

Beijing Declaration

The following is the full text of Beijing Declaration:

1. We, the Governments, participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women,

2. Gathered here in Beijing, in September 1995, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations,

3. Determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity,

4. Acknowledging the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances, honouring the women who paved the way and inspired by the hope present in the world's youth,

5. Recognize that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people,

6. Also recognize that this situation is exacerbated by the increasing poverty that is affecting the lives of the majority of the world's people, in particular women and children, with origins in both the national and international domains,

7. Dedicate ourselves unreservedly to addressing these constraints and obstacles and thus enhancing further the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world, and agree that this requires urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, co-operation and solidarity, now and to carry us forward into the next century,

We reaffirm our commitment to:

8. The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development;

9. Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

10. Build on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and

summits — on women in Nairobi in 1985, on children in New York in 1990, on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, on human rights in Vienna in 1993, on population and development in Cairo in 1994 and on social development in Copenhagen in 1995 with the objectives of achieving equality, development and peace;

11. Achieve the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

12. The empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

We are convinced that:

13. Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace;

14. Women's rights are human rights;

15. Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy;

16. Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development and equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development;

17. The explicit recognition and reaffirmation of the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to their empowerment;

18. Local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels;

19. It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women;

20. The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, in cooperation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action;

21. The implementation of the Platform for Action requires commitment from Governments and the international community. By making national and international commitments for action, including those made at the Conference, Governments and the international community recognize the need to take priority action for the empowerment and advancement of women.

We are determined to:

22. Intensify efforts and actions to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women by the end of this century;

23. Ensure the full enjoyment by women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms;

24. Take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women;

25. Encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality;

26. Promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;

27. Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth through the provision of basic education, life-long

education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women;

28. Take positive steps to ensure peace for the advancement of women and, recognizing the leading role that women have played in the peace movement, work actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and support negotiations on the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects;

29. Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;

30. Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education;

31. Promote and protect all human rights of women and girls;

32. Intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people;

33. Ensure respect for international law, including humanitarian law, in order to protect women and girls in particular;

34. Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

We are determined to:

35. Ensure women's equal access to economic resources including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, *inter alia*, by means of international cooperation;

36. Ensure the success of the Platform for Action which will require a strong commit-

ment on the part of Governments, international organizations and institutions at all levels. We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Equitable social development that recognizes empowering the poor, particularly women living in poverty, to utilize environmental resources sustainably is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. We also recognize that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice. The success of the Platform for Action will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, sub-regional, regional and international institutions; a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy-making processes; the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women;

37. Ensure also the success of the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition, which will require continued international cooperation and assistance;

38. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes. We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action.



Platform deems 12 areas critical

No 1 worry is poverty

The Platform for Action adopted yesterday at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women urges all governments and international institutions to take concrete actions to implement all policies and programmes aimed at helping women overcome poverty.

The Platform says that women are continuously and increasingly burdened with poverty.

The poverty of women is No 1 on the Platform's list of 12 critical areas of concern.

The 150-page official document says that more than 1 billion people in the world today, the great majority of whom are women, live in unacceptable conditions of poverty. Poverty occurs in all countries — as mass poverty in many developing countries and as pockets of poverty amidst wealth in developed countries.

The document cites as the major cause of poverty the uncertain global economic climate accompanied by economic restructuring as well as, in certain countries, persistent, unmanageable levels of external debt and structural adjustment programmes, all types of conflicts, displacement of people, environmental degradation and the gender disparities in economic power-sharing.

In order to help women overcome poverty, all governments should review and modify, with the full and equal participation of women, macro-economic and social policies.

All governments should analyze, from a gender perspective, policies and programmes, and adjust them, as appropriate, to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services; pursue and implement sound and stable macro-economic and sectoral policies; and introduce measures to integrate or reintegrate women living in poverty and socially marginalized women into productive employment and the economic mainstream.

The Platform calls on all governments to enable women to obtain affordable housing and access to land, by, among other things, removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female heads of household.

Governments also are urged to formulate and implement policies and programmes that: enhance the access of women who farm or fish to financial, technical, extension and marketing services; promote household food security, especially in rural areas; and, where appropriate, encourage the development of producer-owned, mar-

ket-based co-operatives.

The Platform appeals for support to women in the form of legal services, legislative and administrative reforms and credit.

Multilateral financial and development institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and regional development institutions, should help provide services that target poor women and create an enabling environment that allows women to build and maintain sustainable livelihoods.

Equal access to education

The Platform notes that education is a basic human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys, and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men.

The literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society.

Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.

Although girls and boys have achieved equal access to primary education, girls lack full access to high-quality education. Science curricula in particular are gender-biased. More than two-thirds of the 960 million illiterate adults worldwide are women.

The Platform calls on governments to:

- Ensure by the year 2000 universal access to basic education and the completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children;
- Close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005 so as to achieve universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015;
- Eliminate gender disparities in access to all areas of tertiary education by ensuring that women have equal access to career development, training, scholarships and fellowships, and by adopting positive action when appropriate;
- Reduce the female illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 level by 2000, with emphasis on rural, migrant, refugee and internally displaced women and women with disabilities;
- Develop and implement education, training and retraining policies for women, especially young women and women re-

entering the labour market, to provide them with skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context and to improve their employment opportunities;

- Develop non-discriminatory education and training, including vocational training, in science and technology;

Good health is essential

The Platform says women have the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This right is vital to their life and well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life.

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, the Platform says. Women's health involves their emotional, social and physical well-being, and is determined by the social, political and economic context of their lives, as well as by biology.

However, health and well-being elude the majority of women. The major barriers to the highest attainable standard of health is inequality, both between men and women and among women in different geographical regions, social classes and indigenous and ethnic groups.

Actions proposed to governments include:

- Reaffirm the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, protect and promote the attainment of this right for women and girls and incorporate it into national legislation; review existing legislation, including health legislation, as well as policies, where necessary, to reflect a commitment to women's health and to ensure that they meet the changing roles and responsibilities of women wherever they reside;
- Design and implement gender-sensitive health programmes, including decentralized health services, that address the needs of women throughout their lives;
- Strengthen preventive programmes that address threats to women's health;
- Undertake gender-sensitive multisectoral initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other sexual and reproductive health issues;
- Promote research and information dissemination on women's health;
- Increase budgetary allocations for primary health care and social services, with adequate support for secondary and tertiary levels, and give special attention to the reproductive and sexual health of girls and women; priority should be given to health programmes in rural and poor urban areas;
- Establish, as appropriate, ministerial and inter-ministe-

rial mechanisms, for monitoring the implementation of women's health policy and programme reforms, and establish, as appropriate, high-level focal points in national planning authorities responsible for monitoring to ensure that women's health concerns are mainstreamed into government agencies and programmes.

Violence and women

The Platform says that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace, and a presupposition to raise women's status is to eliminate the effect of armed and other forms of conflicts.

The Platform says the term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

"Violence against women is exacerbated by social pressures, notably the shame of denouncing certain acts that have been perpetrated against women; the lack of laws that effectively prohibit violence against women; and the absence of educational and other means to address the causes and consequences of violence. Images in the media of violence against women, in particular, those that depict rape or sexual slavery as well as the use of women and girls as sex objects, including pornography, are factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence."

To eliminate violence against women, the Platform urges governments to condemn violence against women; provide women who are subjected to violence with access to the mechanisms of justice; enact and enforce legislation against the perpetrators of practices and acts of violence against women.

It also urges governments to provide shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services, and develop counselling, healing and support programmes for girls, adolescents and young women who have been or are involved in abusive relationships.

The document urges government to raise the awareness of the responsibility of the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men, as well as in eliminating patterns of media presentation that generates violence, and encourage those responsible for media content to establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct.

It calls on governments, international and non-governmental organizations to promote research, collect data and compile statistics, relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, especially domestic violence.

Governments should consider the ratification and enforcement of international conventions on trafficking in persons and slavery, develop educational and training programmes and policies and consider enacting legislation aimed at preventing sex tourism and trafficking, giving special emphasis to the protection of young women and children.

Armed conflicts

The Platform says that armed and other types of conflicts have not decreased since the end of the Cold War.

Women and children constitute 80 per cent of the 23 million refugees and of the 26 million displaced persons in the world.

The Platform points out that governments and international and regional organizations should increase and strengthen the participation of women in national reconciliation processes and reconstruction after all forms of conflict.

Governments should consider the ratification of or accession to international instruments containing provisions relative to the protection of women and children in armed conflict.

It also encourages governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to take all the necessary steps to ensure the right of refugee and displaced women to safe and protected passage as they return to their homes.

Economic, political role

The Platform devotes much space to women's economic participation and policy-making power.

On economic participation, the Platform says that in most parts of the world, women are virtually absent from or are poorly represented in economic decision-making, including the formulation of financial, monetary, commercial and other economic policies.

(Continued on Page 7)

Document calls nations to action

(Continued from Page 6)

Economic structures and policies have a direct impact on women's and men's access to economic resources, their economic power and consequently the extent of equality between them at the individual and family levels as well as in society as a whole.

Governments are urged to:

- Enact and enforce legislation to guarantee the rights of women and men to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;
- Adopt and implement laws against discrimination based on sex in hiring and promotion, the extension of employment benefits and social security, and working conditions;
- Eliminate discriminatory practices by employers and take appropriate measures in consideration of women's reproductive role and functions.

Strengthen mechanism

Governments and international organizations should strengthen state and international mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, the Platform says.

A state mechanism for the advancement of women has been established in almost every UN member state, but these mechanisms are marginalized in national government structures.

The mechanisms are frequently hampered by unclear mandates, lack of adequate staff, training, data, resources, and support from national political leadership.

At the regional and international levels, mechanisms and institutions to promote the advancement of women encounter similar problems emanating from a lack of commitment at the highest levels.

A national mechanism for the improvement of women's status is the central unit co-ordinating policy within government. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all

policy areas.

On this issue, the major actions governments and international organizations are to take include locating the mechanism at the highest possible level in the government under the responsibility of a cabinet minister.

Such state bodies should have clearly defined mandates and authority. Other critical elements are adequate resources, and the ability and competence to influence policy and formulate and review legislation.

Governments and the United Nations should intensify the collection and analysis of data related to women.

Improving position

The Platform notes that the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty. "Sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable are possible only through improving the economic, social, political, legal and cultural status of women."

The success of policies and measures aimed at supporting or strengthening the promotion of gender equality and the improvement of the status of women should be based on the integration of the gender perspective in general policies relating to all spheres of society as well as the implementation of positive measures with adequate institutional and financial support at all levels, the Platform says.

Media can contribute

The Platform affirms the potential exists everywhere for the media to make a far greater contribution to the development of women.

All governments and international organizations should en-

hance the role of traditional and modern mass media to promote the awareness of equality between women and men effectively.

The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in various media communications must be changed.

Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world.

In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products also negatively affect women and their participation in society.

To immediately change the situation, strategic goals should be taken, such as increase the participation and enhance the access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and communication technologies, and to promote a balanced portrayal of women in the media.

All governments should support women's education, training and employment and ensure women's equal access to all areas and levels of the media, and encourage the development of educational and training programmes for women.

Governments should also promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communications with a view to promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their roles.

Universal rights

The Platform says that the human rights of women and girls are an inalienable, indivisible and integral part of universal human rights. A full and equitable share of all human rights and basic freedoms by women and girls is a priority for all governments and the United Nations, and this is crucial to the advancement of women.

Governments should: Work actively towards ratifi-

cation or accession to, and implementation of, international and regional human rights treaties;

Ratify or accede to and ensure implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women so that universal ratification of the Convention can be achieved by 2000;

Develop a comprehensive human rights education programme to raise awareness among women of their human rights and among others of women's human rights;

Take urgent measures to achieve universal ratification of, or accession to, the Convention on the Rights of the Child before the end of 1995.

Provide constitutional guarantees and enact appropriate legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex for all women and girls;

Take urgent action to combat and eliminate violence against women.

Protecting ecosystem

The Platform calls on all governments to involve women in environmental decision-making at all levels.

Governments also are to ensure the integration of gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development, and establish or strengthen mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

Resource depletion, the degradation of natural systems and the dangers of polluting substances have increased markedly in the past decade.

"The worsening conditions are destroying fragile ecosystems and displacing communities, especially women, from productive activities and are an increasing threat to a safe and healthy environment," the Platform says.

Take care of our girls

The Platform appeals for immediate measures by all governments to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against girls and violation of their rights.

It sets forth nine strategic goals for this purpose, including ending all forms of discrimination against girls, eliminating negative cultural attitudes and actions against them, abolishing discrimination in education, technological development, health care, nutrition and other aspects, and stopping violence against them.

Governments of all nations should develop and implement comprehensive policies, plans of action and programmes for girls' survival, protection, development and advancement, eliminate the injustice and obstacles in relation to inheritance, and ensure an equal right to inherit, regardless of the sex of the child.

Governments should also enact laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage and raise the minimum age for marriage where necessary.

Governments should ensure universal and equal access to and completion of primary education by all children and eliminate the gap between girls and boys.

All governments, international and non-governmental organizations should provide public information concerning the removal of discriminatory practices against girls in food allocation, nutrition and access to health services, and take all measures to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

Governments should protect children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to harm or to interfere with their education, health or their physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. (Xinhua)

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