

act | advance | achieve | women's rights

*Every Woman, Every Right, Every Minute
Everyone is Responsible. The Time is Now.*

Geneva NGO Forum on Beijing +20

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5 November, 2014

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 is as relevant today as it was 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 our full rights as citizens. **A world of accountability for all and by all.**

Celebrating Achievements in the 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 levels.

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, and at all levels, support women's empowerment and advance 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 Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women at national and international levels, including the establishment of UN Women. However, these remain largely underfunded and poorly resourced, particularly in countries that have reduced their annual revenues through tax cuts and other fiscal measures.
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. However, 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, and disability 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 rights 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 and tax or fiscal consolidation response to the economic and financial crises has resulted in unprecedented unemployment, drastic cuts to public expenditures, and household level and overall social and economic insecurity, disproportionately impacting women and girls. 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 unpaid work deriving from their stereotypical role in reproduction. In addition to gender mainstreaming approaches, we must emphasize addressing the root causes of inequality. Violations of and threats to girls and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights call for protection and implementation 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). Transformation requires addressing the structural and macro issues that perpetuate inequalities, discrimination and exclusion.

The increase in violent extremism, bio-politics, and wide range of population phobias, has resulted in the restriction of individual freedoms. 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 approach to development cooperation has been shifting, inextricably linking development, aid, trade, investment and foreign policy; 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 specific regions on certain issues. Increasing unemployment in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, and complacency toward women's issues Western Europe and North America, reinforce and compound one another. Violence against women and girls remains pervasive, and is 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 delivered through and monitored by strong well-funded Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women at every level of government; buttressed by an accountability, resourcing, tax and public fiscal and revenue framework capable of sustainably financing progressive realization of women's human rights.
2. Women are at the heart of sustainable development; 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. 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 demand women's equal access to resources including land, credit and funding towards intergenerational social, cultural, development, environmental, economic, civil and political rights and justice;
5. Robust and sustained investment in women and girls' rights including Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights; ending violence against all women and girls; and particularly ending child, early and forced marriage as well as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
6. Urgent and systematic focus on women of all ages as users, shapers and leaders of new technologies.
7. Sharing power with young women and girls as leaders and agents of change and ensuring responsibility and accountability of men and boys for gender equality.

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

We acknowledge the facilitation of the NGO Forum by NGO CSW-Geneva and the support from Governments of Switzerland, Geneva International, City of Geneva as well as governments of Canada, Netherlands, USA, and France, among others. We deeply extend our gratitude to the UN Economic Commission for Europe, United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) and UN Women for their collaboration.

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

Our recommendations

1. Women's Rights are Human Rights : Accountability and Resources

- a. Resource full commitment and implementation of CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Resolution 1325, and all human rights instruments as the global policy framework for women's rights, empowerment, and gender equality and ensure mainstreaming across all post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and frame as **a stand-alone goal** with robustly resourced indicators.
- b. Partner and adequately fund women's organizations and civil society for advancing and implementing the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action and the post-2015 agenda.
- c. Implement existing laws and policies that protect human rights for all women, every minute and everywhere, especially for girls, young women and older women, ethnic minorities, indigenous women, Roma women and girls, women with disabilities, rural women, and LGBTI persons.
- d. Ensure that all gender-mainstreaming is 'twin-track,' with provision for special programmes for women and girls including women-only spaces.
- e. Ensure robust financial and human resources for national machineries and entities for gender equality, including bilateral and multilateral institutions such as the United Nations.
- f. Strengthen oversight mechanisms such as parliament and ombudspersons.
- g. Ensure comprehensive monitoring frameworks for gender equality through well-resourced national machineries, independent human rights institutions and comprehensive disaggregated data.
- h. Ensure access to justice redress and remedial actions in cases of violations of women's human rights.
- i. Ensure full civil and birth registration for all.
- j. Develop, implement and fully fund legal aid systems, accessible to all women especially in rural areas and vulnerable situations, ensuring competency of legal consultants to provide legal assistance including in economic, family, civil and criminal matters.
- k. Support the legal literacy of all women and girls.
- l. The promotion and protection of women's human rights is the responsibility of all, especially governments and society, including men and boys.

2. Violence Against Women and Conflict : Building a Culture of Peace

Violence Against Women

- a. Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls
- b. All programmes to prevent and eradicate VAW must include women of all ages, including indigenous women, women with disabilities, widows, single mothers, child witnesses of domestic violence, women in armed conflict and post-conflict settings, women murdered under discourses of honour, lesbian and trans women, and rural women.
- c. Eradicate harmful practices including child, early and forced marriage, discrimination against widows, FGM and sexualisation of girls' and women's bodies.
- d. End criminalisation of victims and impunity of perpetrators through effective gender justice systems, and acting in solidarity with women and girls experiencing conflict, forced prostitution, occupation, violations of sexual and reproductive rights, and situations of crisis including in Ukraine and Palestine.

- e. Grant migrant women and undocumented women who are victims of forced prostitution and trafficking with residence permits, and develop prevention policies in countries of origin.
- f. Implement, with due diligence and accountability, existing laws and policies through protection, service provision, prevention, prosecution, and partnership with women's organizations.
- g. Sign, ratify and effectively implement the Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women.
- h. Transform gender stereotypes that normalize and trivialise violence against women and girls.
- i. Ensure national laws criminalize non-State torture perpetrated by non-State actors and hold perpetrators accountable for gender-based non-State torture crimes.
- j. Redefine masculinities, resocialize and educate boys to respect women and girls, and increase participation and accountability of men and boys in violence prevention and gender equality.
- k. Partner with faith based communities and cultural leaders to prevent violence against women and girls.
- l. Establish non-discriminatory reporting systems and support victims during legal processes as well as gender sensitive training of police and legal professionals.
- m. Provide One-Stop Centers with medical/legal/social supports for victims, and fully resource short term shelters and permanent affordable housing for women and children as well as vocational training for survivors to become self-supporting.
- n. Address new and emerging forms of violence against women and girls, including violence as a consequence of new technologies, and ensure cyber safety for girls.

Women and Conflict

- a. Military expenditure has grown globally by 2% each year since 1995. Reduce military expenditure by a minimum of 2 percent per annum to bring compliance with the Beijing Platform for Action and robustly resource development to ensure progressive realization of social and economic rights from a gender perspective.
- b. Implement Resolution 1325 through applying affirmative action/quota systems for decision-making in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace-making and peace building.
- c. Ensure conflict prevention by addressing power structures that facilitate and encourage conflict and occupation. The political economy of power, the cause of violence at all levels, is highly gendered.
- d. Implement and enforce a new norm of accountability and end liability of victims and impunity of perpetrators, including perpetrators of the violence of occupation as well as arms traders.
- e. Ensure the equal participation of women in peace processes providing financial support to them to organise during conflict and under occupation and engage in meaningful consultations.
- f. Ensure continued social, economic and psychological support for women after agreements have been reached to maintain women's participation post-conflict.
- g. Prioritise support for women in situations of displacement to end their invisibility, address issues such as sexual violence, killings under the discourse of honour, civil status and statelessness, and trafficking and sexual exploitation including early marriage.
- h. Grant asylum to women and children who flee their country by recognizing sexual and gender-based violence as legitimate grounds for asylum.
- i. Consult with women in the military as to how to change military cultures which condone, encourage and deepen violence against women.

3. Poverty, Economics and Social Development : Money Matters

- a. Develop an alternative macro-economic framework, based on women's human rights approaches, that institutionalizes feminist economics at all levels and in all policy domains, particularly in the tax, fiscal and transfer domains. Ensure transparency and facilitate monitoring by women's organizations.
- b. Institutionalise and implement gender responsive budgeting at all levels and in all policy domains, including in government procurement policies.
- c. Reform all national and other fiscal systems to provide progressive redistributive tax revenues that generate annual revenues sufficient to finance the progressive realization of women's equality rights, and to eliminate all gender discrimination and sex role stereotypes embedded in tax and spending measures.
- d. Eliminate the gender pay-gap and take necessary steps to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, implementing specific economic policies and measures for the lowest income segment.
- e. Ensure labour market policies and practices recognise and value motherhood and family care work, and ensure opportunities and support to balance these responsibilities with flexible work and careers and take effective measures to close the gender pension gap.
- f. Recognise the social and economic value of unpaid care work, and reduce the negative gendered impacts on women through redistribution of care services *within and* between households and adequate government services.
- g. Address women's time poverty by resourcing and ensuring access to high-quality public services and infrastructure including clean water, energy, transportation, ICTs, health care and childcare.
- h. Adopt, implement and enforce laws on social protection and against gender-based discrimination in the labour market and within the economy, including the informal economy.
- i. Promote women's entrepreneurship and economic autonomy/empowerment through education, training, resources and innovation; with special focus on women in vulnerable situations.
- j. Ensure and extend the provision of social protection in times of economic crisis, especially part-time workers, unpaid care workers, and women working in informal or other sectors in precarious jobs.
- k. Ensure women's access to safe, secure and adequately paid work, free of intimidation, harassment and violence.
- l. Ensure and monitor that investment and trade policies and practices respect local ownership and management of natural resources, including water, minerals, energy resources and forests, in the region and globally.
- m. Regulate and hold companies based in ECE countries accountable for women's rights and abuses, including banks and multi-nationals, especially in extractive industries in countries around the world. Use the UN guiding principle for Business and Human Rights as a basis for legal frameworks.
- n. Introduce disability-responsive budgeting; invest in programmes to address lack of education and unemployment among women and girls with disabilities; ensure lifelong protection of human rights.

- o. Implement a broad-based program of study and knowledge mobilization on the causes of poverty, broadening the scope and understanding of the causes including impacts of divorce on women, in response to the unacceptable rates of people living under and around the poverty line in ECE countries.

4. Participation and Decision-Making, Shifting Power

- a. Implement measures to achieve an equal distribution of decision-making power between women and men, including parity/quotas in political leadership, economic governance and all other sectors, and ensure leadership that advances women's rights.
- b. Ensure governance and electoral systems are women-friendly, replacing plurality with proportional representation or mixed systems, and adopt other critical measures to ensure women's access to political and economic decision-making.
- c. Develop effective communication strategies that support women's access to decision making and ensure leadership that advances women's rights, including gender equality in micro and macro- economic policy-making processes.
- d. Ensure adequate financial, moral, social support and opportunities for all women's effective participation in political and public life; including to women's organisations and networks.
- e. Include women's and feminist NGOs and lobby groups in legal and decision-making processes to ensure women's perspectives and realities are reflected and addressed in law and policy.
- f. Develop and strengthen mechanisms for young women's participation in political leadership.
- g. Abide by the duties to develop democratic societies and civic dialogue; support women's organisations and protect human rights activists/defenders.
- h. Make institutional arrangements for a Fifth World Conference on Women to address emerging gender equality issues, women's access to power and decision-making, and creating and strengthening institutional mechanisms for women's rights. Broadcast the Conference over the Internet.
- i. Ensure public sector and parliamentary accountability to women's rights and empowerment through gender-responsive policy, budgeting and programmes.
- j. Robustly resource, and reverse austerity funding cuts to, institutional mechanisms that advocate for women's rights and gender equality.
- k. Ensure strong and robustly-funded Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women to protect achievements from being eroded and to further advance gender equality and women's rights, and do not cut tax revenues which are an important source of funding for gender equality and women's rights.
- l. Ensure that the entire public sector is gender-aware and actively working for gender equality, including through public sector reform and networks to support gender-responsive policy and action.

5. Environment and Climate Justice : People and Planet

- a. Recognise women's rights and gender equality as central to the achievement of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.
- b. Systematically include a women's rights and gender equality perspective in all aspects of domestic and development environmental, climate, water, forest, biodiversity, transport and energy policy, research and data collection at all levels.
- c. Incorporate intergenerational and gender equality in climate and environmental policy and programmes through increased participation of young women in decision-making at all levels, including the UNFCCC.
- d. Ensure legal and policy protection of indigenous and women's rights in land and natural resources, extraction and pollution prevention, especially by private interests and corporations.
- e. Invest in innovative alternative technologies and recognise and value indigenous-owned knowledge for environmental and climate justice.
- f. Ensure effective participation of women for climate governance at all levels.
- g. Ensure women's access to, control over and ownership of land and natural resources, including in post-conflict, post-disaster and post-displacement situations.
- h. Prevent and monitor the trafficking of women and girls following environmental and climate-related disasters.
- i. Hold ECE-based corporations accountable for women's rights violations, including gender-based and sexual violence, in all communities where industries are located.
- j. Reduce the burden of climate change on women vis à vis commitments made by governments and the impacts of development and environmental policies.
- k. Ensure adequate resourcing for environmental and climate justice, including for eliminating reliance on high risk energy sources such as fossil fuels and nuclear energy, especially for communities at risk and for women's networks and organisations as partners for change.

6. Human Rights and Migrant Women : Together in Solidarity (Women and Poverty)

- a. Uphold and promote equality and non-discrimination for all migrant women, recognizing first and foremost their humanity and dignity.
- b. Reframe the discourse and framework on migrant women to recognize that human rights are women's rights, which are inherently migrant women's rights.
- c. Extend the Beijing Platform for Action with specific reference to the condition of all migrant women and girls, regardless of status.
- d. Ratify and fully implement all international conventions on migration as well as international labour standards to strengthen the protection of migrant women.
- e. Empower migrant women to self-organize, support migrant women's organizations, and facilitate networking and advocacy by migrant organizations and women organizations.
- f. Recognize and regularize all migrant women and their children; extend social protection, social security, and full health care, including covering sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- g. Support migrant family unity and integrity by family reunification policies and an immediate end to deportation practices that separate families.

- h. Provide equal treatment for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced women.
- i. Provide quality secondary, vocational, and tertiary education and lifelong learning for migrant girls and women particularly to support integration and access to employment.
- j. Allocate robust financial, political, diplomatic and legislative resources and efforts to prevent trafficking of girls and women, recognizing the lifelong impacts of displacement, lack of legal protection, and associated trauma.

7. Women and Health: Wellbeing for All

- a. Protect women's rights and freedom of choice to control their body, fertility and sexuality.
- b. Ensure political will, commitment to and investment in making sexual and reproductive health and rights a reality for all, including ensuring access to age-appropriate evidence-based comprehensive sexuality and HIV education, as well as women's and girls' access to legal, safe, modern and free contraception, abortion services and family planning to end preventable maternal mortality and morbidity.
- c. Urgently address the emerging incidence of sex selection and foetal abortion in some ECE countries.
- d. Ensure accessible, affordable and quality health care services to all to ensure health for women and reduce women's unpaid care burden.
- e. Ensure gender specific health research *and* medical practices.
- f. Provide comprehensive mental health care services and support for all women of all ages.
- g. Provide effective health care services targeted at non-communicable diseases, including diabetes and heart disease.
- h. Provide free breast cancer screening and free access to testing for and treatment of cervical cancer, especially Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in young women.
- i. Leverage opportunities of technology for women's access to health information and services.
- j. Protect women's rights and choice to control our bodies, fertility and sexuality.
- k. Support and promote nutrition for holistic health and well-being.
- l. Protect and fulfill women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- m. Protect the right of women to decide freely whom to marry and whether and when to marry and have children.
- n. Ensure every woman has access to a clean and healthy environment, especially water, sanitation and clean cooking technologies.
- o. Ensure women's equal access to health care services throughout her life course, including women's shelters, without discrimination based on legal or migration status, disability, sexual exploitation, sex work, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, age or religion.

8. Girls, Ageing and Intergenerational Justice : Building a Common Future

- a. Adopt an intergenerational justice approach to women's human rights and empowerment, recognising the specific priorities, needs and circumstances of women at different of stages of their life course, especially for girls and older women, and mothers.

- b. Eliminate age-based stereotypes which undermine the full potential and effective participation and leadership of women and girls of all ages.
- c. Develop an international convention on the rights of older persons incorporating rights articulated in CEDAW.
- d. Raise and implement the legal minimum age of marriage to 18, as part of full implementation of CRC and CEDAW.
- e. Recognize young women as a critical population group in achieving development and ensure young women's effective participation in leadership and decision-making at all levels.
- f. Ensure older women adequate income to live in dignity and implement social protection laws and policies that enable older women to be autonomous, full participants in the development of society.
- g. Recognize and address the intergenerational dimensions of all forms of violence, abuse and neglect.
- h. Collect, analyze, report and utilize data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and marital status.
- i. Enable age-friendly rural and urban physical and social environments, structures and services accessible to, and inclusive of, older women with varying capacities, especially women with disabilities.
- j. Recognise and support intergenerational mentorship and solidarity through specific activities including in care work.
- k. Ensure that every girls enjoys full human rights, including mutual respect and equal partnership between girls and boys and among women and girls of all ages.

9. Education, Science, Technology and Innovation : Transformation for All

- a. Fulfill every woman and girl's right to safe, quality free education including primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education.
- b. Ensure that every girl has access to age-appropriate evidence-based comprehensive sexuality and HIV education.
- c. Ensure leadership development, social and life skills for girls; enhance confidence, integrity, and critical thinking skills.
- d. Include human rights education in school curricula at all levels to promote of culture of peace, inclusion, respect for diversity and women's rights.
- e. Promote the importance of girls' education, providing incentives to encourage communities in vulnerable situations to send their daughters to school, and eliminate discrimination against children from minority ethnic and social groups.
- f. Bridge the gendered digital divide through increase the use of technology, for access to quality education, especially in conflict and insecure situations.
- g. Resource community-based safe spaces for inclusive, continuing and lifelong education.
- h. Actively promote initiatives to improve girls' awareness about and involvement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and encourage private companies in the ICT field to offer gender-balanced internship opportunities.
- i. Support and encourage educational programmes to increase the digital and scientific literacy of women and girls.

- j. Ensure use of ICTs in schools, include Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in curricula, enhance girls' awareness and involvement in STI, hence increasing the digital and scientific literacy of women and girls.
- k. Encourage the private sector to collect, analyze and share data on gender perspectives in STI to document the gaps in access for women and girls and develop strategies to address these gaps, including practical support to young women scientists.
- l. Build a new platform for cooperation and networking among all actors to facilitate advancement of women.

10. Media and Communications : Breaking Stereotypes

- a. Develop effective legislation and gender-responsive policy that prohibits sex/gender discrimination in all forms of media and communications, and establish regulatory mechanisms to monitor gender discrimination and stereotyping.
- b. Ensure media regulation to stop the proliferation of negative and violent images, videos and stereotypes that degrade, undermine the dignity of women, and violate their rights and privacy.
- c. Develop and regularize training on women's rights and gender stereotypes for all media professionals.
- d. Support, develop and finance alternative media, created and owned by women, that portrays women as leaders and positive role models working for development and peace.
- e. Ensure protection for women journalists and human rights defenders, especially in politically sensitive environments including conflict situations.
- f. Harness the potential of social media to advance women's human rights and empowerment while ensuring adequate protection, privacy and safety of women.

The NGO Forum appreciates all the partners that supported the NGO Review, especially the Swiss Federal Government, Geneva International, the City of Geneva, and the governments of Canada and USA. We also acknowledge the partnership with Economic Commission on Europe (ECE), United Nations (UN) with UN Women, as well as the extensive volunteer support and contributions of women's and feminist organizations and individuals. The forum was convened by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) in Geneva. Further information is available on <http://beijing20.ngocsw-geneva.ch/>.