



Summary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

January 1996

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ABOUT THIS SUMMARY

The authors of this unofficial Summary studied the regional platforms that were produced prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women, and they monitored the progress of the official Platform for Action in its various drafts. They attended the UN Conference and the NGO Forum, and came away with a focused understanding of the negotiated resolutions, as well as an appreciation for the participation of the world's women, without whom no such progress would have been made. The authors believe the Platform is a call to action, and that its success now depends on its wide dissemination. This Summary, therefore, is an attempt to assist in alerting all women and men that the Platform exists. It seeks to provide the reader with a general understanding of the issues addressed in the Platform. To reduce almost 400 paragraphs to summary format obviously requires subjective analysis short of interpretation. Thus, while the Summary still parallels both the essence and language of the Platform, it also reflects the authors' judgments, in that it paraphrases some parts while omitting others. Minor changes have been made to the format of the official document, as well. For example, each of the main sections that represent a Critical Area of Concern contains a summary of the introductory paragraphs, followed by each Strategic Objective contained in that section, and a list of some of the concrete actions agreed to or recommended by the States for each Strategic Objective. The Platform itself is in numbered-paragraph format. The reader is encouraged to obtain and refer to the Platform for detailed discussion of each issue, using this Summary as a reference tool. Paragraph numbers in parentheses in this Summary correspond to the Platform's paragraph numbers. Reproduction and dissemination of the Summary is encouraged. Printing donated by FAEGRE & BENSON, Professional Limited Liability Partnership.

Requests for copies of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action should be made to: FWCW Secretariat, Division for the Advancement of Women, 2 United Nations Plaza, DC2-1226, New York, NY 10017 USA; fax: 212-963-3463; e-mail: daw@undp.org

The Platform is also available on the Internet at:
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

INTRODUCTION

For women's international struggle to achieve equality, development, and peace, September 1995 was the culmination of decades of a global movement and over a year of intensive preparations and meetings. From September 4th to 15th, official representatives from over 180 countries gathered in Beijing, China, for the Fourth World Conference on Women. For ten days, they worked in legislative sessions and focused working groups, refining the document that would reflect the issues and concerns of the world's women at the end of the 20th century, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Several issues were prominent in these discussions. Not all Governments agreed that human rights are universal in nature. Would the Platform declare that all women's rights are human rights, that the universality of human rights guaranteed women of all cultures the same treatment? In the end, the Platform would include several statements that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal, although the term "universal" does not appear every time human rights are mentioned.

A struggle centered around women's economic issues, specifically whether inheritance, for example, must be conveyed in an "equal" or in an "equitable" fashion. While representatives from some countries believed men and women should be treated the same way, without discrimination (equally), others argued that culture and religion dictated women be treated fairly (equitably), but not necessarily equally. This issue was resolved largely in favor encouraging equal, nondiscriminatory treatment of women and men in economic and other matters.

Sexual rights and reproductive health and freedom were the focus of a working group devoted almost entirely to resolving whether such issues would appear in the Platform, and, if so, to what extent women would have guarantees in this area. Although inclusion of these concerns in international debate was not new – such language had been discussed intensively at the population conference in Cairo in 1994 – many Governments were not willing to expand women's achievements in this area. In fact, only in the weeks before the Conference did they finally agree to retain the work done in Cairo. In its final form, the Platform does guarantee women the right to determine reproductive issues, and states that Governments will ensure "the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health."

The Platform is not a binding treaty. It does not provide a mechanism for redress of wrongs, nor is there any enforcement mechanism. Several dozen countries made reservations. Nevertheless, it is a consensus document, and it is the most comprehensive statement about the issues concerning women the world has seen. It addresses a range of problems from human rights abuses to poverty. It recognizes the lack of gender perspective from governmental decision-making to educational systems. It asks people and organizations, from trade unions to

international bodies, to commit to addressing the Governments that have embraced the Platform commit themselves to numerous actions, from researching gender issues in the media to eliminating violence against women.

BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

September 15, 1995

BEIJING DECLARATION

The Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women (the Conference), gathered in Beijing in September 1995, seek to advance the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women. The Governments acknowledge the diverse voices of women. The Governments recognize that despite progress, women still suffer obstacles to achieving equality with men, and that further progress is hindered especially by the poverty suffered by so many women and children.

The Governments recommit to:

The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men as embodied in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the Women's Treaty), and other international human rights instruments.

The progress made at previous UN conferences, including the conference on women in Nairobi in 1985, on children in New York in 1990, on the environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, on human rights in Vienna in 1993, on population in Cairo in 1994, and on social development in Copenhagen in 1995.

The full implementation of the human rights of women and the girl child as an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Governments are convinced that:

Women's rights are human rights.

Eradication of poverty requires women's involvement in economic and social development and the equal opportunities of women and men in sustainable development.

Peace is attainable and is linked inextricably with the advancement of women.

The implementation of the Platform for Action (the Platform) requires commitment from Governments, as well as the international community.

The Governments commit to:

The full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls and the elimination of discrimination and violence against them.

The equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for women and girls who face additional barriers because of race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people.

The equal access of women and girls to economic resources, including land, credit, science, technology, vocational training, information, communication, and markets.

The adequate mobilization of national and international resources, as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries, from all funding mechanisms.

The Governments hereby adopt and commit to implementing the following Platform, and urge the UN, regional and international financial and other institutions, other relevant organizations, and all women and men, to commit themselves and contribute to its implementation.

I. MISSION STATEMENT (paras. 1-5)

The Platform is an agenda for women's empowerment. It recognizes that equality of women and men is necessary for social justice and to achieve development and peace. It is an action agenda to safeguard women's human rights. The goal of the platform is to accelerate the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, which will succeed only by commitment of Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, equal participation of women and men, and strengthening of mechanisms for accountability to the world's women.

II. GLOBAL FRAMEWORK (paras. 6-42)

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace is the continuation and acceleration of a process begun in 1975, International Women's Year. The UN Decade for Women, from 1976 to 1985, sought to examine the status and rights of women, bring women into decision-making, and address women's issues. In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the Women's Treaty. In Nairobi in 1985, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women adopted the Forward-looking Strategies, to be implemented by the year 2000. The world has experienced profound political, economic, social, and cultural changes, including the end of the cold war, emergence of global information networks, worldwide democratization, rural to urban migration, expanding poverty, and global economic recession.

But the promise of women's equality has fallen far short of expectations. Most government structures, corporations, and the UN and its agencies continue to be represented by men. The number of women living in poverty has increased in all regions. The world's population is at an all-time high, which burdens women who are the primary caregivers to children, the sick, and the elderly. Women suffer unemployment, underemployment, unremunerated work, and lack of job safety and security. Continuing environmental degradation directly impacts women's health and their sustainable livelihood. The growing numbers of migrants, displaced persons, or refugees from conflict or environmental stress affect women unequally. Transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is increasing at a disproportionate and alarming rate among women and girls. Women are restricted throughout the life cycle by discrimination, unjust social structures, and lack of resources.

The Conference takes place on the threshold of a new millennium. It seeks and requires international commitment. The Platform is a basic group of priority actions for implementation over the next five years to ensure that all are free from injustice, oppression, and inequality.

III. CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN (paras. 43-46)

The Platform establishes twelve Critical Areas of Concern that need to be addressed in order to achieve political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental security among all people. These Areas as they relate to women are poverty; education; health; violence; armed conflict; the economy; power and decision-making; mechanisms for women's advancement; women's human rights; mass media; the environment; and, the girl child. These Areas are interrelated, of high priority, and require the attention of all actors.

IV. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (paras. 47-48)

For each Critical Area of Concern, the problem is diagnosed and strategic objectives and concrete actions are proposed for Governments and others. These actions are intended to improve the situation of all women, recognizing that women may face additional barriers to full equality because they are indigenous, refugee, displaced, internally displaced, immigrant, or migrant women, or due to age, race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, family status, or socio-economic status.

A. WOMEN AND POVERTY (paras. 49-70)

Women make up the majority of the over one billion people who live in poverty. Current macroeconomic policies, which focus on the formal economic sector, need to be reformulated to address women's needs. In the past decade, the number of women living in poverty has increased disproportionately, particularly in developing countries. Contributing factors to the feminization of poverty are the rigidity of socially ascribed gender roles; women's limited access to power, education, and resources; and the disproportionate burden of labor on women. Policies designed to eradicate poverty must include a gender perspective.

A.1. Review, adopt, and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.

Governments agree to:

Modify macroeconomic policies, with full participation of women, to achieve the objectives of the Platform for poverty eradication.

Restructure public expenditures.

Multilateral financial and development institutions should:

Implement commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development to seek financial resources to eradicate poverty.

Develop solutions to debt problems, including implementation of the December 1994 Paris Club terms of debt forgiveness.

Ensure that structural adjustment programs are designed to minimize negative effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

A.2. Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources.

Governments agree to:

Undertake legal reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including rights to inheritance and property ownership, and provide legal services for poor women.

A.3. Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions.

Governments agree to:

Support innovative lending practices.

Multilateral and bilateral development cooperation organizations should:

Support, by providing capital and resources, financial institutions that serve low-income, small-scale, and micro-scale women entrepreneurs and producers, in both the formal and informal sectors.

A.4. Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty.

Governments, in collaboration with academic and research organizations, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), and the private sector, should:

Research the gender impact of economic policies, including structural adjustment programs, the value of women's unpaid work, and the relationship between gender and poverty, and disseminate the research findings.

B. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN (paras. 71-90)

Education is a basic human rights and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development, and peace. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition, and education and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. At least sixty million girls remain without access to primary schooling. Of the world's 960 million illiterate adults, more than two-thirds are women. Discrimination in girls' access to education persists due to customary attitudes, early marriages and pregnancies, inadequate and gender-biased teaching and educational material, sexual harassment, lack of accessible schools, and insufficient resources.

B.1. Ensure equal access to education.

Governments agree to:

Ensure access to education for at least 80% of primary school age children by the year 2000.

Eliminate barriers to education for women with children by providing child care options.

B.2. Eradicate illiteracy among women.

Governments, national, international, and regional bodies, and NGOs should:

Reduce female illiteracy to one half the 1990 level.

Encourage adult and family engagement in learning.

B.3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science, technology, and continuing education.

Governments, in cooperation with employers, workers, trade unions, and national and international NGOs, should:

Develop and implement training for women in and re-entering the labor market and recognize non-formal educational opportunities and apprenticeships for women.

Develop gender-sensitive materials for such fields as science, technology, environmental and informational technology, mathematics, and management training.

B.4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training.

Governments, educational authorities, and educational and academic institutions should:

Develop multilingual and multicultural materials that are free of gender-biased stereotypes.

Ensure that male and female teachers have the same opportunities and are of equal status within the institution.

B.5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reform.

Governments, NGOs, multilateral development institutions, and UNESCO should:

Allocate a substantial percentage of their resources, and mobilize funds from other institutions, including the World Bank, toward basic education for women and girls.

B.6. Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.

Governments agree to:

Create flexible education programs that facilitate transition between women's activities at all stages of life.

C. WOMEN AND HEALTH (paras. 91-112)¹

Women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to women's life and well-being and to their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life. A major barrier for women to the achievement of this right is inequality. Women's health is affected by poverty, violence, negative attitudes towards women and girls, discrimination, lack of access to health services, inadequate research on women's health, the limited power many women have over their sexual and reproductive lives, and the lack of influence in decision-making. The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality – free of coercion, discrimination, and violence.

C.1. Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable, and quality health care, information, and related services.

Governments, in collaboration with NGOs and employers' and workers' organizations, and with the support of international institutions, should:

Support and implement international and national commitments to meet the health needs of girls and women of all ages, and reaffirm the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health.

Design and implement gender-sensitive health plans, services, information, and policies.

Make health care accessible and affordable for all, including sexual and reproductive health care.

Eliminate harmful, medically unnecessary, or coercive medical interventions.

C.2. Strengthen preventive programs that promote women's health.

Governments, in cooperation with NGOs, the mass media, the private sector, and international organizations, should:

Prepare and support educational programs and disseminate information on women's health.

¹ This section was heavily bracketed in the Draft Platform for Action. At the Conference, there was significant debate about the language, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive rights.

Pursue policies that consider the effects of external factors on women's health, such as eliminating poverty, reducing burdens on women within the family, increasing women's participation in sports and physical activities, and reducing environmental hazards.

Adopt specific preventive measures to protect women, youth, and children from any abuse.

C.3. Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues.

Governments, international bodies, bilateral and multilateral donors, and NGOs should:

Involve women in decision-making, research, and education on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Establish and expand peer and community education.

Provide universal access of couples and individuals to preventive services.

Research preventive measures that address women's needs and situations.

C.4. Promote research and disseminate information on women's health.

Governments, the UN system, health professions, research institutions, NGOs, donors, pharmaceutical industries, and the mass media should:

Promote gender-sensitive research, including research on how gender-based inequalities affect women's health.

Increase the number of women in leadership, including researchers and scientists, in the health professions.

Acknowledge and encourage beneficial traditional health care, especially by indigenous women.

C.5. Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health.

Governments at all levels, in cooperation with NGOs, especially women's organizations and youth organizations, should:

Increase budgetary allocations for primary health care and social services, and develop local and community-based health services.

Develop goals and time frames for improving women's health, and establish monitoring mechanisms.

Governments, the UN system, international financial institutions, bilateral donors, and the private sector should:

Formulate policies favorable to investment in women's health and increase allocations for such investment.

D. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (paras. 113-131)

Violence against women violates women's human rights² and fundamental freedoms. Violence against women means physical, sexual, and psychological violence against women because of gender. Women and girls are subjected to violence which cuts across class, income, and culture, in their homes and communities. Women and girls suffer gender-based violence perpetrated or condoned by the State. Violence against women includes battering, dowry-related violence, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, forced abortion, harmful traditional practices including female genital mutilation, rape, sexual harassment and intimidation in the workplace and in educational institutions, trafficking of women and girls and forced prostitution, and violence against women and girls in armed conflict such as murder, systematic rape, and sexual slavery. Refugee, displaced and migrant women, and women in situations of conflict or foreign occupation are particularly vulnerable to violence, as are minority, elderly, and indigenous women, and women with disabilities. Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, and is a crucial social mechanism to force women into a subordinate position. Violence is abetted by women's lack of access to legal information and assistance, lack of laws to prohibit violence and inadequate enforcement, absence of education about the causes of violence, inadequate statistics, and images of violence against women in the mass media.

D.1. Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

Governments agree to:

Condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking custom or religion to avoid obligations under the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Punish and redress the wrongs done to women, whether in the home or society.

Enact and enforce legislation against perpetrators of practices and acts of violence against women.

Educate about equality between men and women and violence as a human rights violation.

Train judicial, legal, police, and health personnel.

Implement the Women's Treaty.

² The term "universal human rights" was disputed and eventually deleted from this section.

Support the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

Governments, NGOs, educational institutions, and private enterprises should:

Provide well-funded shelters for women and girls subjected to violence, as well as counseling, legal aid, and medical assistance.

Organize and fund information campaigns and educational programs to teach everyone about the personally and socially detrimental effects of violence and about how to communicate without violence.

Eliminate sexual harassment.

D.2 Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures.

Governments, regional and international organizations, the UN research institutions, and NGOs should:

Promote research and compile statistics on the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, especially domestic violence.

Research the impact of violence, such as rape, on women and girls.

Encourage the media to examine how gender-role stereotypes foster gender-based violence and inequalities.

D.3. Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.

Governments and regional and international organizations should:

Consider ratifying and enforcing international conventions on trafficking in persons and on slavery.

Address the root causes of sex tourism and prostitution, including the factors that encourage trafficking, commercialized sex, forced marriages, and forced labor.

Dismantle national, regional, and international networks in trafficking of women.

E. WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT (paras. 132-151)

Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men, and with development. Women suffer human rights violations in situations of armed conflict, including terrorism, torture, disappearance, rape, ethnic cleansing, family separation, and displacement, as well as lifelong social and psychological traumatic consequences. Women and children constitute 80% of the world's millions of refugees and displaced persons. Implementation of cooperative approaches to peace and security is urgently needed. If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making. At the same time, maintaining national security and peace is essential for economic growth and development and the empowerment of women.

E.1. Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflict or under foreign occupation.

Governments and international and regional IGOs should:

Strengthen the role of women and ensure equal representation of women at all decision-making levels in national and international institutions.

Integrate a gender perspective in the resolution of conflicts, and strive for gender balance in international bodies, such as the UN International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda and the International Court of Justice.

E.2. Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.

Governments agree to:

Increase and hasten the conversion of military resources and related industries to development and peaceful purposes.

Investigate and punish members of the police, security and armed forces, and other who commit acts of violence against women in situations of armed conflict.

Seek solutions, including ratification of relevant international instruments, to the problems caused by land mines, with a view toward their eventual elimination.

E.3. Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.

Governments agree to:

Ratify or accede to international instruments that protect women and children in armed conflicts, and respect fully the norms of international humanitarian law.

Governments and international and regional organizations should:

Encourage diplomacy, negotiation, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Identify and condemn the practice of rape and other inhuman treatment of women as a deliberate instrument of war, and reaffirm that rape is a war crime; provide assistance to victims and punish those responsible.

Develop gender-sensitive training programs on international humanitarian law and human rights for relevant personnel, such as those involved in UN peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance.

E.4. Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.

Governments, international and regional IGOs, and NGOs should:

Develop peace research, with the participation of women, regarding conflict resolution and the impact of armed conflict on women and children and establish education programs to foster a culture of peace.

E.5. Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.

Governments, IGOs, NGOs, and other institutions working with refugee and displaced women should:

Ensure that women are fully involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs for refugee women and displaced women.

Ensure the safety and physical integrity of refugee women and displaced women.

Apply international norms to ensure equal access and equal treatment of women and men in refugee determination and asylum procedures, and promote efforts to develop gender-sensitive criteria and guidelines.

Governments agree to:

Implement guidelines from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and protect women and children who migrate as family members from denial of their human rights.

E.6. Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories.

Governments, IGOs, and NGOs should:

Promote the right of self-determination of all peoples by providing programs in leadership and decision-making.

F. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY (paras. 152-182)

Throughout the world, women are virtually absent from formulation of financial, monetary, business, tax, and employment policies. Women's share in the labor force continues to rise but women are concentrated in unremunerated and temporary work. Employment opportunities for women often have been limited to low pay and poor working conditions. When combined with inflexible working conditions, inadequate sharing of family responsibilities, and attitudinal obstacles, these factors restrict women's economic opportunities and economic autonomy. Women experience discrimination in education, training, hiring, promotion, and pay. Women migrant workers, including domestic workers, contribute to economies but experience higher levels of unemployment than men. Although women are active in the workplace, legal and customary barriers to ownership of land and capital impede women's economic progress. Women's unremunerated work in agriculture, food production, and community work is under-valued and under-recorded. Full visibility of the type, extent, and distribution of this unremunerated work will contribute to better sharing of responsibilities.

More recently, women have become self-employed and owners of small enterprises in the expanding informal economic sector. When they gain access to capital and training, women contribute to sustainable development. Governments and others must mainstream a gender perspective in economic policies and programs.

F.1. Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment and appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.

Governments agree to:

Enact and enforce legislation guaranteeing women equal rights to work; prohibiting discrimination in employment, social security, and tax benefits; and assuring equal access to economic resources.

Measures, incorporate, and distribute information on the type, extent, and distribution of unremunerated work done by women.

Implement national policies that support traditional savings, credit, and lending mechanisms for women.

Ensure that transnational corporations and trade agreements comply with national laws that do not adversely impact women's economic rights.

F.2. Facilitate women's access to resources, employment, markets, and trade.

Governments agree to:

Support development of small enterprises and strengthen women's access to credit and capital on terms equal to those of men.

Governments and banking institutions should:

Structure services to reach women involved in micro-, small-, and medium-scale enterprises with special attention to young, low-income, and indigenous women.

F.3. Provide business services, training, and access to markets, information, and technology, particularly to low-income women.

Governments, NGOs, and the private sector should:

Provide public infrastructure to assure equal market access for women and men entrepreneurs.

Disseminate information about successful women entrepreneurs.

Provide affordable support services such as child care.

F.4. Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks.

Governments, in cooperation with financial, training, professional and women's organizations, and the private sector, should:

Support NGOs, financial organizations, women's groups and other providing economic services for women entrepreneurs.

F.5. Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.

Governments, employers, employees, trade unions, and women's organizations should:

Enforce international labor standards and workers' rights.

Encourage the participation of women in non-traditional work.

Recognize collective bargaining and support women labor leaders.

Eliminate child labor, including excessive informal demands on girls.

Facilitate the productive employment of migrant women.

F.6. Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

Governments, the private sector, and NGOs should:

Create flexible work environments including part-time work, parental leave policies, and facilitation of breast-feeding for working mothers.

G. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING (paras. 183-197)

Women's empowerment and autonomy and the improvement of their social, economic, and political status are essential for the achievement of transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. The power relations that impede women's attainment of fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. Women are under-represented at most levels of government. Globally, only 10% of legislators are women, and fewer hold ministerial positions, even though women constitute over half of the electorate in almost all countries. Socialization and negative stereotyping of women, including stereotyping through the media, reinforce the tendency for political decision-making to remain the domain of men. Often, discriminatory attitudes and practices within the family influence unequal power relations in the public sector. Women also need to be fairly represented among economic and political decision-makers, including transnational corporations.

G.1. Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Governments agree to:

Establish gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, the judiciary, and all governmental and public administration positions.

Protect and promote the equal rights of women to engage in political activities and to freely associate.

Recognize that shared work and parenting between women and men promote women's increased position in public life.

Monitor and evaluate progress on the representation of women through regular collection and analysis of data.

Political parties should:

Examine party structures and procedures to eliminate discrimination against women's participation.

Develop initiatives to encourage women's participation and incorporate gender issues in their political agenda.

Governments, national bodies, the private sector, subregional and regional bodies, NGOs, and other organizations should:

Take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives, and managers in strategic decision-making positions.

Strengthen solidarity among women through information and education, and advocate at all levels to enable women to influence political, economic, and social decisions, processes, and systems.

The UN should:

Adopt and implement employment policies and measures to achieve overall gender equality by the year 2000.

G.2. Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

Governments and all organizations should:

Provide training to women and girls in leadership, self-esteem, public speaking, self-assertion, political campaigning, and the electoral process.

Apply transparent criteria for decision-making positions.

H. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (paras. 198-212)

National machineries for the advancement of women have been established in almost every Member State and at the regional and international levels. Often marginalized in national government structures, these mechanisms suffer from unclear mandates and insufficient staff, training, data, resources, and support from national political leadership. Similar problems have arisen at the international level. While methodologies exist for effectively incorporating women's concerns in policies and programs, and are available for application, few governments and international bodies have utilized them.

H.1. Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies.

Governments agree to:

Ensure that responsibility for the advancement of women is vested in the highest possible level of government.

Create or strengthen national machinery for the advancement of women with clear mandates, adequate resources, and ability to influence policy.

Establish cooperative relationships between governments and public, private, and volunteer organizations.

Report on the progress of efforts to mainstream gender concerns, including the implementation of the Platform.

H.2. Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs, and projects.

Governments agree to:

Review policies to ensure they reflect women's contributions, and to consider their impact on women.

Regularly review national employment and income policies to guarantee that women are direct beneficiaries of development and that their contribution is considered.

H.3. Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data for planning and evaluation.

Governments agree to:

Regularly produce a statistical publication on gender in a form suitable for non-technical users, and ensure that it is regularly reviewed for adequacy.

The UN should:

Promote the development of better methods for collecting and analyzing data on the human rights of women, including violence against women, and the role of women in economic, social, cultural, and political development.

Prepare a new issue of The World's Women every five years and distribute it widely.

Multilateral development institutions and bilateral donors should:

Provide resources so that countries can fully measure the work done by women and men, including both remunerated and unremunerated work.

I. HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN (paras. 213-233)

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings; their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of Governments. The universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question. The Platform reaffirms that all human rights, including the right to development, are universal and interrelated. The rights of women are an inalienable and integral part of universal human rights. Nevertheless, women's enjoyment of their rights is impeded by reservations to documents, discrepancies between national laws and international norms, lack of recourse mechanisms, and ineffective enforcement. Many women face additional barriers to enjoyment of their human rights. Human rights of women must be protected and enforced, and women need to be made aware of their rights and how to exercise them. Governments must refrain from violating the human rights of women. The human rights of women must be integrated into all human rights activities at the UN. Women engaged in defending human rights, including those working in women's organizations and feminist groups, also must be protected.

Violence, in particular, violates and impairs the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Gender-based violence includes domestic violence, sexual abuse, sexual slavery, trafficking in women and children, sexual harassment, and pornography. In addition, women suffer violence resulting from armed conflict, cultural and racial prejudice, ethnic cleansing, foreign occupation, harmful traditional practices, religious and anti-religious extremism, terrorism, and xenophobia. Governments should take urgent action to eliminate all forms of violence against women in private and public life.

I.1. Promote and protect the human rights of women, by implementing human rights instruments, especially the Women's Treaty.

Governments agree to:

Ratify the Women's Treaty by the year 2000, limiting or withdrawing reservations, especially those incompatible with or contrary to its purpose; ensure its implementation.

Include gender aspects when reporting under all human rights conventions.

Support the process of creating an optional protocol to the Women's Treaty to provide a right of petition procedure.

Seek universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the year 2000.

Eliminate trafficking in women, including for sexual exploitation, pornography, prostitution, and sex tourism, by implementing relevant human rights instruments.

The UN system should:

Give full attention to the human rights of women.

Include information on gender-based human rights violations in all activities and programs.

Strengthen cooperation between the UN organizations in the promotion of human rights of women.

Establish cooperation between the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees, recognizing the close link between human rights violations such as systematic rape of women in war, and the fact that refugee, displaced, and returnee women may be subject to particular human rights abuse.

I.2. Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice.

Governments agree to:

Promote and protect human rights of all women and men without distinction as to race, language, religion, opinions, color, national origin, property, or other status.

Enact legislation and review national laws, including customary laws, to ensure consistency with international human rights instruments and the principle of equality.

Provide gender-sensitive human rights education and training to public officials.

Establish mechanisms to investigate violations of the human rights of women.

Eliminate violence against women, which is a human rights violation, including violence from harmful traditional practices, cultural prejudices, and extremism.

Prohibit and eliminate female genital mutilation.

Ensure that women have the same right as men to be judges, advocates, and police officers.

I.3. Achieve legal literacy.

Governments, the UN, NGOs, and other international organizations should:

Translate (into local languages, indigenous languages, and formats accessible to people with disabilities and those with lower levels of literacy), publicize, and disseminate human rights law, including the Women's Treaty.

Promote education about human rights in schools, adult education programs, public offices, national security and armed forces, and UN peacekeeping operations.

Ensure that refugee and displaced women, migrant women, and women migrant workers know about their human rights and of the recourse mechanisms available to them.

J. WOMEN AND THE MEDIA (paras. 234-245)

Advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that affects public policy and private attitudes and behavior, especially of children. However, the media does not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions. Programming that is violent, degrading, or that reinforces women's traditional roles, negatively affects women's participation in society. Most women, especially in developing countries, do not have access to electronic information superhighways and, therefore, cannot establish networks that will provide them with alternative sources of information.

J.1. Increase women's participation in and access to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new communication technologies.

Governments commit to:

Review media policies with a view toward integrating a gender perspective.

Encourage media to increase the number of programs for and by women, if consistent with free of expression.

Governments, NGOs, and media associations should:

Create and disseminate multicultural media.

Establish media watch-groups.

J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in media.

Governments and international organizations should:

Create appropriate legislation against the projection of violence against women and children in the media.

Encourage media and advertising agencies to raise awareness of the Platform.

Mass media and advertising organizations should:

Establish professional guidelines and methods of self-regulation to address violent, degrading, or pornographic materials concerning women in the media.

Media, NGOs, and the private sector should:

Support and finance alternative media and all forms of communication that address the needs of women.

K. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT (paras. 246-258)

The major cause of continuing deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, aggravating poverty and imbalances. Environmental degradation affects the health, well-being, and quality of life, particularly of women. The global community must value and learn from women who, as consumers, producers, and caretakers, play an important role in sustainable development. Women's contributions in environmental management, including grass-roots efforts to reduce resource use and to promote an environmental ethic, have been important. The global community should make women's environmental knowledge systems central to the agenda for the 21st century. Sustainable development policies that do not involve women will not succeed in the long run.

K.1. Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels.

Governments agree to:

Ensure opportunities for women, including indigenous women, to participate in environmental decision-making as managers, designers, and evaluators.

Encourage use of women's environmental knowledge; respect their intellectual property rights.

NGOs and the private sector should:

Facilitate access of women agriculturists, fishers, and pastoralists to marketing services and environmentally sound technologies.

K.2. Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programs for sustainable development.

Governments commit to:

Integrate rural women's traditional knowledge in the development of environmental management programs.

Assess women's particular susceptibility or exposure to environmental degradation and hazards.

Promote research into women's ecological knowledge, including food gathering and production, soil conservation, irrigation, sanitation, and watershed management.

International organizations, NGOs, and the private sector should:

Support women's consumer initiatives such as marketing organic food, product labeling, and promoting recycling.

K.3. Strengthen or establish mechanisms at all levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

Governments, regional and international organizations, and NGOs should:

Provide technical assistance to women in agriculture, fisheries, small enterprises, and trade to promote development of human resources, environmentally sound technologies, and women's entrepreneurship.

Develop gender-sensitive databases and participatory action-oriented research, with the collaboration of academic institutions and local women researchers.

Promote compliance with international obligations, including Agenda 21, promote coordination between the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on the Status of Women.

L. THE GIRL CHILD (paras. 259-285)

In many countries the girl child is discriminated against from the earliest stages of life through her childhood. Girls often are treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last, undermining their self esteem. Girls suffer bias in education, the family, health services, and opportunities to participate in decision-making. Early marriage and child-bearing impedes equal access to education and employment opportunities. The girl child is at a disproportionate risk of malnutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and sexual violence. Girls with disabilities, and girls who are homeless, displaced, or of an ethnic or racial minority, are particularly vulnerable.

L.1. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child.

Governments agree to:

Take urgent measures towards ratifying and implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Eliminate unjust inheritance practices that discriminate against girls.

Enact and enforce minimum marriage age laws.

L.2. Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.

Governments agree to:

Inform adults about harmful effects of certain traditional practices on the girl child and take steps so that tradition and religion are not a basis for discrimination against girls.

L.3. Promote and protect the rights of the girl child and increase awareness of her needs and potential.

L.4. Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills, and development training.

L.5. Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition.

Governments, international organizations, and NGOs should:

Provide public information on discriminatory food and nutritional care allocation practices.

Strengthen and reorient health education to address girls' needs, including reproductive health education.

L.6. Eliminate economic exploitation of child labor and protect young girls at work.

Governments commit to:

Protect children from exploitation and hazardous work, in conformity with Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Define a minimum labor age.

L.7. Eradicate violence against the girl child.

Governments, international organizations, and NGOs should:

Enact and enforce legislation to protect girls from all forms of violence at work, in the household, and in society.

L.8. Promote girls' awareness of and participation in social, economic, and political life.

L.9. Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child.

V. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS (paras. 286-345)

Immediate action and accountability are essential to meeting the goals established by this Platform. Implementation of the Platform depends on Governments, as well as a wide range of institutions in the public, private, and non-governmental sectors at the community, national, subregional/regional, and international levels. During the UN Decade for Women, many institutions devoted to then advancement of women were established at the local, national, and international levels. Implementation of the Platform by the national, subregional/regional, and international institutions would be facilitated by transparency, by increased linkages between organizations, and by clear and strong mandates, backed by adequate authority, resources, and accountability. Further, there should be a clear commitment to international norms and standards of equality between women and men as a basis for all actions.

A. National Level

Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform. Commitment at the highest political level is essential to its implementation, and Governments should take a leading role in coordinating, monitoring, and assessing the progress of women. Governments should encourage support from legislative bodies, academic and research institutions, professional associations, trade unions, cooperatives, local community groups, NGOs, the media, religious groups, youth organizations, cultural groups, and financial and not-for-profit organizations. Governments should develop implementation strategies for the Platform, drawing upon persons in the highest levels of government, as well as persons in NGOs.

B. Subregional/Regional Level

Subregional and regional structures should promote and assist the pertinent national institutions in monitoring and implementing the Platform, in close collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women. Regional commissions should mainstream women's issues and gender perspectives and should consider the establishment of implementation mechanisms for the Platform.

C. International Level

The Platform needs to be implemented, specifically and as an integral part of wider programming, through the work of all the bodies and organizations of the

UN system,³ as well as through other international institutions, during the period 1995-2000. An enhanced framework for international cooperation for gender issues must be developed, and the institutional capacity of the UN system to implement the Platform should be improved. Efforts must be made to improve and mainstream mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, including improved resources, support, and advisory functions. Action must be taken by the UN and other international institutions to eliminate barriers to the advancement of women within their organizations in accordance with the Platform.

³ The entities specifically referenced in this section are the UN, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Commission on the Status of Women, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and other treaty bodies, UN Secretariat, Division for the Advancement of Women, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, UN Development Fund for Women, and other specialized agencies and international institutions.

VI. FINANCIAL ARRANGMENTS (paras. 346-362)

Resources generally have been insufficient for the advancement of women. The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies adopted ten years ago has not received adequate financial resources. Implementation of the Platform requires identification and commitment of human and financial resources. This requires integration of a gender perspective in budgetary decisions, as well as adequate financing of specific programs for equality. To implement the Platform, funding will be needed from all sources and across all sectors.

A. National Level

At the national level, governments have primary responsibility for allocating expenditures to achieve the strategic objectives of the Platform.

Governments must assess how expenditures impact women, allocate resources to assure equality, and mobilize other resources to achieve the goals of the Platform. Where machineries for achievement of equality do not exist, governments should provide resources to establish them. Governments should reduce military expenditures to achieve these goals, consistent with national security requirements. Governments should create a supportive environment for mobilization of resources by NGOs and the private sector.

B. Regional Level

At the regional level, regional development banks and business associations should contribute to implementation of the Platform.

C. International Level

At the international level, organizations (including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development) should allocate financial resources to implement the Platform in developing countries, particularly in Africa and in the least-developed countries.

Achieving the agreed target of .7% of GNP of developed countries is required for the developmental assistance and increased funding that will strengthen developing countries' capacity to implement the Platform. International aid should be monitored for efficiency and gender impact.

The UN should revitalize its structures devoted to the advancement of women, especially the Division for the Advancement of Women of the UN Secretariat, analyze the gender impact of its programs, and expand resources targeted

towards eliminating gender disparities in UN funding. The outcome of the UN World Summit for Social Development regarding debt management and reduction should be implemented.

Developed and developing country partners committed to, on average, 20% of development assistance and 20% of the national budget for basic social programs, should incorporate a gender perspective.