(d) To request the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that his reports to intergovernmental bodies systematically address gender perspectives through the use of sex- and age-disaggregated data and qualitative gender analysis and that they provide concrete recommendations for further action on gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(e) To stress that the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly is integral to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and agree that the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women should feature prominently in the post-2015 development framework.
