

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

### Terms of Reference

*October 2025*

#### 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.

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.

In 2025, the expansion of the IBC-GE to include human rights to strengthen support to UNCTs on reaffirming normative commitments in the context of pushback in the region was raised in several meetings of the Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP), following requests from some ECA Resident Coordinators. As follow up to this proposal, the co-chairs of the IBC-GE (UN Women and UNFPA) and OHCHR agreed, and the Terms of Reference of the IBC-GE were subsequently revised in October 2025 to reflect the expanded scope.

#### 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, women's empowerment and human rights in Europe and Central Asia. It aims to strengthen regional engagement to promote gender equality and human rights, 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 Equality and Human Rights:



- 1) Strengthen UN system-wide **integration of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and human rights** 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-HR's sister structures at the country level (GTGs/GRGs/Human Rights Theme Groups (HRTGs));
- 3) Strengthen **regional engagement to promote gender equality and human rights 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, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations and networks in advocacy efforts;
- 4) Development of **common positions and joint advocacy to promote gender equality** and human rights related to key issues, trends, violations and abuses across the region;
- 5) Improve **sharing of knowledge, good practices and lessons learned** on gender equality and human rights issues among member agencies at the regional level and across all GTGs/GRGs/HRTGs and UNCTs in ECA countries;
- 6) Strengthen **regional coordination, cooperation and partnerships** on gender equality and human rights 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-HR has on offer for its key clients, including UNCTs (specifically Resident Coordinators and GTGs/GRGs/HRTGs) and other regional mechanisms under the Regional Collaborative Platform. The Menu of Services will be included as an annex to the annual IBC-GE-HR work plan.

The IBC-GE-HR will develop an annual workplan that responds to evolving needs and priorities across UNCTs. The work plan will remain a flexible document, enabling the IBC-GE-HR to respond to evolving needs based on changing country-level contexts and dynamics across the region.

### IV. Membership

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

Each member agency will designate a focal point and an alternate, ideally a gender and/or human rights 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-HR.

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

The IBC-GE-HR is currently comprised of members from 15 UN entities including: FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNFPA, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women, WFP and WHO. It remains open to new members.

## V. Management Arrangements

### *Chair and Secretariat*

The IBC-GE-HR is co-chaired by UNFPA, UN Women and OHCHR. The co-chairs will be responsible for overall coordination and following up on the status of joint work plans.

The three agencies co-chairing the IBC-GE-HR will also have responsibility for 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-HR 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-HR 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.

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-HR.

### *Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Arrangement*

During the 1st quarter of each calendar year, the IBC-GE-HR 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-HR will specify the key areas of collaboration among member agencies in the ECA region, based on existing regional strategies, regional programmes and other types of planning documents of each agency. The joint work plan will be shared with the RCP Secretariat for further sharing with the RCP members and progress tracking as appropriate. Where deemed necessary, specific task teams will be established by the IBC-GE-HR to lead on different priority areas under the Annual Work Plan.

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

- Members of the IBC are expected to participate in the IBC-GE-HR 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-HR products and initiatives internally and with their external partners and networks when appropriate.
- Knowledge and advocacy products will be considered as an IBC-GE-HR output when endorsed by a majority IBC-GE-HR members and developed by at least four IBC-GE-HR members.
- The IBC-GE-HR will also be a space where members can share gender and human rights 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-HR 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. Lead agencies will report on the status and achievements during the quarterly meetings of IBC-GE-HR.

The co-chairs of IBC–GE-HR 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 and human rights work; gender equality and human rights are institutionalized in the several regional UN Working groups; support to UNCTs is no longer needed and gender equality and human rights, including the rights of women and girls are fully included in the several UN planning processes and strategies.
- It is decided that an alternative mechanism is best-placed to advance the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls within the UN system in ECA region.

### *Externally*

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