

## The United Nations Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Issue-Based Coalition on Gender Equality (IBC-GE)

### Terms of Reference

*Draft March 2021*

#### I. Background

The establishment of a gender coordination group at the regional level in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region was first proposed among Regional Directors at the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) meeting in December 2014. UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP regional offices began meeting on a regular basis in early 2015. A regional partnership framework document was developed among the three agencies in early 2015 to strengthen collaboration and coordination among the three agencies at the regional level and to better support the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Gender Theme Groups (GTGs)/Gender Results Groups (GRGs) at country level.

In 2016, as per the decision of the Regional Directors under the framework of Regional undg and RCM, the ECA-RWGG was transformed as Issue-Based Coalition on Gender Equality (IBC-GE). This was done to strengthen collaboration and partnership with key regional actors beyond the UN system to jointly advocate for and support the implementation and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the ECA region. Since then, the IBC-GE strengthens inter-agency coordination; UN system accountability on gender equality at the regional level; and supports UNCTs and GTG/GRG in the ECA region.

The IBC-GE is comprised of members from 14 UN entities including: FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNFPA, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP and WHO. It remains open to new members. The IBC-GE is co-chaired by UNFPA and UN Women.

In line with the roll-out of UN Development System reform at the regional level, in 2020, a review of IBCs in ECA region was conducted to contribute to their effectiveness and ensure that they are demand-driven and based on UNCT needs and priorities. In March 2021, the IBC-GE reviewed and revised its TORs to align with the recommendations emanating from the IBC-Review.

#### II. Main Goal and Objectives

The main goal of the Issue-based Coalition is to ensure a coordinated UN system approach to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Europe and Central Asia. It aims to strengthen regional engagement to promote gender equality, provide more coherent and timely policy guidance and technical support and improve coordination, communication as well as information sharing on key lessons and good practices.

The following are specific objectives of IBC-Gender:

- 1) Strengthen UN system-wide **integration of gender equality and women and girls' rights and empowerment** to advance accountability by all UN entities;
- 2) Coherent and **timely and demand-driven technical policy guidance and technical support** to the regional system (through the Regional Collaborative Platform and other regional structures) and to UN Country Teams, with a specific focus on IBC-GE's sister structure at the country level (GTGs/GRGs);
- 3) Strengthen **regional engagement to promote gender equality through regional and international initiatives and fora** such as the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), engaging external partners such as regional organisations and civil society organizations and networks in advocacy efforts;
- 4) Development of **common positions and joint advocacy to promote gender equality** related to key issues and trends across the region;
- 5) Improve **sharing of knowledge, good practices and lessons learned** on gender equality issues among member agencies at the regional level and across all GTGs/GRGs and UNCTs in ECA countries;
- 6) Strengthen **regional coordination, cooperation and partnerships** with other IBCs and regional mechanisms and other key regional partners.

### III. Typology of Activities / Menu of Services

Each year, an updated Menu of Services will be developed which will provide a clear overview of the types of services and products that the IBC-GE has on offer to its key clients including UNCTs (specifically Resident Coordinators and GTGs/GRGs) and other regional mechanisms under the Regional Collaborative Platform. The Menu of Services will be included as an annex to the annual IBC-GE work plan.

Each year a joint annual planning retreat will be held with R-DCO and GTGs/GRGs to discuss evolving needs and priorities across UNCTs and to ensure that the proposed actions in the work plan align with actual country team needs and priorities. The work plan will remain a flexible document, enabling the IBC-GE to respond to evolving needs based on changing country-level contexts and dynamics across the region.

The IBC does not engage in operational matters, or in mobilizing resources for programmes or projects, or in implementing them

All types of support services provided by the IBC to UNCTs are request based.

### IV. Membership

The membership of IBC-GE consists of the UN agencies and related entities working at the regional level on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Europe and Central Asia. Additionally, there will be some representation from the country level as relevant, such as chairs of GTGs/GRGs, depending on the specific topics/subjects of agenda.

Each member agency will designate a focal point and an alternate, ideally a gender specialist/advisor or someone equivalent in their respective office. The cost of participation will be met by each participating member agency.

The focal points represent their agency and are responsible for providing an update on their gender-related activities and plans. The focal point is also responsible for keeping their colleagues in the respective agencies informed on the activities of IBC-GE.

Observers may be invited to the IBC-GE meetings on a case-by-case basis as necessary and when relevant (for instance, member agencies might invite their colleagues to brief IBC-GE on their specific activities).

The IBC-GE is currently comprised of members from 14 UN entities including: FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNFPA, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP and WHO. It remains open to new members.

## V. Management Arrangements

### *Chair and Secretariat*

The IBC-GE is co-chaired by UNFPA and UN Women.

The co-chairs will be responsible for overall coordination and following up on the status of joint work plans.

The two agencies co-chairing the IBC-GE will also be in charge of the secretariat functions, including organizing the quarterly meetings, drafting and finalizing minutes as well as finalizing joint annual work plan and following up on the status of activities in annual joint work plan.

### *Meetings*

Meetings of IBC-GE will be normally held quarterly. Additional meetings may be convened, if deemed necessary, by the members. Video conferencing facilities will be used for meetings to enable involvement of interested regional and/or sub-regional offices of member organisations that are not based in Istanbul, as well as participants from country level as relevant to the specific agenda.

The agenda of each meeting will be provided to members in advance by the secretariat, including relevant background documents. Minutes of each IBC-GE meeting, summarizing key decisions and follow-up actions, will be prepared by the secretariat and endorsed by the members. The final version of minutes will be shared with all member agencies by email and uploaded in ECA Gender Group page of Yammer.

In addition to the quarterly meetings, member agencies communicate and coordinate regularly for effective implementation of activities as agreed in joint annual workplans of IBC-GE.

### *Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Arrangement*

Every year, during the 1st quarter of each calendar year, the IBC - GE will prepare a joint annual workplan that consists of: 1) priority areas, key joint results/indicators and activities; 2) lead agenc(ies); 2) supporting agenc(ies); 3) timeline. The joint annual workplan of the IBC-GE is to specify the key areas of collaboration among member agencies in ECA region, based on existing regional strategies, regional programmes and other types of planning documents of each agency. The financial contribution and funding must come from the member agencies/entities of IBC-GE. The joint work plan will be uploaded in IBC-GE page of Yammer and on the UNECE IBC website. Where deemed necessary, specific task teams will be established to lead on different priority areas under the Annual Work Plan.

As a coordination mechanism, the work of the IBC-GE will provide the UN system and IBC members with a platform to leverage work on GE and women and girls' human rights, and empowerment;

- Members of the IBC are expected to participate in the IBC-GE meetings and contribute to discussions and agreements, and contribute with their unique positions guided by the mandate of their organizations, as well as building consensus to ensure common positions in key issues;
- Members are expected to participate and/or take the lead in the activities outlined in the work-plan.
- Members are expected to disseminate and share IBC-GE products and initiatives internally and with their external partners and networks when appropriate.
- Knowledge and advocacy products will be considered as an IBC-GE result when endorsed by a majority IBC-GE member and developed by at least four IBC-GE members.
- The IBC-GE will also be a space where members can share gender related knowledge products for review and or consultation, and to inform about new products to facilitate coordination and dissemination. To facilitate this process, the IBC-GE will prepare a live document with relevant knowledge products each year.

The leading agency per key activity is responsible for coordinating with other agencies to ensure effective implementation and monitoring. Leading agencies will report on the status and achievements during the quarterly meetings of IBC-GE.

The co-chairs of IBC-GE will report to the RCP on the overall status of joint annual work plan as well as key achievements and challenges through the Regional Results Report and regularly, as needed. Budget allocations and outstanding requirements to achieve objectives of the group will be also reviewed with the RCP if necessary.

## VI. Sunset Clause

The IBC-GE will cease working when:

### *Internally:*

- There is no longer a need to ensure coordination on gender equality work; gender equality is institutionalized in the several regional UN Working groups; support to UNCTs is no longer needed and gender equality and women and girl's rights are fully included in the several UN planning processes and strategies.
- It is decided that an Issue-based Coalition is not the right forum for advancing the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

### *Externally*

- Other stakeholders and partners have completely taken up advocacy on gender equality at regional level, and a coherent UN voice to ensure progress on gender quality is no longer needed.