

1997 ECOSOC INTERNATIONAL DECLARATION ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING

signed by ECOSOC (the umbrella body for UN organisations).

ECOSOC DEFINITION

“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality” (p2).

ECOSOC FRAMEWORK

“Mainstreaming practice requires more than designing and implementing “add-on” projects for women. Currently, United Nations development entities that actively address gender issues in their work, in general take a two-pronged approach:

- (a) mainstreaming gender considerations in priorities, policies and programmes and
- (b) targeting women as participants and/or beneficiaries through women- and girl-specific programmes.

Mainstreaming and targeting are not mutually exclusive, but complementary strategies both having the achievement of gender-sensitive outcomes as their objective. Increasingly, women-specific projects are linked to mainstreaming efforts.” (pp11-15)

Detailed ECOSOC guidelines cover a number of different dimensions of policy:

- vision
- organisational structure for policy formation and implementation
- guidelines and incentives at programme level
- continued support for women's projects and programmes
- commitment to participatory processes.

But the definition used here incorporates also subsequent distinctions between ‘gender equality of opportunity’ and ‘gender equity of outcomes’ rather than conflating these in the terms ‘gender equality’ or ‘gender equity’.