

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO
FURTHER IMPLEMENT THE BEIJING PLATFORM
FOR ACTION**

HIGH-LEVEL INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING TO REVIEW REGIONAL
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Bangkok, 26-29 October 1999

INTRODUCTION

The goals of mainstreaming women in the development process and their economic and political empowerment are enshrined in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985), the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific Region (1994), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in September 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women marked a watershed in the quest for advancing the cause of women, reflecting renewed international commitment to the goals of equality, development and peace, and placing human rights on the women's rights agenda.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 52/100, has decided to convene a high level plenary review to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action and to consider further actions and initiatives. The Assembly, in its resolution 52/231, also decided that the high-level plenary review should be held as a special session of the General Assembly from 5 to 9 June 2000.

At the fifty-fourth session of ESCAP, the Commission decided to convene a high-level intergovernmental meeting in 1999 to review the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action and the regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The High Level Meeting was held from 26-29 October 1999 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The High-level Intergovernmental Meeting was attended by over 450 participants from 47 countries. The Meeting reviewed progress made in the regional implementation of the critical areas of concern as identified in the Beijing Platform for Action, highlighting best practices, progress achieved, constraints faced and future course of action, within the context of regional and global trends and changes. Discussions also focused in-depth on: (i) economic empowerment of women,

(ii) political empowerment of women (iii) rights-based approach to empowerment of women (iv) strategies for empowerment of women.

The Meeting adopted **Strategies and Recommendations to Further Implement the Beijing Platform** for Action which will be the regional input from the Asian and Pacific region for the special session of the United Nations General assembly Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century to be held in New York in June 2000.

PREAMBLE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Preamble

1. The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 heralded the dawn of a new era in the quest for a just society based on gender equality, development and peace. It espouses a human rights-based approach to gender equality. The Platform is an agenda for bringing together various stakeholders with the common objective of the empowerment of women. It enshrines a concept of shared power and responsibility at home, in the workplace and in the wider community. Based on a lifecycle approach, all appropriate public and private actions should be taken to protect the rights and to meet the needs of women in an integrated manner.
2. Since 1995, the countries of the region have used the Platform for Action to guide national action and regional and international cooperation in empowering women in social, economic and political fields. It has served as a useful instrument for measuring progress, identifying gaps and galvanizing national, regional and international action to achieve gender equality and shared partnership between men and women. Measured against the benchmarks and the objectives set in the Platform for Action, some progress has been achieved by the region for the realization of women's human rights in all aspects of life and for their economic and political empowerment.
3. Yet new obstacles and challenges have emerged. Some countries in the region have been adversely affected by the financial and economic crisis. Others are adversely affected by their lack of self-determination. As the Asian and Pacific region enters the new millennium, globalization and integration have intensified. While its positive impact has expanded opportunities of women, its negative impact has increased the vulnerability of women in Asia and small island developing states in the region and exacerbated the inequalities between men and women. The meaning of work is changing as new and emerging technologies, especially information technologies, increasingly shape economic structures with a profound impact, both negative and positive, on women's lives. Thus, the political/economic empowerment of women, following a rights-based approach and specific strategies, offer a cornerstone for the further improvement of the status of women.
4. In the midst of these unprecedented and rapid changes, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action has acquired a new urgency. We, the participants of the High-level

Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, recognizing the existing obstacles to advance the status and empowerment of women, have come here to share and develop strategies for overcoming obstacles at the national and international levels. We reaffirm our commitment to implementation of the Platform for Action.

We are convinced that with our joint efforts we will fulfil our vision of gender equality, development and peace in the 21st century.

B. Recommendations

5. In the course of the discussions, governments and other actors identified strategies and recommendations including affirmative actions, where appropriate, to further implement the Beijing Platform for Action *inter alia* as follows;
6. Concerted steps should be taken to counter the effects of the slowing down of the growth rates in many countries in the region, particularly on female labour force participation, by providing alternative avenues of employment and income earning opportunities. These opportunities should include small enterprise development, new skills training schemes to upgrade women's productivity and employability, and access to credit.
7. An integrated approach would be needed in removing the structural and policy impediments faced by the women in the region. In addition to reforms and sectoral projects and programmes at micro level, measures and initiatives should be supported by macro processes which aim at improving and sustaining the total productivity of the society as a whole, including that of women.
8. Urgent measures would be needed to protect the migrant workers in the region, including measures to safeguard equal wage for equal work, guarantees against unfair dismissal, safe and better working conditions etc. The financial and economic crisis in the region added to the vulnerability of female migrant workers who face repatriation and loss of income/earning opportunities.
9. Effective measures should be adopted to alleviate the economic plight of the poor female headed households which have been adversely affected by the economic crisis. These measures should include specialized training programmes and appropriate measures to support employment and small and medium enterprises of women from these households.

10. Gender analysis of men's and women's paid and unpaid economic activity, including through periodic time use surveys, should be carried out and the value of unpaid work reflected in official accounts to achieve better harmonization of family responsibilities.
11. Existing measures should be strengthened and new ones should be introduced to improve the living and working conditions of women in the rural and urban areas both in the formal and informal sectors. Measures should also be taken to ensure that home-based women workers receive fair remuneration for their work. Appropriate strategies should be developed for the well-being of low-waged workers with special focus on industries in which women are predominantly found, including the enforcement of domestic labour laws in export processing zones. Adoption of training and retraining schemes can be effective in raising the productivity and remuneration of low-waged workers. For rural women engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishery, pay commensurate with labour should be promoted by clarifying the roles of women in such activities.
12. Adequate basic needs and food security should be provided to women, particularly during periods of reductions in households' access to food and other basic needs arising out of business setbacks as well as sudden loss of employment by its members, such as during the economic crisis that set in the region in 1997. Measures should be taken to facilitate financial institutions and other credit organizations to provide microcredit to women with no collateral, where appropriate. Particular attention should also be given to special women, like refugee women, other displaced women, internally displaced women, including women in situations of armed conflict.
13. Women's full and equal access to productive resources, and local and indigenous knowledge should be promoted, including the rights to inheritance, right to own and transfer land, credit, technology and natural resources.
14. Governments, where appropriate, should consider ratifying the conventions of the International Labour Organization to guarantee equal pay for equal work of equal value and against discrimination based on sex in the labour market.
15. The special situation and conditions of elderly women, women with disabilities, indigenous women and other marginalized women including refugee women, women in situations of armed conflict and other displaced women, internally displaced women, women living under foreign occupation, women living in colonies and non-self governing territories, women migrant

workers within the framework of the human rights in policy, law and practice, should be addressed.

16. Universal awareness by all persons, women and men, girls and boys, of all human rights - civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, including the right to development - and fundamental freedoms of women and children, including the girl-child, should be promoted through comprehensive gender-sensitive human rights education and legal literacy programmes.
17. It is essential that a right-based approach to women's health is included in all health policies and programmes and that the current focus on reproductive health be expanded to the provision of comprehensive services which takes into account cultural diversity and moral conviction and which are accessible and affordable to women of all ages, including marginalized groups.
18. Constitutional provisions on gender equality and the use of affirmative action policies, where appropriate, as an intrinsic dimension of realizing equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex should be considered.
19. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):
 - (i) Encourage countries to ratify CEDAW to achieve universal ratification of the convention by the year 2000.
 - (ii) Countries with reservations may consider withdrawing or limiting the extent of their reservations.
 - (iii) Review and amend national laws, as appropriate, to ensure that they are in line with the provisions set forth in CEDAW and other human rights treaties.
 - (iv) Consider ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, keeping in view national needs, priorities, and other considerations.
 - (v) Countries may consider integrating the concluding observations by the United Nations Committee on CEDAW on the Country Reports, as appropriate, into policy planning.
 - (vi) In order to ensure the effective implementation of CEDAW and other human rights treaties, legal literacy and gender-sensitive human rights education should be conducted by relevant human rights authorities and institutions. Non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to participate in the reporting process to treaty bodies such as CEDAW.
 - (vii) Enhance support to UNIFEM and the United Nations Division for the Advancement

of Women to assist them in carrying out capacity building programmes of member countries in implementing CEDAW.

20. Consideration should be given to promote the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, particularly among countries of origin, transit and receiving countries.
21. Appropriate policies and programmes should urgently be developed, in partnership across civil society, to protect all women and girls including women in situations of armed conflict, indigenous women, older women, immigrants, refugees and women migrant workers and other displaced and vulnerable women and girls in need of protection, from violence including rape, sexual assault, domestic and family violence, sexual slavery and forced prostitution.
22. Policies and programmes to address violence against women should adopt an integrated, holistic and preventative approach and ensure support for victims of violence, including through: public education; a comprehensive legislative framework; adequate social, psychological, medical and legal services and infrastructure; measures to prevent violence and sexual harassment in the workplace and other places; data collection on incidences and types of violence; and gender-sensitive training of actors dealing with all aspects of victims' needs.
23. The United Nations system, particularly the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women and UNIFEM should be encouraged to strengthen the knowledge base on effective strategies to eliminate violence against women for countries to draw on.
24. Information and educational campaign on the risks and damages of irregular migration and trafficking should be considered.
25. Comprehensive human rights-based strategies should be developed and implemented to tackle trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for the purposes of slavery or slavery-like practices, forced labour or services by addressing prevention, protection and redress for trafficked persons, and prosecution and enforcement of traffickers.
26. Efforts, including ongoing efforts, on bilateral, subregional, regional and international agreements and treaties to combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls should be promoted. Provision of comprehensive assistance to victims of violence and trafficking should be promoted.
27. A climate of regional cooperation and peaceful coexistence should be encouraged as part of

- the promotion of a culture of peace. Governments are encouraged to work actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.
28. The right of self-determination of all peoples as enunciated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action should be considered, and where appropriate, accelerated.
 29. Consider, where appropriate, the ratification of the Convention of Biological Diversity.
 30. Full recognition of the girl-child's rights as a child, which should not be overshadowed by casting the girl child as tomorrow's woman, should be ensured and measures to ensure girls' development at different stages of life, including importantly early childhood and adolescence should be promoted.
 31. Basic education for girls should be achieved as soon as possible to ensure that the benefits of education accrue, in a sustainable way, to girls.
 32. Greater gender parity at higher levels of education in response to the uneven and limited access of girls to higher levels of education should be fostered, where necessary.
 33. Affirmative action, where appropriate, should be supported with a view to ensuring equal opportunities of women to participate in decision-making processes including in parliamentary and other elected assemblies, political parties, and the public sector.
 34. Appointment and nominations processes should be examined and reviewed with a gender perspective to eliminate discrimination, encourage participation and promote the advancement of women at all levels of decision making.
 35. Gender-sensitive education should be emphasized and promoted in the school system at all levels and in life-long learning programmes. Gender-sensitivity training should be provided to all stakeholders who are involved in policy, planning and implementing such policies and programmes.
 36. Leadership training should be provided for women at all levels of society to create an environment conducive to their enhanced participation in leadership roles.
 37. Electoral systems should be examined and promoted to ensure more opportunities for the full participation and representation of women in politics.
 38. Research, studies and collection of sex-disaggregated statistics on women's participation in and impact on decision-making should be supported for the empowerment of women.
 39. Women's leadership and participation in all areas should be encouraged, including peace and preventative diplomacy/conflict resolution, as well as situations of displacement following

armed conflict and in the field of environment. The role of women should be promoted in the celebration of the year 2001 designated by the General Assembly as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations to make and extend a culture of dialogue, peace and tolerance among different peoples from different civilizations.

40. Policies and procedures should be considered for review with a view to ending those that directly or indirectly discriminate against women's access to senior positions.
41. Measures should be adopted to expand monitoring and accountability of private sector, trade unions and civil society in terms of accessibility by women to leadership roles in these institutions and promote the contribution of women in the economy by addressing the obstacles that currently exist in terms of their access to training, technology, credit, resources, markets and information.
42. Efforts should be supported to organize formal and informal mentoring schemes for women's full and equal participation in politics.
43. Integrated gender management systems and its advocacy should be developed into policy, planning, programming and budgeting at the local and national levels and appropriate reforms undertaken and resource allocations provided from international bodies.
44. The distinction between mainstreaming gender perspective and mainstreaming women should be noted. Mainstreaming gender perspective emphasizes gender analysis in planning, policies, programming and capacity building actions; mainstreaming women means the achievement of the empowerment of women and one of its goals is balancing gender representation between women and men in all fields and at all levels. Capacity building in all field and at all levels for national machineries for the advancement of women should include these distinctions. National machineries can be strengthened through involving South-South cooperation and bilateral collaborations.
45. Training of personnel, in particular in the public sector, in curricula of higher education institutions, the training of men in gender analysis, and media campaigns as part of increased awareness raising on gender inequality should be expanded.
46. Monitoring and evaluation beyond government accountability to other actors, e.g., civil society, private sector, trade unions, the United Nations, multilateral and bilateral organizations, should be promoted.
47. Effective mechanisms to enable the monitoring of the implementation of obligations of treaties

by States Parties and the Beijing Platform for Action, involving non-governmental organizations, should be identified or established and encouraged.

48. Gender-sensitive indicators that encapsulate women's advancement in qualitative as well as quantitative terms, e.g. consider enabling indicators, performance indicators, progress indicators as well as psychological indicators as forms of measurement should be identified.
49. Representation of women in governmental bodies at national, provincial and local levels as well as in international organizations, in particular the United Nations, in decision-making and in active roles, including delegations, missions, and other national and international fora should be encouraged.
50. Resources and support for innovative non-governmental organizations and individuals engaged in women's empowerment activities in critical areas of concern apart from welfare services, income generating or credit projects for women should be explored.
51. Partnership and cooperation between governments and non-governmental organizations, and international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in the Asia and Pacific region established since Beijing should be further promoted.
52. Growing partnerships and cooperation between governments and non-governmental organizations since Beijing at national, regional and international levels should be further enhanced, particularly between ESCAP and Asian and Pacific non-governmental organizations, and its subregional groupings.
53. The preparatory committee of women 2000 is urged to promote wider participation of non-governmental organizations in the year 2000 Beijing +5 processes in accordance with United Nations regulations and practices such as the accreditation process of non-governmental organizations for the Social Summit +5.
54. The United Nations should take necessary steps to promote wider participation of member states, especially developing countries, in the Beijing +5 process.