



**Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of
implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

**Report of the Expert Consultation
New York, USA
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Organized by

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the experts and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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I. Background

1. The ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was carried out during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2005. The review and appraisal indicated that while there had been significant progress over the past decade in terms of policy reforms, legislative change, and institutional development, much remained to be done in terms of implementation. Positive developments included the establishment of national policies and strategies for gender equality in almost all countries. Member States reported increased diversity in the mechanisms at national level for promoting and monitoring the achievements of gender equality (such as gender equality commissions, ombudspersons offices and parliamentary networks and caucuses), as well as innovative approaches including increased attention to resource allocations through gender-sensitive budgeting, and efforts to engage men and boys more actively in promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.
2. Despite progress made, however, the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remain far from being fully achieved. While some gains had been realised in relation to each of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern in all regions, obstacles and challenges were reported in every area. A large gap exists between policy and practice which needs to be explicitly addressed. Persistent gaps in all regions included low levels of women's representation in decision-making positions; stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices; and discrimination in employment, including occupational segregation and wage gaps. Violence against women, including domestic violence, was noted as a major challenge worldwide. In some regions, Governments noted disproportionately high poverty levels among women, and their insufficient access to or control of economic resources. Governments also noted the serious impact of conflict on women, and including gender based violence. Member States Countries reported the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and trafficking in women and girls.
3. The review and appraisal heightened awareness that the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly - together with the outcomes of other intergovernmental processes, such as Security Council resolution 1325, as well as the articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - remain the global framework for promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.
4. The Declaration adopted, by consensus, by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session, reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Declaration welcomed the progress made thus far towards achieving gender equality, stressed that challenges and obstacles remain in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and in this regard, pledged to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation.

5. The Declaration also emphasized that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration further recognized that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.

6. In 2006 the Commission on the Status of Women will hold its fiftieth session. The fiftieth session of the Commission provides a unique opportunity to identify ways to enhance implementation and to identify key issues to be addressed in the follow-up to the ten year review in the context of the discussion of its working methods and the development of its new multi-year programme of work from 2007.

7. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) organized an Expert Consultation on “Priorities in the follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” in New York, from 31 October to 3 November 2005 in order to identify priority issues in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The consultation is also expected to make a contribution to the preparations for the development of a multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women from 2007. The report which follows is the outcome of this consultation and presents the findings of its independent experts.

8. The Consultation was attended by invited representatives of regional and international networks from Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Africa and North America.

9. At the conclusion of the expert consultation, the experts were invited to present their findings at a panel attended by representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations on 3 November 2005 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

II. Organization of work

A. Participation

10. The Expert Consultation on “Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” was attended by nine experts from different regions. Support to the experts was provided by representatives from DAW (see Annex I).

B. Documentation

11. The documentation for the meeting consisted of:

- An Aide-Memoire prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women

- Nine papers prepared by experts

12. This report of the independent experts and all documentation relating to the consultation are available on-line at the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>.

C. Programme of work

13. At its opening session on 31 October 2005, the meeting adopted the following programme of work (Annex III):

- I - Opening session
 - Election of officers and adoption of the programme of work
 - Presentation and discussion of papers prepared by experts
 - Drafting groups
 - Finalization of report in plenary

- II - Presentation of the findings of the Expert Consultation at a panel discussion for Member States, United Nations entities, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations and academic

D. Election of officers

14. The experts elected the following officers:
Chair: Ms. Dima Dabbous-Sensenig
Co-Chair: Ms. Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng and
Rapporteur: Ms. Meagen Baldwin

E. Opening statement

15. The meeting was opened by Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women. In her welcoming statement (Annex IV), Ms. Hannan expressed deep appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations for hosting the Expert Consultation and welcomed the representatives of regional and sub-regional networks from around the world. In her statement, Ms. Hannan pointed out the positive developments and remaining challenges that emerged from the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. She noted that the consultation provided an opportunity to share experiences and insights on enhancing implementation at national level, through identifying priority issues which would require attention in the follow-up to the ten-year review. She encouraged the experts to outline why these priority issues were critical for moving forward, and identify the strategies required to address them.

III. Identification of priority issues

We stress the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. We recognize that all individuals in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.

(Outcome document Millennium Summit, 2000)

16. During the expert consultation, a number of priorities and strategies were identified by the experts:

- Economic justice
- Women in armed conflict
- Women's human rights
- Access to information (access and use of)
- Sustainable development/environment.
- Human security
- Violence against women
- Women's health issues
- Gender mainstreaming and women in decision-making
- Citizenship
- Governance and democracy
- Poverty

17. One of the main challenges faced by the experts during the consultation was to prioritize these issues, recognizing that much had been achieved at a policy level and to identify strategies to address the problems arising as a result of the gaps between policy and practice/implementation.

18. Taking into consideration the specific experience of participants, the experts focused on the first four priorities. Human security, gender-mainstreaming and women in decision-making were considered cross-cutting themes across the priority areas. The focus on these four areas did not detract from the importance or priority of the other issues/strategies; rather these four areas represented the main areas of expertise and experience within the panel. The gender perspectives of environmental policy and degradation were considered important by the experts, particularly as the issues are relatively less developed in the Beijing Platform for Action. However, environment was considered as a cross-cutting issue in the Expert Consultation.

19. In this report, the experts assume a broad definition of human security although they did not have the time to explore all aspects of the complexities of the term. The experts felt strongly that human security must be related to the Beijing Platform for Action and must incorporate a non-militarized understanding of human security.

20. The experts recognised that the linkages between issues identified are critical to understanding the multi-layered and multi-faceted aspects of these issues and their impact on women. The priority issues identified are complex and cannot be adequately addressed or challenged without understanding the inter-connections and without placing them in a broader context.

21. For each identified priority, the panel made a number of recommendations and identified strategies to *accelerate* the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This report summarizes these recommendations within the relevant sections.

22. A number of strategies were considered as cross-cutting, covering several of the identified priority issues:

Access to information

23. The participants recognized that access to and use of knowledge and information and the rights to generate/share knowledge and information was critical to progress in all areas. Discussions on access to information highlighted the need for information to be culturally, politically and contextually appropriate and for it to be timely and available in local languages. The flow of information should be in two directions: information must be available *to women* to inform their daily lives and decisions; and information must flow *from women* to policy-makers to inform and influence policy-making.

Access to decision-making

24. Women's voices, experience, concerns, and solutions need to be brought into decision-making. Recognizing that including women in decision-making positions is critical in advocating for the empowerment of women, the experts also discussed the importance of looking at which women took on these roles and who these women represent. Women decision-makers need to be heard but equally they need to be representative of women and to actively participate in influencing policy and decisions that impact on women. The importance of having 'effective' women in decision-making (and not assuming that women decision-makers *per se* will be supportive or aware of gender equality issues) and supporting their role as decision makers (through training, information etc) was emphasized. Using quotas, requires caution to ensure that they serve as a threshold rather than as a ceiling to the number of women in decision making positions.

25. Women should work to influence male decision-makers rather than ignore or absolve them of their responsibilities. Men should equally be encouraged and educated to promote and protect the rights of women.

Localizing content

26. The experts noted the importance of placing issues, challenges and strategies for change within local political and cultural contexts. The experts further noted that while issues are not necessarily specific to any one country or region, understanding them and developing appropriate strategies to address them requires consideration of local specificities.

Use of Legal Systems and Judiciary

27. The experts discussed the double-edged power of the legal system to both solve problems and to perpetuate inequality. The legal system could be used across a number of issues, and should include the use of both national and international legal systems and mechanisms.

Indigenous knowledge and practice

28. Although not sufficiently documented, experts noted that the use of traditional knowledge and practices have been effectively used to address several areas of concern for women, including in conflict areas to address health needs and ensure food security and sustainable societies and should be encouraged and supported. They noted that, when discussing indigenous and/or traditional practices, the usual assumption is that these are positive traditions and practices, particularly when they are discussed in conjunction with 'modern' practices being imposed or replacing them. The experts pointed out that not all traditions are good traditions and that it is important to make the distinction between 'beneficial' traditions and harmful ones.

Gender mainstreaming

29. The gender mainstreaming strategy is a prerequisite for the attainment of sustainable development, poverty reduction and peace and democracy. A number of persistent constraints hinder its implementation, including conceptual confusion and lack of real commitment. At the same time, knowledge exists on why gender mainstreaming hasn't worked and what elements are needed to make it work. Efforts should be made to commit to fully and effectively implementing gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve gender equality.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

30. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation was considered priority for measuring progress in relation to all policies, reforms and programmes.

Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325

31. The militarization of societies and the impact of armed conflict and its aftermath on women was repeatedly highlighted in the consultation. The specific targeting of women for attack as a method of warfare was discussed, as well as the continued absence of

women from negotiations and decision making in both conflict and post-conflict situations. The experts called for the full implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 at national level.

IV. Four key areas for action

32. The experts identified four key areas for action to ensure the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:

- (a) Economic justice
- (b) Women and armed conflict
- (c) Human rights of women
- (d) Access to information

A. Economic justice

33. The Beijing Platform for Action takes into account deep inequalities within and across countries and puts forward a comprehensive strategy for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The experts stressed that the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is an essential pre-requisite for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. For the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and those of the Millennium Summit to be achieved, it is important to find ways to ensure that women's rights are respected, women's voices are heard, women are involved in decision-making and that women are included in all the discussions that impact on their lives, including the 'economic' and 'trade' discussions. For this reason, the experts pointed out the importance of strengthening the linkages not only between the ten-year review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but also between these and economic and trade concerns. These concerns must be addressed to ensure that gender justice is linked to economic justice, at all levels – locally, regionally and internationally.

34. The experts expressed concern that economic and trade policies can exacerbate inequality and that the adjustment costs of unfair economic policies were often borne by women. The experts referred to the Report of the Secretary General on the Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century,"¹ in which a number of Member States had reported that globalization in the form of transformation of production patterns, accelerated technology innovation and macroeconomic policies, including structural adjustment and privatization, continued to present both opportunities and challenges. They observed that women suffered from increased poverty and unemployment, deteriorating working conditions and social insecurity and lower public expenditures. In many countries, relatively few educated and multi-skilled women enjoy benefits in the form of jobs, income, trade and investment markets. Low-skilled women workers remain

¹ Report of the Secretary-General on the Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (E/CN.6/2005/2) paragraph 284.

vulnerable to job instability, low incomes without employee benefits, heavy workloads, long hours and hazardous working environments.

35. The experts stressed that the enjoyment of economic rights is critical for women and men's human rights, employment, livelihoods and entitlements. They observed that increasing levels of national debt, trade liberalization and the implementation of structural adjustment programmes have increasingly reduced the pursuit of development as well as constricted the policy space for governments in addressing their own development needs. Most of the earlier policies and programmes used by countries that achieved high levels of development in recent years, such as the protection of infant industries and subsidies, are either no longer available or not available to the same extent under agreements currently being negotiated in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The experts considered that, while trade may lead to increased levels of gross national income, it can also exacerbate income inequality. As domestic policies to address and alleviate the negative impact of trade agreements are not discussed at the same table, these are unlikely to be implemented in a coherent and coordinated way.

36. Liberalization can create economic opportunities for men and women, but it can also increase inequalities within and among societies. In many cases there is a differential negative impact on women compared with men, leading to increased poverty of women, for instance in relation to the control and ownership of property, labour rights and within the legal system.

37. The experts also considered that the privatization of services and/or the 'reform' of private services undertaken to achieve 'efficiencies' can quite often have unintended results— with reform or privatization leading to higher user fees, unequal distribution of services, a lack of centralized decision-making and weakened delivery systems. Usually women and vulnerable groups bear the burden of these outcomes. It is also important to highlight however, that for some countries and regions where governments fail to take on their role of provider of public services, the private sector is the only provider of these services. In these contexts, many people from these countries welcome and encourage privatization and see it as the only way to receive services such as water, power and telephones. The quality and cost of these services becomes less important when the alternative is no service at all.

38. The experts agreed that the Sixth Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization in December, 2005, provided an opportunity to examine the implications of the proposed agreements. They noted that many compliant policy adjustments have reinforced the marginalized roles assigned to women as a result of globalization, increased their work burden especially in agriculture and export-oriented sectors, and increased female labour force participation in highly exploitative working conditions, such as the Export Processing Zones and the textiles industry. The phenomenon of a 'gender-equalization-down effect' (general lowering of wages and labour standards) has also been noted. Additionally, the experts expressed concerns that the widespread privatization of essential services (health, water supply, provision of electricity) resulted in increased prices, limited supply and reduced access; the reduction of tariffs contributed to the loss of public revenues that could be used for the provision of public services – and where the

reduction of revenue was 'paid for' by public services, women as the primary care - providers of families were disproportionately adversely affected.

39. Gender analysis of trade and economic policies suggest that poor and marginalized women are potentially the most vulnerable group. Alternative policies and practices should consider the gender perspective and socially responsible economic development.

40. The experts noted the following examples which are not socially responsible or did not consider the gender dimensions of the issues.²

- a) In many parts of Africa, farmers have suffered huge losses as a result of subsidies in traditional export destinations such as USA and European Union, which are estimated at 250 million dollars in direct costs and 1 billion dollars in indirect costs. As an example, cotton farmers in Africa (mostly women) cannot produce raw materials at competitive prices for international markets due to subsidies which give an unfair advantage to farmers in European and American countries. This has contributed to increased poverty and migration in cotton producing countries of Africa where cotton is as much as 40 per cent of total exports.
- b) In India, privatization of the health system has not resulted in significant improvements in reproductive health outcomes particularly for women in the last decade. Reforms in the health sector have resulted in an increase of user fees and an expansion of social health insurance; decentralization of decisions on service delivery; the promotion of public-private interactions in health services and the promotion of cost effective methods for priority setting. Benefits and entitlements did not reach those intended and health systems have in fact been weakened. Reduced access and increased fees are more likely to affect women as they are responsible for the health of the children and families, and need access to reproductive health services.

Recommendations

41. Governments should have the right to determine their own sustainable and gender-sensitive development policies, programmes and priorities and to implement these. These should be developed within an international human rights framework and be given priority over trade objectives and ensure a nation's right to decide on issues related to agriculture and people's food security. These policies should also not undermine a countries commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action or to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

42. Governments should take into account their own development needs and their level of development to allow gender-sensitive sustainable development to move to the next stage of development.

² Based on expert papers and inputs by experts during the consultation.

43. Governments should put in place the appropriate economic and legal policies to allow women to fully participate in economic activities at the local level and have equal access to benefits.
44. Governments should prioritize poverty reduction and implement strategies that are responsive to the specific needs of women.
45. Governments should evaluate and re-prioritize national budgets and curb military spending which diverts essential national resources from health, education, environmental protection and national needs, i.e. sectors which have a differential impact on women.
46. As 70 per cent of women are farmers and as women are most often responsible for feeding their families, Governments should ensure that they incorporate the gender dimensions of national sovereignty in issues related to agriculture and people's food security.
47. Civil society should advocate for the World Trade Organization to respect the right to sustainable gender-sensitive development and respect governments' autonomous rights to implement strategies to address its own development needs.
48. Civil society should pressure the World Trade Organization to introduce a review mechanism whereby governments can re-visit agreements following outcomes which negatively impact on the development of countries and the lives of the people, including women.
49. The United Nations should promote and encourage the full implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the conventions of the ILO that address gender perspectives in the labour market.
50. The United Nations, Governments and civil society should promote individuals' access (and demand access) to information on trade and its implications. Civil society should increase awareness among women and the general public on the impact of trade agreements on women in their daily choices and quality of life. With particular emphasis on the specific needs of women, civil society should provide training on economic literacy, on the implications of globalization and trade liberalization and the alternatives that citizens need to develop to support economic justice, including the use of popular education appropriate for the local context.
51. Civil society should encourage the involvement of women's groups in the development and implementation of economic policy at all levels – local, national, regional and international.
52. Civil society should incorporate research and participatory research methods in particular to combat poverty. Its advocacy and research work on gender equality should include local and grass root experience and expertise at all levels.

53. As women's decisions and behaviours as consumers are often undertaken on behalf of the family, they should ensure that these decisions and behaviours take into account the consequences for the environment in the short, medium and long term. Men should also take responsibility for their consumption decisions and behaviours.

B. Women and armed conflict

54. The aspirations expressed in the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirmed in the 2005 World Summit recognize that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.³

55. 95 per cent of the armed conflicts today are violent conflicts within states, not between states and nearly 90 per cent of all direct war and conflict-related deaths are men.⁴ The tragic loss of life has multiple impacts on women in all societies and especially in patriarchal societies: the number of widows and the number of single-parent families increases; women assume additional roles and responsibilities in care-giving, procuring a livelihood, securing food, and shelter and raising families; the vulnerability of women and children is increased during times of conflict; and after hostilities cease they are subject to many forms of violence and suffer greatly. War is increasingly characterized by intra-state conflicts, displacement and targeting of civilian populations and destruction of communities. War is destructive to all human beings, to the environment and to social structures. In addition, war exacerbates existing gender inequalities including gender-specific violence.

56. Women, men and children are impacted in *different* ways during and after conflict and gender is an important determinant of war-time vulnerability. Gender-based violence, displacement, marginalization and militarization impact millions of women. In a number of countries, women living in situations of armed conflict are frequently subjected to sexual violence by armed forces. Systematic organized military violation of women's human rights and violations of the rights of refugees and indigenous people occur in various forms, including rape and sexual slavery.

57. Reports indicate that systematic rape and sexual assault were encouraged by military leaders as a means of furthering war aims and reports indicate that the incidence of these crimes may be increasing. Rape as a 'weapon of war' was used in at least 13 countries between 2001 and 2004.⁵

58. Victims of sexual violence are at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases from their attackers—the most deadly being HIV/AIDS. Other diseases have long lasting effects, usually go untreated, either because they are not recognized or health care is non-existent or inadequate as a result of conflict.

³ 2005 World Summit Outcome, (A/60/L.1), paragraph 9.

⁴ "Human Security Report 2005: War and peace in the 21st Century", Human Security Centre, University of British Columbia, Canada, November 2005.

⁵ Ibid.

59. Age is also a factor of war-time vulnerability. Though the numbers are not easily determined, it is estimated that there are about 300,000 child soldiers world wide. During the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, an estimated 70 per cent of the soldiers were under 18, and in Liberia, approximately 40 per cent of the child soldiers were girls.⁶

60. Gender-based violence which is exacerbated by war, displacement and conflict is often not addressed and remedied. Generations of youth who know only conflict and war, do not experience supportive family, environmental and community structures and relationships. Global militarization, the accompanying ecological impact, and the diversion of resources from human needs should be recognized and advocacy done to increase the understanding of security in order to view it in terms of human security. The concept of national or state security that is based on acquisition of ever more destructive and available armaments and their use perpetuates the root causes of war.

61. The impact of armed conflicts continues long after the conflict has ended. Education systems become dysfunctional and food security becomes a major issue particularly for women who are more often responsible for feeding families. Thus, women usually need to venture beyond the home into unsafe areas, where unexploded ordinances and land mines restrict agricultural pursuits. Conflicts create conditions such as displacement and loss of livelihood in which people are vulnerable to trafficking. War exacerbates the incidence of gender-specific violence, but women continue to be subject to violence even when hostilities and killings cease. The psychological and physical impacts of conflict remain with communities long after the conflicts have officially ended.

62. Women can play a critical role in prevention of war and hostilities by advocating for cessation of violence, in peace building, trauma healing, disarmament and reconciliation. They are also increasingly involved not only as victims but also as combatants. Thus their specific needs should be considered in the planning and implementation of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programmes and return to civilian life. As the DDR programmes often require that weapons be surrendered by beneficiaries, women serving in roles other than combat, may not qualify to receive compensation or counselling.

63. In many societies, such as Northern Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea and Liberia, women play traditional and unique roles in reconciliation, peace-building and forgiveness to enable reintegration into the society. The experts gave the example of the Mano River Women's Peace Network, in which women of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea succeeded in influencing the peace process in Liberia and indirectly participated in drafting a new constitution through peace advocacy on the sidelines of the formal peace agreement negotiations. They subsequently sought to use this positive experience in the conflict in neighbouring Cote D'Ivoire. Nevertheless, women are usually not consulted in the formal process of negotiation and DDR, nor seated at the negotiation tables. Consequently, there is often failure to restore communities' sustainable peace or people's safety.

⁶ "Human Security Report 2005: War and peace in the 21st Century", Human Security Centre, University of British Columbia, Canada, November 2005.

64. The experts noted that not all traditional practices promoted the human rights and dignity of women. For example, in some societies, the traditional way to handle a woman who has been sexually violated is to kill her. The experts also raised their concern about the children born of rape. The traditional practices of Uganda and DDR, for example, do not address the needs of these children who are labelled and ostracised for life. Traditional methods of reconciliation in the age of modern wars killing masses of people, is difficult as the constructive traditional methods of reintegration and reconciliation of one individual at a time would need to be adapted to large groups.

65. The Beijing Platform for Action set out six strategic objectives⁷ within the critical area of concern on women and armed conflict:

- *To increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation;*
- *To reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments;*
- *To promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations;*
- *To promote women's contribution to a culture of peace;*
- *To provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women; and,*
- *To provide assistance to the women of colonies and non-self governing territories.*

66. The 10-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at national level indicated that there is now greater awareness in all these areas. The Security Council and many entities of the United Nations system have made progress in beginning to implement these strategies. However, the process of implementation is far from complete.

Recommendations

67. The United Nations should not only discuss and define the concept of human security within the General Assembly but should broaden and incorporate it in the deliberations of all United Nations entities, and encourage governments and civil society to promote a better understanding of the concept. The concept of human security should be interwoven and mainstreamed into all aspects of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

68. The United Nations, Governments and communities should recognize the traditional role that women play in many societies to achieve and maintain reconciliation, reintegration and trauma healing. Women should be fully involved in conflict prevention, in peace negotiations and in healing of war torn communities with their experience, knowledge and skills.

⁷ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. IV, Strategic objectives E.1.-E.6.

69. The United Nations, governments and civil society should press for progress in disarmament in all areas – nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and specifically small and light weapons which have immense impact on women.
70. Governments and civil society should seek to re-prioritize national budgets to fund human needs by diverting money from excessive military spending. Priority should be given to funding health, education, water supply and other priority areas. To this end, governments should include women in the process to ensure that their needs and the needs of their families are addressed and supported.
71. The United Nations, governments and civil society should address the root causes of conflict by enhancing democracy and transparent governance. Governments should involve women at all levels of governance and encourage them to exercise their rights, to vote and to run for office.
72. Governments and civil society should develop women's skills in early warning and conflict prevention, in conflict transformation and reconciliation, in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.
73. The United Nations should fully implement Security Council Resolution 1325. Governments, civil society and the United Nations should ensure that the provisions of Resolution 1325 are translated into local languages to ensure that it is accessible and has a wide application in local communities, and must guarantee the adequate budgetary funds allocated to broad implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325.
74. Civil society should work at the local and national levels to raise awareness of the provisions of the Security Council Resolution 1325 by organizing campaigns, media, educational training and workshops and by supporting initiatives to implement national action plans and policies on women, peace and security.
75. The United Nations should ensure that gender units in peacekeeping missions are adequately resourced financially and with appropriate personnel to undertake gender mainstreaming activities.
76. The United Nations and Governments should enhance and promote, interpret and implement the Beijing Platform for Action, in the context of a holistic and non-military understanding of human security.
77. The United Nations agencies and Governments should put in place gender-sensitive programmes addressing the specific reproductive health needs and trauma-related complications among women survivors of armed conflict. Humanitarian agencies should incorporate gender-specific needs in their relief supply packages.
78. Governments should remove landmines and unexploded ordinances which particularly affect women in agricultural work, in securing fuel and food.

79. Governments should sign and ratify the 1949 Geneva Refugee Convention. Governments and the United Nations should protect and assist internally displaced people (IDP), the majority of whom are women, since they do not fall within the scope of this Convention.

C. Human rights of women

80. At the World's Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the human rights of women and the girl-child were recognized as inalienable, integral and indivisible of universal human rights. The Beijing Platform for Action reaffirmed that the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.⁸

81. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, Member States agreed to take action to fully recognize and implement the human rights of women as one of the critical areas of concern. In order to comply with their commitments, States should recognize, protect and ensure human rights of women both at the international and the national level. While many Member States ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the following issues remain outstanding:

- A few countries have not ratified the Convention.
- Many countries ratified with reservations and some of these reservations are incompatible with the objective or purposes of the Convention, such as those on article 2.
- The level of compliance with CEDAW is still low.
 - National laws have not been revised in conformity with the Convention.
 - Even when national laws are in accordance with the CEDAW, they are often ignored or poorly implemented.
 - Gender-sensitive public policies have not been properly developed to fulfil the obligations under CEDAW, particularly in the area of economic, social and cultural rights.

Recommendations

82. Governments should remove all reservations, especially those that are against the principles and purposes of the Convention. In addition, they should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and comply with the recommendations in the concluding comments of the CEDAW Committee to accelerate the achievement of gender equality.

83. Governments should ratify regional instruments such as the "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa" and the "Convention on the Prevention, Eradication and Punishment of Violence against Women" (Convention of Belém do Pará).

⁸ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, paragraph 213.

84. Governments should remove all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate measures to ensure respect for the human rights of women.
85. Governments should ensure that human rights documents are disseminated and translated into local languages.
86. Emphasizing that all civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights of women should be fully implemented, this paper, calls attention to some specific rights that are not universally implemented:

Personal Status and Laws and Citizenship

87. Despite the fact that the majority of state parties have committed to and ratified most international instruments that call for equality and equity, women continue to face discrimination in status and in legislation. As a result, women have had major difficulties in exercising their fundamental rights.

88. For example, lack of citizenship is used by some governments to deny certain human rights, especially to women. Citizenship is a basic condition for the exercise of rights. However, in many countries, it is not granted on the same basis for women as for men. Often, only men can transfer their nationality to their children. In several countries, other constraints prevent a woman's citizenship from being recognized. A lack of citizenship can prevent women from obtaining a passport or travelling at national level and internationally. It can prevent them from owning property or real estate, limit access to education and health services, and in case of divorce can deny many women rights to their children. All of these factors influence a woman's autonomy and financial independence.

89. The impact of the lack of citizenship is exacerbated in areas of armed conflict, when states fail to protect human rights. In these areas, women often take responsibility for tasks that are otherwise performed by men in peace time (for example, farming, food security, collection of wood). However, as women are not granted citizenship and other rights on the same basis as men, they face additional obstacles in undertaking their responsibilities.

90. While most Member States have ratified CEDAW, many of them have not reviewed their laws on citizenship.

Recommendations

91. Governments should review policies and legislation to ensure equal rights for men and women and children for citizenship. Access to citizenship should not be influenced by gender, race, ethnicity, religion or origin.

92. Civil society should play a lead role in educating women on the implications and rights of citizenship.

Family Laws

93. Article 16 of CEDAW requires states to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. It emphasizes that marriage and family rights must be granted, on the basis of equality between men and women, including the right to enter into marriage; the rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution; equal rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, and in matters relating to their children; etc.

94. Despite the fact that several States have committed to the provisions of article 16 (and many have reservations), they continue to have discriminatory family laws that prevent women from exercising their rights. These laws often deny women the autonomy to act on their own behalf in relation to economic transactions, property ownership, age of consent for marriage, divorce, custody of children after divorce, and inheritance.

95. Even in those countries where the laws are not openly discriminatory, laws have been interpreted in a discriminatory way. Such discriminatory interpretations, are often based on the power of tradition, and the lack of access of women to the judiciary, especially in religious courts.

96. Finally, it should be noted that discriminatory family laws can exacerbate domestic violence. For example, as a result of the marriage laws in several countries, women in abusive relations opt to endure the violence for fear of losing custody of their children if they are divorced. Changing custody laws in favour of women in this case would enable women to decide freely whether to stay in the marriage or not, and would reduce domestic violence that goes unchecked, unrecognized, and ultimately unpunished in many countries.

Recommendation

97. States should remove reservations to Article 16 of CEDAW and review discriminatory laws on their statutes.

Violence against Women

98. Violence against women is a form of discrimination against women in so far as it impairs or nullifies the enjoyment of human rights.⁹ The Beijing Platform for Action considers violence against women as a critical area of concern, defining it as any gender-based act that results or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women.¹⁰ It may be perpetrated by family members, within the general community and by the state. It may also be condoned by public institutions, in which case the state might be held responsible by international human rights bodies for the act of violence, even if it is perpetrated by a non-state agent.

⁹ CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 19 (Eleventh session, 1992)

¹⁰ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, Paragraph 113 and 124(a).

99. Ten years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, violence against women remains a critical and under-addressed area of concern. The roots of violence against women stem from a patriarchal view of society which sees women as inferior to men. This hierarchy is often reflected in legislation and policies as well as in their implementation. Currently, for many people and societies domestic violence is considered a private matter that should not be addressed in the public sphere. This interpretation means that many states do not enact or implement legislation on domestic violence. The first steps in addressing violence against women should be removing discriminatory legislation and policies and educating girls and boys from an early stage to ensure a truly equal society.

100. Even in cases where violence against women is punishable by law, the criminal laws addressing violence against women are often discriminatory or enforced in a discriminatory way, and thus many victims do not refer to the law or the courts. Of the few cases that do enter the judicial system, they often end up examining the behaviour of the victim instead of that of the aggressor. For example, it is quite common to see victims of rape being blamed for the violence.

101. There are many challenges to developing public policies to prevent and punish violence against women. Many governments do not see violence against women as a priority area, partly because they under-estimate the negative consequences that this type of violence has on the person herself, on her family and on the whole community. Policy-makers need improved access to reliable statistics and they need to recognize and address prejudicial understandings about the problem. Where States do manage to design good public policies and programmes, they are often not accessible nor properly implemented.

Recommendations

102. Governments should develop legislation on violence against women and criminalize the offence.

103. Governments should develop innovative strategies to prevent violence against women, targeting both women and men.

104. Governments and civil society should provide training to professionals in the health sector, the police and the judicial system. Governments should offer comprehensive attention to women in situations of violence.

105. Governments should address cultural and other beliefs which perpetuate and encourage violence against women. Women, men and children need to be educated to believe in the rights of women – including the right to freedom from fear.

106. The United Nations, Governments and civil society should ensure women's access to information on their rights.

Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights

107. The human rights of women also include the right to have control over and to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.¹¹

108. Sexual health and reproductive rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws and international instruments. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, the Platform for Action, reaffirm that reproductive rights should be based on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and the means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free from discrimination coercion and violence, as expressed in international human rights instruments.

109. The lack of reproductive rights for women is reflected in the high maternal mortality rates in many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The experts considered that a possible reason for this is the low priority and subsequent limited resources (both human and financial) given to the health sector, especially for reproductive health and sexual health services. In addition, many health services are vulnerable to high costs following health sector reforms and/or privatization. The often resultant higher costs limit women and girls' access to services. In addition, slow implementation of reproductive public policies and plans, and weak monitoring, reporting and public accountability have made the access of women and girls to such services more difficult.

110. Poor selective implementation of liberal abortion laws in some countries and restrictive laws in other countries have also contributed to high levels of unsafe abortion. Lack of information on laws and availability of access, as well as lack of access to safe abortion, also contribute to higher maternal mortality rates.

Recommendations

111. Governments should increase the per capita government health expenditure to at least US\$ 15 for developing countries (as recommended in the WHO Report of the Macroeconomic Commission on Health). They should increase the proportion of Public Health Investment to at least 3 per cent of the GDP and increase the allocation of this investment to reducing maternal mortality and unsafe abortion.

¹¹ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, paragraph 96.

112. Governments should ensure that all related policies, such as the national health policy, reproductive health policy, population policy, HIV-AIDS policy, and women's empowerment policies, have detailed target figures disaggregated by sex and a timeline to implement actions known to reduce maternal mortality. They must report annually on progress of implementation of these policies and plans to national and local stakeholders, including NGOs and the United Nations agencies using specific agreed indicators.

113. Governments should, as a matter of priority, review restrictive abortion laws and reform these laws to allow abortion in certain cases, for example to save the life of the mother, for mental health reasons, and for socio economic reasons, especially poverty.

114. Governments should, as a matter of priority, remove any user fees for reproductive health services [especially for childbirth, legal abortion, and contraception] introduced with health sector reforms.

115. Policy makers in Governments, the United Nations agencies and multilateral agencies need to ensure that health sector reforms are evaluated as a matter of priority and regularly monitored to ensure accurate assessment of the impact of the reforms on women and on the quality and affordability of health services.

116. In countries where social insurance has been introduced, Governments should ensure that policies cover reproductive health services and are extended to the informal sector and to the poor and marginalised.

117. Governments should strengthen efforts and seek more technical assistance to ensure that a clear rights-based agenda and gender equality framework is included in the development of all population, reproductive health, HIV AIDS and women's empowerment policies and programmes and their implementation, monitoring and evaluation

118. The United Nations should promote, fund and develop more models, good practices and clear conceptual and practical rights- and gender-sensitive frameworks, in collaboration with women.

119. Governments should include more women activists in decision-making on new and revised laws, policies and plans, and ensure their representation and technical input on programmes, policies and commissions/committees on population, reproductive health, women's health, and HIV/AIDS.

120. The United Nations agencies [particularly UNFPA] should strengthen their role and be more active in promoting, defending and implementing the ICPD human rights and reproductive rights framework in national laws, policies and programmes and in donor funding, beginning with a review of the content of these documents.

121. The United Nations agencies, in collaboration with gender-focused nongovernmental organizations, should facilitate and provide more national and regional

technical meetings, training and general technical assistance, beginning with top policy makers.

122. Governments should ensure that national demographic surveys use a rights-based approach which includes an unmet needs framework and that they should interview a cross-section of people, both young and unmarried people and not only married women.

123. Governments should ensure that providing information and full reproductive health services to young people within the primary health care system is a priority in promoting reproductive rights.

124. The United Nations, Governments and civil society should create a common regional and national monitoring system of the Beijing, Cairo and MDG objectives, with indicators agreed to by all stakeholders- government, nongovernmental organizations, the United Nations agencies, researchers and parliamentarians.

125. Governments should require annual monitoring and transparent reporting of budgets and expenditure by local government bodies and the auditor-general's office to ensure efficiency in resource use and progress in achievement of Beijing, Cairo and MDG goals.

126. The United Nations, Governments and civil society should ensure that designation of national focal points from within the government line ministries, (for example, Ministries of Health and Women's Empowerment) host regular annual forums in which regularly include presentation of government reports and dialogue with civil society on progress achieved on their agendas.

127. Governments should increase resources and technical assistance for the capacity building of politicians and government officials, including those in the remotest areas, in order to develop skills and commitment for working effectively as monitors of health services and women's rights.

128. Governments should ensure that Ministries of Health initiate a coordination mechanism for women's health and reproductive health and rights for information sharing and project coordination, with a senior cabinet minister convening the initiative and including all relevant line ministries.

129. The United Nations and Governments should introduce new momentum to revitalise implementations by creating Task Forces composed of governmental organizations, parliamentarians, researchers and civil society organization representatives to plan and monitor specific components in the National Plan on Women and the Reproductive Health and Rights Plan.

130. The United Nations and Governments should ensure that a national system for implementation of ICPD and Beijing agreements includes information and education dissemination up to the end-user level and establishment of an effective feedback loop involving the NGOs.

Women human rights defenders

131. There have been some achievements over the past years in regard to work on human rights defenders. Documentation on the violations against women human rights defenders and efforts to hold governments accountable has increased. The appointment of the United Nations Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders has also highlighted the need to protect human rights defenders. The Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (also known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders) has given greater legitimacy to the work on human rights defenders. Efforts and advocacy by women's groups worldwide increased awareness of human rights defenders issues. This also created a space for raising gender-specific issues within the discourse on human rights.

132. Despite the international recognition of the need to protect human rights defenders, their situation remains alarming due to growing fundamentalism, militarism, terrorism, and war on terror. Women human rights defenders have increasingly faced intimidation, torture, imprisonment, abduction and disappearance. They face heightened risks because of their work on women-specific issues which frequently challenges cultural stereotypes and religion. Consequently, there has been an increase in hostility to women human rights defenders as their work has threatened the status quo. They have also faced sexual violence which has been used to silence them because they raise gender-specific concerns.

Recommendation

133. Women engaged in the defence of human rights must be protected. Governments should guarantee the full enjoyment of all rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by women working peacefully, in a personal or organizational capacity, for the promotion and protection of human rights.¹²

D. Access to information

134. The right to communicate is not a new right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that *every one has the right to freedom of opinion and expression...freedom to hold opinions without interference and seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.*¹³

135. The provision of information is important for women as it impacts on nearly every part of their daily lives at some level, whether it be information on contraceptives or nutrition, information on legal rights, information on the impact of trade agreements, information on farming techniques, on rights to education, and so on. The control, use

¹² Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, paragraph 228.

¹³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 19.

and distribution of information reflects power in a society. It is important that information be timely, accurate, and accessible and that it be delivered in culturally and contextually appropriate ways. The flow of information should be in two directions: information must be available *to women* to inform their daily lives and decisions; and information must flow *from women* to inform and influence policy makers.

136. Communities, Governments and civil society must be encouraged to develop a people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge and participate in or influence policymaking. This will enable all people, regardless of sex, class, ethnicity, language, social and cultural setting, to achieve their full potential, to promote sustainable development and to improve their quality of life.

137. While acknowledging the achievements in some areas with respect to empowering women in and through information, the experts stressed that more needs to be done to address not only the issue of access to information but also the issue of misinformation and information that encourages inequality, racism, xenophobia, sexism and other forms of bigotry. They suggested that more thought needs to be given to the mechanisms for providing and distributing information (for example, modern or traditional means, radio or TV, drama, music and dance etc)

138. Recognizing that media is a powerful tool for the dissemination of information, the Beijing Platform for Action outlined two strategic objectives under the critical area of concern related to women and the media: it called for increased participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media; and it called for a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. The experts recalled that both objectives outlined actions to be taken by governments, policy-making bodies, the media and NGOs.

139. The experts noted that the increasingly globalized and liberalized media environment has led to an increased imbalance in the international flow of information, mostly between North and South. They pointed out that the resultant free trade practices (for example, cultural dumping) has disadvantaged the production of and access to vital information for the empowerment of women in developing countries. They observed that another source of this increasing imbalance is the privatization of vital public sectors and emphasized that as a result of this imbalance, vulnerable and economically disadvantaged communities are increasingly becoming recipients of imported programming that largely ignores and is oblivious to local needs and realities.

140. The experts further noted that the recently ratified UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions¹⁴ is a key document in this respect, supporting efforts and policies that address humanity in its diversity and specificity, regardless of trade considerations.

¹⁴ UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

Recommendations

141. Governments and communities at national level should develop, among other things, alternative means of information that make use of and develop both traditional and modern communication technologies that are adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of the communities to be reached, in order to promote a human rights agenda and empower women.

142. Governments should create an enabling environment for women and civil society in order for them to have timely and accurate access to gender-sensitive information, to influence information content, policymaking, including in the following areas: women's rights, decision-making, budgeting, health and reproductive rights, etc.

143. Governments should ensure that information be contextually appropriate, taking into consideration local, cultural, political, economic, and social concerns, as well as traditional knowledge and practices.

144. Governments should give equal access to all government-owned facilities to enhance information flow and development.

145. Governments should set up regulatory mechanisms to monitor and evaluate gender portrayal in the public domain. For example, independent government media councils and non-governmental media watch groups could be established to monitor the portrayal of women in the media; advertising standards should be set up and monitored.

146. Governments should also enact policies that promote south-south exchange of information and development to enable the sharing of good practices in empowering women through an effective exchange of information.

147. Governments should disseminate traditional practices and knowledge that enhance the lives of women, for example in areas related to health, agriculture, healing practices, etc. This local knowledge can be effectively disseminated through various media outlets.

148. Governments should create and disseminate information for empowering women and youth using a variety of culturally appropriate methods and genres such as storytelling, folk songs, drama skits, role playing, talk shows, cartoons, etc.

149. Governments and civil society should disseminate accurate information, through all means possible, about all international protocols, conventions, and treaties (for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) that governments have ratified and which have a direct impact on their lives. Such awareness-raising would include the setting up of appropriate mechanisms that allow the population, through civil society organizations, to be involved in the discussion, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a process vital for the advancement of the nation as a whole.

150. Governments and civil society should start with human rights education as early on as possible. This education should be reflected, among other things, in school curricula but also in radio and TV programmes for children and youth, as well as in the content of more modern communication technologies.

151. Civil society, in partnership with governments, should promote exchange of good practices and lessons learnt from countries that have used media advertising and programming to improve the image of women. Good practices, including media campaigns that have successfully drawn attention to key issues such as violence against women, should be encouraged and rewarded.

152. Governments and/or civil society should introduce gender-sensitive training and programmes that reflect on how women are portrayed in society and the impact this has on women and men. Training should be at different levels and targeted to the different groups that play a role in defining women in public spaces (for example media, advertising).

153. Governments and/or civil society should train women in the use of new technologies, especially disadvantaged rural women, in order to give them access to information vital for the improvement of their livelihood. User-friendly software that addresses the reality and needs of rural and illiterate women should be invested in and developed.

Annex I: List of participants

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Annex II. List of documents

Background Paper

Aide-Memoire Prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women

Papers by Experts

EC/PRABD/2005/EP.1 *“Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”*, prepared by Kibre Dawit

EC/PRABD/2005/EP.2 *“Women’s Peace Initiatives in Africa: Some of Africa priorities in the Follow up to the Ten –Year Review and Appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”*, prepared by Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng

EC/PRABD/2005/EP.3 *“Women’s Concerns Count”*, prepared by Indu Capoor

EC/PRABD/2005/EP.4 *“Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”*, prepared by Anjana Shakya

EC/PRABD/2005/EP.5 *“Priorities in the Follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”*, prepared Meagen Baldwin

EC/PRABD/2005/EP.6 *“Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”*, prepared by Regina Birchem

- EC/PRABD/2005/EP.7 *“Priorities in follow-up to the term-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”*, prepared by Denise Hirao
- EC/PRABD/2005/EP.8 *“Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action”*
prepared by Jeanne Henriquez
- EC/PRABD/2005/EP.9 *“Incorporating an Arab-Muslim perspective in the re-assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action”*, prepared by Dima Dabbous-Sensenig

Annex III. Programme of work

Monday, 31 October 2005

- 09.00 a.m. - 10.00 a.m.** **Introduction and Objectives of the meeting**
- Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
- Introduction of Participants**
- Election of Officers**
- 10.00 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.** **Coffee break**
- 10.30 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.** **Presentation 1**
- Ms. Kibre Dawit, African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
- Discussion**
- 11.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.** **Presentation 2**
- Ms. Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng, Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE)
- Discussion**
- 12:30 p.m. – 02:00 p.m.** **Lunch**
- 02:00 p.m. – 03:00 p.m.** **Presentation 3**
- Ms. Indu Capoor, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
- Discussion**
- 03:00 p.m. – 04:00 p.m.** **Presentation 4**
- Ms. Anjana Shakya, Asia-Pacific Women's Watch (APWW)
- Discussion**
- 04:00 p.m. – 04:30 p.m.** **Coffee break**
- 04:30 p.m. – 05:00 p.m.** **Sum up Discussion**

Tuesday, 1 November 2005

09:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m. General Summary of Key Points from Day 1 (Rapporteur)

Presentation 5

Ms. Meagen S. Baldwin, Network Women in Development Europe (WIDE)

Discussion

10:00a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Coffee break

10:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m.

Presentation 6

Ms. Regina Birchem, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Discussion

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Presentation 7

Ms. Denise K. Hirao, Latin America and the Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women’s Rights (CLADEM)

Discussion

12:30 p.m. – 02:00 p.m.

Lunch

02:00 p.m. – 03:00 p.m.

Presentation 8

Ms. Jeanne D. Henriquez. Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

Discussion

03:00 p.m. – 04:00 p.m.

Presentation 9

Ms. Dima Dabbous-Sensenig, Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW)

Discussion

04:00 p.m. – 04:30 p.m.

Coffee break

04:30 p.m. – 05:00 p.m.

Sum up Discussion

Wednesday, 2 November 2005

- 09:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m.** **General Summary of Key Points from Day 2 (Rapporteur)**
Brainstorming on Priority Issues
- 10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.** **Coffee break**
- 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.** **Drafting Groups**
- 12:30 p.m. – 02:00 p.m.** **Lunch**
- 02:00 p.m. – 04:00 p.m.** **Drafting Groups**
(including coffee break)
- 04:30 p.m. – 05:00 p.m.** **Reporting back in Plenary**

Thursday, 3 November 2005

Morning: Room DC2-1282

- 09:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.** **Finalization of Report**
- 10:00 a.m. – 01:00 p.m.** **Preparation of Panel Discussion**
- 01:00 p.m. – 03:00 p.m.** **Lunch**

Afternoon: Conference Room 3

- 03:00 p.m. – 06:00 p.m.** **Panel discussion for Member States, United Nations entities,
and representatives of NGOs and academic**

**Annex IV. Opening statement by Ms. Carolyn Hannan
Director, Division for the Advancement of Women**

Distinguished experts and colleagues,

I am delighted to welcome you all as representatives of important regional and sub-regional networks from around the world to this Expert Consultation on “Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”.

I want to begin by expressing deep appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations for hosting this Expert Consultation. I would like to particularly thank Mr Serhat Aksen of the Turkish Mission and Mr Hasan Ozdemir, the Manager of the Turkish Centre, for providing these excellent facilities, and in this way supporting the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the preparations for the Commission on the Status of Women.

The Division for the Advancement of Women holds expert meetings prior to each session of the Commission on the Status of Women as a means of ensuring access to the latest research and practical experience on the themes and issues before the Commission. In 2006 the Commission on the Status of Women will hold its 50th session. It will be important to consider ways to enhance its role in effectively addressing the challenges ahead, in particular in relation to accelerating implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The 50th session of the Commission provides a unique opportunity to identify the key issues to be addressed in the follow-up to the ten year review, and the best means to do this, in the context of the development of its new multi-year programme of work from 2007 and consideration of its working methods.

The ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was carried out during the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women earlier this year. The review and appraisal showed that there has been significant progress over the past decade in terms of policy reforms, legislative change, and institutional development. Positive developments included the establishment of national policies and strategies for gender equality in almost all countries. Countries reported increased diversity in the mechanisms at national level promoting and monitoring attention to gender equality (such as gender equality commissions, ombudspersons offices and parliamentary networks and caucuses), as well as innovative approaches including increased attention to resource allocations through gender-sensitive budgeting, and efforts to engage men and boys more actively in promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

Analysis of the responses from Governments clearly indicated, however, that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains far from being fully achieved. Progress has been uneven within and across regions. While some gains had been seen in relation to each of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern in all regions, serious obstacles and challenges were also reported in every area.

Persistent gaps in all regions included low levels of women's representation in decision-making positions; stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices; and discrimination in employment, including occupational segregation and wage gaps. Violence against women, including domestic violence, was noted as a major challenge worldwide. In some regions, Governments noted disproportionately high poverty levels among women, and their insufficient access to or control of economic resources. Governments also noted the serious effects of conflict on women, particularly sexual violence. In many countries, women's health, including lack of access to reproductive health services and high levels of maternal mortality, continued to give cause for concern. Countries reported high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and trafficking in women and girls was of concern to many Governments.

There were two important learnings which emerged from the review and appraisal. Firstly that there is a huge gap between policy and practice which needs to be explicitly addressed as an urgent priority. And related to this, Government responses illustrated that attitudes towards the gender equality and empowerment of women among the general public and within Government bureaucracies have not changed at the same pace as policy, legal and institutional frameworks. Explicitly addressing persistent stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices is critical to the full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

Many Members States in their responses also recognized the critical role of NGOs in awareness-raising, advocacy, monitoring and programme delivery and called for increased collaboration. Women's groups and networks have played a very strategic role in moving the global agenda on gender equality forward. Non-governmental organizations have energized the debates on critical areas and contributed to increasing the visibility and recognition of the importance of gender equality for development. A great deal of the sustained attention and the achievements made over the past decade has been due to their efforts. Their role in advocating for and monitoring implementation of the commitment made by Governments has been particularly significant. The increasing partnerships between Governments and civil society on the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality is a positive development, which needs to be built upon strategically.

The Declaration emphasized that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Importantly, the Declaration also recognized that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.

The Declaration called upon the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, all sectors of civil society including non-governmental organizations, as well as all women and men, to fully commit themselves and to intensify their

contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

The 2005 World Summit, held in New York last month, also reaffirmed that gender equality is essential to development, security, peace and that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Platform for Action is required for achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. It further emphasized that freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including the right to development, the rule of law, gender equality and market-oriented policies, and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies, are essential and mutually reinforcing.

In the Summit, Member States endorsed the importance of gender mainstreaming for achieving gender equality and undertook to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres. They called on the United Nations to take further steps in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the policies and decisions of the Organization.

The Summit further highlighted the importance of, and made specific commitments on, reproductive health; education; employment; human rights, including in particular inheritance and property rights and violence against women, including in the context of conflict and its aftermath; access to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology; representation in decision-making; and conflict prevention and resolution.

In the Summit Member States also emphasized the importance of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to enhanced action to fully implementation MDG3, efforts will be needed to ensure that gender perspectives are fully incorporated into implementation and monitoring of all the Millennium Development Goals.

It is now essential to focus on directing attention and resources to accelerated and effective follow-up and action to ensure full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. A critical element will be working quickly to build on the momentum of the review and appraisal process and the Declaration adopted by the Commission as well as the outcome of the 2005 World Summit to take full advantage of opportunities, at national, regional and at global level, for increasing attention to implementation.

The consultation provides an opportunity to share experiences and insights on enhancing implementation at national level, through identifying priority issues which will require attention in the follow-up to the ten-year review, outlining why these are critical for moving forward, and identifying the strategies required to address these priorities. It would also be useful to use your experiences from regional and sub-regional levels to identify what global policy development would be required in these areas.

The expert consultation has brought together representatives of networks which play a leading role in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. I am fully confident that the experience and learnings from your networks, together with your individual expertise from national, regional and global contexts, will provide important insights and guarantee the success of this consultation. I urge you to seize the opportunity provided to facilitate accelerated implementation at all levels. I wish you very productive discussions and an excellent outcome.

Thank you.