

ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 10-Year Review of the Beijing Platform For Action, December 15, 2004

EMERGING ISSUES from the NGO Beijing + 10 Review

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Chair of the NGO Working Group**

The Emerging Issues working group, like all of the NGO working groups, reaffirms the continuing relevance of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Outcome Document from the Beijing + 5 Review and stresses the urgency of accelerated action toward its implementation. Women of the world see the Beijing Platform as a vital social compact between governments and citizens pledging to work together toward the fulfillment of the human rights of all women. Women in all regions are watching this 10 year review to ensure that this remains a solid commitment and not a string of broken promises. And we know a lot about broken promises.

I speak today about the conclusions from the NGO Emerging Issues workshop, which looked at critical areas not adequately covered in the Platform and at trends affecting its implementation. When I spoke here five years ago at the Plus Five ECE Review, NGOs were more optimistic about the future of progress on the human rights of women than we are today.

The overarching concern of NGOs is the way in which global forces that have intensified over the decade have often eroded support for and attention to women's human rights. In particular, we want to stress that the increase in militarism and armed conflicts, the growth of fundamentalisms of many kinds and the growing inequities produced by global economic policies are major obstacles detrimental to the achievement of the Beijing Platform for Action.

We begin by stating emphatically that we reject all excuses for violations of women's human rights whether in the name of "national security" or of "cultural heritage" or religion. The global "war on terrorism" should not be used as an excuse to undermine any group's human rights or to actively neglect the critical issues of women's daily human insecurities caused by poverty, violence against women, etc. The politics of greed, exclusion, domination and military power have failed women in the ECE region. We affirm multilateralism as the way to address global security concerns, and we call upon governments to develop better alternatives for our collective human security based in respect for all human rights.

The group identified many **specific critical areas of emerging concern**. I will speak to the major topical areas, and my colleague, Beata, will speak about the specific issues of diverse women's constituencies discussed by the group.

1. **MILITARISM/women, peace and security:**

Given the current geopolitical context of war, heightened military spending, the promotion of a culture of violence in daily life, and increased transnational crime and corruption, we recommend:

-National governments should counter this climate of violence related to “the war on terror” by more actively promoting peace, disarmament, and intercultural dialogue; Military budgets must be reduced, and defense spending shifted to poverty reduction, development and the protection of human rights;

-UN: Implement Security Council Resolution 1325 through an action plan, an audit of existing funds, and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on 1325;

-UN peacekeeping forces: Include more women in decision making positions; develop gender monitoring mechanisms and trainings on local contexts; and end impunity for violence perpetrated by peacekeepers;

-International organizations with a mandate to work on organized crime need to review their activities, increase transparency, disclose full budgets, and increase public space for discussion of their work and mandates.

2. **FUNDAMENTALISMS:** We oppose all forms of fundamentalisms because they create and demonize “the Other” and use religion, cultural heritage, nationalism and ethnicity to obtain political power and to control women's lives. Governments must ensure that civic rights laws are implemented and enforced. The principle of secularity should be respected by each state in all its policies.

3. **SEXUAL RIGHTS:** Sexual rights embrace human rights already recognized in national laws, international and regional human rights and consensus documents. –

-All women, including young women, have the right to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive lives, including sexual autonomy, sexual orientation, and sexual pleasure, and must have access to comprehensive sex education, and confidential sexual and reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion, male and female condoms.

-All women must have freedom to establish all forms of families and to exercise sexual rights free from gender-based violence and coercion, including FGM, forced and early marriage, so-called honour killings and domestic violence.

-Governments must **create enabling conditions to ensure enjoyment** of sexual rights.

- The Secretary General's **in-depth study on all forms of violence against women** for the GA should include consideration of how gender-based violence violates women's sexual rights.

4. **HIV/AIDS**: As over 50% of people infected with HIV are now women, women's experience and gender equality must be central to discussion of all aspects of HIV/AIDS - access to treatment, the links between violence against women and HIV, epidemiology of the pandemic, etc.

- Prevention and treatment programmes must be designed within a human rights framework, and with community participation. HIV/AIDS strategies must encompass sexual and reproductive health and rights with special attention to young women, through the promotion of comprehensive sexuality education.

-Female controlled prevention methods such as microbicides and female condoms must be accessible and affordable, and women must be involved in the design and delivery of antiretroviral (ARV) programmes.

5. **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**: ICTs offer possibilities for achieving women's rights and gender equality, eliminating poverty, overcoming women's isolation, and improving governance.

- Governments must: provide education on effectively and safely using and shaping ICTs and ensure all ICT initiatives, policies and programs incorporate a gender perspective.

- We must make governments accountable for benchmarking and reaching goals regarding policies and investments that ensure woman of all ages have affordable access and can generate, own, develop, use and adapt ICTs and content.

- There is a need to create a synergy between old and new ICTs to overcome digital divides within and between societies, including between genders.

- Policies and regulatory frameworks are needed to address violent and exploitative images, but we should ensure these are not used to enforce censorship and surveillance, or to limit access to information or invade privacy.

6. **PUBLIC SERVICES**: We are concerned at the trend in the region toward deregulation, privatisation and cuts in public services previously provided largely by the state and that adversely affect women.

-The state has a duty to provide water, sanitation, primary health care, education and care services for children and other dependent people. We oppose the shift of costs and workload caused by privatization and cuts in funding from the state to households, which often creates particular hardship for women.

-Public services must be seen as an instrument of social cohesion, public good and gender equality; the state must remain answerable for the quality of public services and equal access for all; any change of public service provision by the state should be subject to a gender impact assessment.

Finally, the group expressed concern about two other topics not developed in depth:

-**BIOTECHNOLOGY/NEW TECHNOLOGIES** – we must ensure gender and women’s participation in all aspects of developing new technologies.

-**WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT** – we take note of the escalating degradation of the earth and the urgency of involving women in decision-making on the full range of environmental issues.

In closing, this is an urgent moment for the advancement of the human rights of women around the world and we count on you to not only affirm the Beijing Platform for Action here today and to take concrete steps and commit resources to its implementation, but also to address the challenges that have arisen since Beijing that impinge upon women’s rights.

In short, we call on you to show the women of the world whose eyes are on you today that the promises made to them over the past 30 years since the IWY in Mexico City are not empty, and that together we will continue to advance in the pursuit of human rights for all women everywhere.