

Statement
Concerning Beijing +15 process Review at Commission on the Status of Women
New York, March 4th, 2010

The Fourth World Conference on Women produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), a comprehensive women's human rights paradigm that envisioned the transformation of power relations. This was a global vision of social justice, equality, development and peace. Fifteen years later, the BPfA would seem to be considered by governments as technical instrument, and its substance has been depoliticised and diluted. The key implementation strategy of gender mainstreaming has lost its critical perspective vis- a- vis power relations and inequalities.

Women's organizations have been the driving force behind the Beijing process, and the Secretary General has repeatedly emphasised the importance of the contribution of civil society to the work of the UN, particularly in relation to the achievement of women's rights. As representatives of such organizations we are deeply concerned that the spaces for influencing decision making by women's organizations at the Beijing+15 Review have been significantly reduced. This is manifested by:

- The Declaration on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women having been agreed ahead of time and adopted without consultations with civil society.
- The absence of information on opportunities for civil society to influence the conduct and outcome of the CSW meetings and the Declaration.
- Poor logistics and facilities that have prevented women from participating effectively.

The presence of such a huge gathering of women has been used instrumentally to legitimise an empty Declaration. This is another example of the reduction of the space for critical engagement between governments and civil society.

The 54th Session of CSW was intended to be the opportunity to review progress and promote the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, in its failure to strongly reaffirm and commit to renewed and concrete actions and resources to implement the BPfA, the Declaration represents a backward step.

The Declaration appears to overstate the progress made, and to ignore its slow and partial nature. It underestimates the degree and types of challenges that remain for women in their multiple identities, including the persistence of all forms of violence against women. It fails to take into account changes in the global and local contexts. The current context of multiple crises--such as the food, energy, climate change, care , economic and financial crises--new forms of insecurity, new aid modalities, perpetuation of the feminization of poverty and the ongoing struggle around women's health issues, including Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and HIV/AIDS, have created challenges not present 15 years ago.

For this reason, we call upon the Secretary General, the Chairperson of the CSW and Member States to take all opportunities associated with the forthcoming global negotiations in relation to Special High Level Meeting of ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods Institutions, World Trade Organization and the UNCTAD and the 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit to:

- Recapture the transformative nature of the BPfA
- Reaffirm the BPfA both as a comprehensive, critical and human rights framework that requires full implementation as a matter of urgency and as integral to and a prerequisite for the implementation of the MDGs.
- Ensure that civil society, including women's organizations, is able to participate meaningfully and that young women are empowered to become future leaders of these processes.
- Commit to an accountability framework for the BPfA with concrete benchmarks and timetables.
- Ensure adequate funding for gender equality policies, programmes and institutional mechanisms and for women's rights organizations through the implementation, among others, of the 2008 Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, which has strong and concrete commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Protect the policy space of countries so that they will have the flexibility to determine their development pathways consistently with universal women's rights and global commitments.
- Create in 2010 a strong, well-resourced UN Women's Rights and Gender Equality Entity with strong operational capacity and ability to hold UN Agencies and member states to account as well as strong mechanisms for meaningful civil society participation as supported and articulated by the GEAR (Gender Entity Architecture Reform) campaign.

Signatures:

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