I. Championing Women’s Rights: 25 Years on from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 symbolized a landmark global commitment and ushered in a comprehensive and bold global framework to advance women and girl’s rights. A quarter of a century on, despite innovation and progress on many fronts, the pace of change remains too slow across the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA.¹

More women are achieving better educational outcomes and political representation across Asia and the Pacific. However, persisting patterns of inequality are stalling further progress on gender equality. Technological transformations and disruptions, demographic shifts, increasing migratory flows as well as natural disasters and climate change have profoundly impacted the development context for women, their risks and vulnerabilities as well as opportunities in the region.

The centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment to the eradication of poverty and achievement of inclusive and sustainable development has been affirmed through its systematic integration into the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including through a standalone SDG 5. The Beijing+25 Review converges with the 5-year milestone for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and marks a window of opportunity to take stock of progress made and actions required to address barriers to gender equality and implementing the SDGs by 2030.

Leveraging the 12 critical areas of the BPfA and the SDGs, the Beijing+25 Regional Review will centre around six cluster areas that highlight the importance of holistic and joined-up development solutions:

- Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work;
- Poverty eradication, social protection and social services;
- Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes;
- Participation, accountability, gender-responsive institutions;
- Peaceful and inclusive societies;
- Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building.

Synergies with other global development commitments will also be harnessed to ensure gender-responsive implementation of key strategic areas, particularly the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the UN Security Council Resolution

¹ The 12 critical areas/strategic objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action include women and: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment and the girl child
At the global level, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment (UN Women) is leading the Beijing+25 Review with a campaign titled “Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights for an Equal Future” calling governments and other development stakeholders to chart ways to tackle the unfinished business of the BPfA. Bringing younger and older generations together as collective change makers, the review aims to not only celebrate the contribution of women and their advocates to development, but also stresses the urgency to deliver on commitments made and ensure that no one is left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*Asian and Pacific Context*

Across Asia and the Pacific, girls are enrolling in primary education in equal proportion to boys and nearing gender parity at secondary and tertiary levels. Where girls are accessing education, they are achieving a higher proficiency in mathematics and reading than boys. Perceptions are also changing, with a greater acceptance of women working rather than staying at home. Nevertheless, even despite an economic backdrop of sustained growth, these achievements are not translating into more and decent jobs for women.

In Asia-Pacific, female labour force participation rates have consistently declined over the past two decades. In the last five years, although labour force participation rates in the region have fallen for both sexes, they are falling more for women. Disproportionately concentrated in informal and vulnerable forms of employment, women have less access to formal social protection. Even when women land a formal job, they are earning much less than men.

Where women are seizing economic opportunities particularly through small and micro-sized enterprises, they face more barriers than men in sustaining and upscaling their businesses. A compounding factor for women’s low economic participation is unpaid care, where women and girls spend 11 times more of their day than men and boys on unpaid care and domestic work. Not only are women less visible in formal forms of employment, but also in positions of decision-making and leadership. The proportion of women in lower houses of parliament in Asia and the Pacific stands at 19 per cent, below the global average of 23 per cent.

Violence against women continues to be a serious impediment to women’s empowerment in the region. As many as one in two women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in the last 12 months, in countries across the region for which such data is available. Challenges also remain in the realization of women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health and rights. These deprivations are exacerbated for women from marginalized groups who, due to intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion, are at greatest risk of being left behind.

As the region most prone to disasters and climate-related disasters, the issue of climate conservation, climate action and resilience building is a priority. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to climate-related changes and disaster risks. In major disasters in the region, women have suffered higher mortality rates than for men. Women and girls are more likely to be food insecure and reliant on climate-sensitive natural resources for their livelihoods. Due to their lack of access to, and control over, land and other resources, women smallholder farmers and fishers are also less likely to be able to adapt to impacts of climate change.

In light of these trends, for the Beijing+25 Regional Review the focus will be on four key clusters: inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work; freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes; participation, accountability, gender-responsive institutions; and environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building. Particular emphasis will be given to three key areas for intervention: ending all forms of violence and discrimination against women;
entrepreneurship for women’s economic empowerment; and institutional measures to ensure gender-responsive institutions and accountability, with focus on gender-responsive budgeting.

Given the synergies between the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, and with a decade remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is a need for a renewed sense of urgency within the region, if we are to realize the commitments of both the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda. The Beijing+25 regional review process will provide an opportunity for the region’s governments to take stock of the progress so far, and identify innovative and real solutions towards these goals. Asia and the Pacific has a wealth of successes and good practices on which to build further strategies to accelerate the achievement of gender equality by 2030.

**Beijing+25 Regional Review**

In accordance with ECOSOC Resolution E/RES/2018/8, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission (ESCAP) has been mandated to lead the regional intergovernmental review of the BPfA, in collaboration with UN Women’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and supported by the Asia-Pacific interagency network.

The Regional Review aims to build regional consensus on actions to accelerate implementation of commitments made in the BPfA, as well as the knowledge base for progress made and challenges encountered to advance the rights of women and girls in the region. ESCAP, in collaboration with UN Women will convene a Ministerial Intergovernmental Conference to reinvigorate political commitment to accelerate and realize gender equality and the empowerment of women in Asia and the Pacific.

As part of the Beijing+25 Review, Governments were invited to submit comprehensive national-level reviews on progress and challenges encountered in the implementation of the BPfA. A regional synthesis of the comprehensive national-level reviews will be prepared to take stock of priority issues, progress and challenges as well as identify good practices to advancing the women’s empowerment agenda, which will serve as the main background paper for the Conference. A final comprehensive regional synthesis report, jointly prepared by UN Women and ESCAP, will be published in 2020 ahead of the 64th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women.

**Stakeholder Consultation**

The engagement of stakeholders are a vital part of the Conference and a Steering Committee has been established through UN Women to coordinate the contribution of Civil Society Organizations to the Regional Review process. A two-day Civil Society Organization (CSO) Forum will be convened back-to-back with the Ministerial Conference. In addition, Governments have been encouraged to engage stakeholders in the preparation of their comprehensive national-level reviews.

**II. Date and Venue**


**III. Participation**

The Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review will bring together Ministers and senior officials from relevant line Ministries (for example, Ministries of Women, National Planning, Finance), representatives from CSOs, think tanks, academic institutions, youth organizations, UN entities, independent experts and other key stakeholders from across the Asia-Pacific region.
IV. Objectives of the Conference

The objectives of the Conference are to:

- Assess progress and challenges to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific over the past 5 years;
- Review good practices, lessons learned, priority actions required to realize gender equality and the empowerment of women by 2030, as well as address emerging areas that impact on women’s empowerment;
- Provide a platform to explore policy options and strategies, including innovative approaches, toward realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- Consider and adopt a Ministerial Declaration to realize women’s rights for an equal future, which will serve as the regional input to the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the global review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.