

Every Woman, Every Right, Every Minute

Everyone is Responsible: and the Time is Now

NGO Forum on Beijing +20

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5 November, 2014

act | advance | achieve | women's rights

We, the 700 participants in our diversity from around 350 groups, networks, and institutions and 56 countries, of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region, gathered in Geneva from 3-5 November 2014 for the NGO Forum review of the Beijing Platform for Action and recommendations for the future. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace was a historic political commitment to women's rights and empowerment to advance gender equality and take forward the ethos of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Beijing message, building upon the prior international conferences on women; population and environment was clear, to the point and relevant today as 20 years ago: *Women's rights and gender equality are central to the world's attainment of equality, sustainability, development and peace.*

Today, we still aspire for a world – including our ECE region - where women in our diversity and everywhere enjoy our human rights, realise our full potential, and are fully respected members of society; a world in which our lifestyles, economies and relations contribute to the harmony of society, ecology and human wellbeing. We want a world free of violence; a world of peace, where democracy thrives and women can enjoy and exercise their full rights as citizens. **A world of accountability for all and by all.**

Celebrating Achievements in ECE Region

Beijing was about redistribution of power, resources, and opportunities between women and men; and fundamentally addressed patriarchy and stereotyping.

We recognise and celebrate the significant achievements made in this region impacting women's lives as well as at policy and institutional level.

1. Tremendous progress has been made **on education** in many countries in the region. Many girls and young women have opportunities to access to tertiary and vocational education, although regional disparities still exist.
2. Fewer women die in pregnancy and childbirth from preventable causes and more women have access to modern contraception. However, there is lack of access to information and services mostly for young women, minority, indigenous and migrant women.
3. Strong women's organizations and civil society networks in communities exist supporting women's empowerment and advancing rights and equality. In some countries there is restrictive space for civic engagement and women's groups remains underfunded.
4. Increased numbers of women in decision making, although uneven across sectors and regions.
5. Strong institutional frameworks at national and international levels, including the establishment of UN Women. However, these remain largely underfunded and poorly resourced.
6. Strong normative, legal and policy frameworks to address a range of issues including women in decision making, education policies and responding to violence against women. While these are undermined by the lack of full implementation, compliance and accountability.
7. Data collection and dissemination has improved, but there is still an immense need for more gender, age, marital status, geographical and income disaggregated data and information.
8. Gender responsive budgeting has been a positive approach in the region though not applied to all sectors by all countries.
9. UN Security Council Resolution 1325/2000 and subsequent resolutions focusing on violence against women, a result of women's organising, was landmark. However impunity continues.

The ECE region is economically and socially diverse, and many changes over the last 20 years raise **deep concerns** for sustainability, women's and human rights. We are at a tipping point as a region with convergence of multiple crises: financial, energy, climate and food. The austerity measure response to the economic and financial crises has resulted in unprecedented unemployment, drastic cuts to public expenditures, and household level social and economic insecurity, disproportionately impacting women and girls led to a crisis of democracy and progressive values and is pushing women back into traditional roles. We recognize the global demographic shift to an aging population - particularly relevant to our ECE Region. The global gap between rich and poor grows daily. According to UNECE, *“Since 1995 progress has been stagnant, uneven and a reversal of gains in some areas. Measures dealing with the financial crisis have been gender insensitive.”*

We face a myriad of threats to the Beijing commitments. Women experience time poverty; overburdened by unrecognised care work deriving from their role in reproduction. In addition to the technocratic discourse and gender mainstreaming approaches we must emphasize addressing the underlying and root causes of inequality. Violations of and threats to girls and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights call for protection and advancement of the Beijing Platform for Action and prior commitments, ICPD and CEDAW in the post 2015 agenda as well as regional instruments such as the Council of Europe Convention on Any Violence Against Women (Istanbul Convention). The women's agenda has thus remained at the traditional social and micro levels; yet transformation requires addressing the structural and macro issues that perpetuate inequalities, discrimination and exclusion.

Militarization is increasingly used as the answer to conflict, resulting in gross violations of human rights of women and girls not only in this region but globally, and increasing military and arms expenditures at the expense of social and human rights protections. The increase in violent extremism, bio-politics, and wide range of population phobias, has resulted in the restriction of individual freedoms.

The government approach to development cooperation has been shifting, inextricably linking development, aid, trade, investment and foreign policy; thus reducing women's rights to a sub-text of global capitalism rather than central to achievement of peace and sustainable development. Financing for civil society and women's organising has been reduced to government subcontracting, jeopardizing fundamental civil society self-organizing and partnership.

We are especially appalled by the situation of women in particular regions on particular issues. The increasing unemployment in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, as well as complacency to women's issues Western Europe and North America. Violence against women and girls remains pervasive, and further perpetuated through technology and social media. Racial discrimination, especially against migrants who are often undocumented and have no public voice, results in gross violations of women's rights. Women in vulnerable situations, including indigenous women and women with disabilities, experience disproportionate rights violations; while girls and older women lack social protections. Girls and young women face psychological pressures, including sexualisation of their bodies and destructive body image.

Therefore, we call for:

1. Fulfilment of the Beijing commitments to all interconnected and universal human rights and systematic implementation of a women's rights approach; buttressed by an accountability and resourcing framework.

2. Women are at the heart of sustainable development and the post-2015 SDG agenda must include a clear and **stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's rights** with clearly articulated means of implementation for women's rights and empowerment. In addition girls and women's rights must be recognized throughout the other SDG goals and specific strategies.
3. CEDAW must remain the framework for monitoring and accountability of government commitments.
4. We call for women's equal access to resources including land, credit and funding towards an intergenerational social, cultural, development, environmental, economic, civil and political rights and justice;
5. Invest in women and girls' rights including Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights; end violence against all women and girls, particularly ending child, early and forced marriage as well as FGM;
6. Urgent and systematic focus on women of all ages as users, shapers and leaders of new technologies.

Every woman, every right, every minute. Everyone is responsible. The time is now.

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Declaration adopted on 5th of November, 2014 at the UN offices of Geneva; Switzerland.