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WOMEN CITE SUCCESSES IN UN WORLD SUMMIT AGREEMENTS ON GENDER EQUALITY, BUT UNDERScore LACK OF POLITICAL WILL TO TACKLE POVERTY, FOSTER PEACE, AND ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS

United Nations, New York City, September 14, 2005

After months of pressuring governments on women's rights, advocates from around the world have achieved some gains on gender equality in the World Summit outcome document, despite the lack of meaningful action on the total package under debate.

Advocates ensured that women's rights issues were not casualties of the Summit's high-stakes poker game. In fact, the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality (#3) has been expanded from an original focus on primary education to include the following:

- An end to impunity for violence against women
- The goal of universal access to reproductive health
- The right to own and inherit property
- Equal access to labor protections
- Increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies

In addition world leaders agreed to repeal all laws that discriminate against women and promised to implement the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, which promotes women's increased participation in peace and security processes.

One of the most significant achievements of the Summit was a historic agreement on the responsibility of states and the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Another concrete gain is a commitment to double the budget for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

However, women's groups have been dismayed by a shameful lack of political will on the part of governments to tackle poverty, foster peace, and ensure human rights. The grand bargain envisioned for the World Summit has failed. This bargain called for a serious commitment to trade reform, debt relief and financial resources for development in exchange for a Human Rights Council, Peace-building Commission, and UN management reform. Instead, countries deferred these issues to the General Assembly, where the same political divisions prevail.

The US was rebuffed on its top priority of UN management reform, because of its refusal to agree to any substantial compromise on development issues. With the arrival of Ambassador Bolton, the US shifted into high gear, issuing ultimatums, insisting on hundreds of amendments and renegeing on past commitments.

No progress was made on the key demands of developing countries—The US and a few other wealthy nations refused to commit to deadlines for giving 0.7 percent of GNP for official development assistance. Agreements on trade were virtually meaningless. The "agreement" on climate change was a step back

from what the G8 agreed to at their recent meeting in Gleneagles, which was already weak. Furthermore, the permanent members of the Security Council retain their veto power, even in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Women expected more from their governments. Once again they have missed an opportunity to take meaningful and bold action on the world's most critical problems. But women's advocates will not be deterred. We will continue to press for our rights and to hold governments accountable for their commitments to the world's women.

Statement by:

ActionAid International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development Gender Program

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

Choice for Youth and Sexuality, Netherlands

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

Family Care International

Forum on Women and Development (FOKUS)

Gender and Education Office

Girls Power Initiative, Nigeria

Inform, Sri Lanka

International Council on Adult Education (ICAE)

International Institute for Cooperation Amongst People

MADRE

Milenio Feminista

Open Society Institute

Red de educacion popular entre mujeres de America Latina y el Caribe (REPEM)

United Methodist UN Office

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

Youth Coalition