Preamble

The North East of India is marked by glaring contrasts. The region is a storehouse of incredible bio-diversity and extremely rich in resources-both human and natural. However, a large majority of people are economically, geographically and socially disadvantaged. There is growing disparity accompanied by identity conflicts as reflected in the present climate of social unrest. Top down, non participatory, and regionally insensitive development planning have contributed much to this state of unrest.

Women of the region feature significantly in the canvas of the North East. History amply shows women’s collective strength and, in more recent times, their resilience in coping mechanisms during period of upheavals. But they too bear the consequences of violent conflict and insensitive development. Women have been marked by their absence in major decision making bodies of planning development for the region. The Eleventh Five Year planning process provides yet another opportunity to engender development interventions and to bring in women’s perspectives to proactively contribute to the processes of transformation.

Recommendation 1: ACCOUNTABILITY:

Planning Commission to initiate and facilitate

- Monitoring units, consisting of highly credible individuals from government and civil society with at least 50% women members. A five member unit in each state and an eight member regional team to be constituted. Resource allocation to enable the functioning of this unit including periodic review meetings and annual convening of all units of the seven states.
- Following the success of communitisation approach in Nagaland, alternate non-political, participatory group/community approach to be adopted in all sectors in all the states. Build on traditional existing strengths of communities in the NE, bring all the sectors under this while ensuring quality of services and meaningful/proactive participation of women.
- Resource Allocation for social monitoring for all schemes.
- Capacity building of the monitoring team.

Recommendation 2: INFRASTRUCTURE:

In order to attain full utilization of the allocated 10% of central Departmental budgets, a higher percentage of 12-15% may be allotted to NE region. Planning Commission
to initiate and facilitate a survey on existing functioning and non-functioning public/social services infrastructure in the north east region.

This is to be followed and supported by:
- Phase-wise revamping and revitalising the same.
- Continuous flow and utilisation of funds linked to the proposed increment of 12-15% from all central ministries and departments for the NE. Out of the total outlay, 50% should be earmarked for women.
- A non-lapsable pool of funds should be created for women from the money which is under spent in relation to gender budgets.
- Continuous upgradation of human resource development.
- Continuous flow of technical expertise support system.

Recommendation 3: **STATE SUPPORT SERVICES:**
- Address the urgent mental health needs of women consequent upon the prevailing situations in the northeast and the absence of state mental health policies. Resource allocation for provision of holistic, gender sensitive, updated mental health facilities in each state of the northeast.
- Strengthen, increase and upgrade state support services for women and girls in terms of shelter, short-stay homes etc. for destitute, mentally challenged, women victims of various forms of violence.
- Ensure the implementation of proper functioning of working women and girls’ hostels through state departments and implementing agencies.
- Create enabling conditions for ensuring Quality education from primary to higher education levels especially for girls and women.
- Rapid intervention and Care services across states to provide uniform holistic support to women affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.

Recommendation 4: **DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT:**
Planning Commission to ensure gender sensitive, people centric development paradigm that sustains the environment and communities.
- Constitute a people’s Commission/Think Tank to critique ongoing and forthcoming development interventions in the region.
- Draw up projects only in terms of the regional requirements, ensuring minimal displacement, protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) and without any loss of biodiversity. Promote only micro hydro electricity projects, non-extractive and non-exploitative industries, alternate energy sources.
- Constitute policy to protect Common Property Resources/Rights Eg: Water resource, land and forests.
- Ensure protection of existing forests through improved enforcement and community participation.
- Set up patenting and certification authorities in all the states of the North East.

Recommendation 5: **ENTREPRENEURSHIP:**
Planning Commission to initiate and facilitate full participation of women in the look east policy viz-a-viz decision-making and equal opportunities in:
a) Investments
b) Infrastructure – Better road connectivity linking districts and markets within states.
c) Technical Expertise
d) Marketing skills and forward/backward marketing linkages.
e) Livelihoods: enhancing appropriate livelihood alternatives (e.g. gender sensitive Eco-Tourism focusing on indigenous arts, crafts, cuisines etc) and opportunities in rural areas. In the context of eco-tourism, sensitivity should be shown in sustaining domestic livelihood practices of communities, particularly women.

- Adequate resource allocation to ensure safety nets for strengthening local women’s markets of the region. (E.g. *Ima Keithals*).
- Special opportunities and support for particularly vulnerable women viz., internally displaced women; women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS; women affected by armed and ethnic conflict; and by domestic violence; women with disabilities; women displaced due to developmental projects.
- Invest in a special package to harness and promote the inherent potential for sports, adventure and creative pursuits of the young women and men of the region.

Recommendations made by participants of the NER Consultation of Engendering the Process of the Eleventh Five Year Plan and the Drafting Committee.