

NGLS

DEVELOPMENT

DOSSIER

**THE UNFINISHED
STORY OF WOMEN
AND THE UNITED
NATIONS**

by Hilikka Pietilä

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The Unfinished Story of Women and the United Nations

by

Hilkka Pietilä



United Nations
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Hilkka Pietilä, Secretary General of the Finnish UN Association from 1963-1990, has been active in the international women's movement for many years and has attended all the UN world conferences on women. This *Development Dossier* revises and updates the January 2002 version of *Engendering the Global Agenda: The Story of Women and the United Nations*.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book covers more than eighty-five years of history between women and inter-governmental organizations. Unrecorded by history and untold by the media, this book recalls the success story of women and the League of Nations and describes the unfolding history of women at the United Nations for the advancement and empowerment of women, especially in the 30 years since the First UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, and up to the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005. Thus, this is a complementary monograph to the book *Making Women Matter: The Role of the United Nations*, which Jeanne Vickers and I published in the early 1990s and a revision of the 2002 publication *Engendering the Global Agenda: The Story of Women and the United Nations*, produced as the tenth volume in the NGLS *Development Dossier* series.

It was the international women's movement—which was itself in the making at the time—that had an impact on the foresight reflected in the principles governing the creation of the United Nations. All due credit should be therefore given to the “founding mothers” of cooperation between the women's movement and the UN.

This book tells the story of how the United Nations has become a women-friendly global institution in spite of being a forum of governments, the great majority of which until lately has reflected primarily the visions and aspirations of men. Through the strenuous and skilful diplomacy and struggles of women over the decades, women's aspirations and visions have been brought to the forefront of the international agenda and have resulted in declarations, covenants and programmes for the advancement and empowerment of women, which go beyond existing legislation and policies in most of the UN Member States.

In recent years the UN has been undergoing a system-wide reform process that started at the highest level with the Millennium Summit in 2000, and the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and is far from being completed. The global women's movement around the UN has been following this

process with great interest and concern and they have been undertaking many initiatives and proposals on behalf of women. In July 2006 a thoroughly considered, comprehensive paper, entitled “Gender Equality Architecture and UN Reforms,” was submitted to the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). It is attached as Annex II to this edition of the *Dossier*.

My former publications on this subject and also this *Development Dossier* are related to the United Nations Intellectual History Project, which is, finally, a written history of the economic, social and cultural activities of the UN system in the making. Until now this dimension of the UN's history has not been taught, studied, nor researched in the colleges and universities of the world due to the lack of written/recorded history. I hope this updated second edition of the *Development Dossier* will help contribute to filling this gap.

This book is also the latest outcome of the long-term cooperation between the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) and myself from NGLS's inception in 1975, first during the years of my work as the Secretary-General of the Finnish United Nations Association (1963-1990) and then in connection with the publication of books and booklets on the advancement of women by the United Nations since 1985. Therefore my very warm thanks go again to NGLS and my long-term friend, collaborator and NGLS Coordinator, *Tony Hill*. In particular I would like to express my most cordial thanks to *Beth Peoc'h* of NGLS for her invaluable cooperation in substantially editing, streamlining and linguistically finishing this manuscript, and to *Robert-Anthony Bunoan* for his cooperation in finalizing the manuscript.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to the United Nations and NGLS for their generosity in making this book available to all interested readers.

Hilkka Pietilä
Helsinki, January 2007

Chapter 1

PROLOGUE—WOMEN AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

In the 1920s and 1930s women's international organizations, which were still young, had interesting collaboration with the first inter-governmental peace organization, the League of Nations. This collaboration also gave them the necessary experience for participating effectively in the process of the founding of the United Nations after the Second World War. This early history of engendering inter-governmental politics attracted, surprisingly late, the interest of researchers first at the beginning of the 1990s (Miller, 1992). During this time the process of engendering the global agenda also led to a number of irreversible achievements.

The founding of the League of Nations in 1919 marked the beginning of organized and institutionalized inter-governmental collaboration in a form that was unprecedented. This was the first step in joint foreign policy between governments toward supra-national goals—such as peace and security—instead of each nation merely defending its own individual interests against the interests of others. Women immediately realized the importance of such cooperation and had good reason to become interested in it as it aimed at ending wars and violence, and the settlement of disputes through negotiations, which corresponded with women's yearning for peace. This desire was particularly strong in people's minds right after the destruction and horrors of the First World War.

Another reason for women's commitment to inter-governmental collaboration right from the beginning was their firm belief in the fact that the advancement of women in different countries required governmental policies and democratic opportunities for women to influence those policies. Women were united across borders as they

H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa:

...to empower women to lead their lives.

"I believe it is the common responsibility of you, the Member States, to make the General Assembly and the United Nations even more effective. As efforts to revitalize the General Assembly are under way, we must not lose sight of the main purpose of these actions: to meet the rising expectations of the hundreds of millions of peoples around the world.

"We have a challenging task to meet their expectations; those that are poor, malnourished, illiterate or victims of disease... We have a challenging task to ensure their economic and social security which is just as important as their political and military security... We have a challenging task to liberate them from want while seeking to liberate them from fear...

"I would also like to underline that over half the world's population, namely women, typically have less access to health care, employment, decision making and property ownership. This disparity needs to be addressed so that women and men can enjoy the same opportunities, the same rights, and the same responsibilities in all aspects of life. To promote gender equality, we need to empower women so that they have more autonomy to lead their lives. To achieve these goals it is essential that we work closely together, so that together, we can promote human rights and achieve sustainable development."

—President of the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, speaking on 12 September 2006

Sheikha Haya from Bahrain is a champion of women's rights, particularly in the legal sphere and defending women before the Islamic sharia courts in her country. She is also an advocate of a progressive interpretation of Islamic texts as they apply to women.

In 2006 she was elected President of the 61st session of the UN General Assembly, and is the third woman to hold this position in the history of the United Nations.

worked to promote peace, and they saw promising chances to empower themselves in these new forms of inter-governmental cooperation.

It is amazing to see how well-prepared international women's organizations influenced the inter-governmental process right after the First World War even though women's cooperation was still very young. The first women's international organizations began to emerge at the turn of the century and during the First World War.

Women at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference

After the First World War, representatives of governments gathered at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to establish the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Representatives of women's international organizations were present in order to give their proposals regarding the Covenant of the League of Nations and to prevent the exclusion of women from the provisions and decisions.

In this context women founded the Inter-Allied Suffrage Conference (IASC), whose delegation received the right to participate in certain peace conference commissions. Provided with the chance to meet the representatives of 14 Allied Nations, the delegation immediately urged that women be given access to decision-making positions in the League of Nations. They also made proposals on issues they wished to be included in the programme of the newly established League. They proposed that the League set out to promote universal suffrage in Member States, take measures to recognize the right of a woman married to a foreigner to keep her nationality, and work to abolish trafficking in women and children and state-supported prostitution. In addition, they called for the creation of an international education and health bureau, and the control and reduction of armaments.

Based on these proposals, the Covenant of the League of Nations declared that Member States should promote humane conditions of labour for men, women and children as well as prevent trafficking in women and children. It also included provisions that all positions in the League of Nations, including the secretariat, should be open equally to men and women.

At the same time, women from American and British trade unions were on the move when the constitution of the ILO was being drafted. Specifically, they called for an eight-hour working day, an end to child labour, support for social insurance, pensions and maternity benefits, equal pay for equal work for women and men, as well as minimum wages for housework, among other things. Their proposals were politely received but quickly shelved as too radical.

Nevertheless, women's efforts resulted in the inclusion of a reference to fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children in the International Labour Organization constitution (Galey, 1995). The work toward the other objectives has continued, although some goals have still not been achieved.

People's Organizations and Inter-Governmental Cooperation

After the founding of the League of Nations and the ILO, representatives of women's organizations began to regularly observe the proceedings and work of the inter-governmental organizations and give their own proposals to government representatives. They founded the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations, which became "the voice of women" in Geneva. Women's organizations campaigned throughout the 1920s and 1930s to ensure, among other things, that women and their rights would not be neglected. The League of Nations established a body for international legal

protection of the human rights of particular minority groups.

This was the start of the dialogue between international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and the inter-governmental organization (IGO) of the League of Nations. Forerunners in this dialogue, which later continued with the United Nations, included women's international organizations such as the International Council of Women (ICW), International Alliance of Women (IAW), International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG), International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), International Federation of University Women (IFUW), World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). These were based mainly in Europe and the United States.

“While each type of organization clearly had distinct goals and priorities, they all believed that the League of Nations was an important vehicle for social and political reforms, in particular, the advancement of the status of women” (Miller, 1992). These organizations were estimated to represent 45 million women, but “a leadership cohort of middle and upper-class British, Scandinavian and American women who met on a regular basis in London or Geneva coordinated women's international work.”

Encouraged by the founding of the ILO, American female trade unionists convened the first International Congress of Working Women in Washington DC in 1919, in collaboration with women from the European trade unions. The International Federation of Working Women (IFWW) was also founded at this conference, and decisions were reached regarding a united approach to women's questions at annual International Labour Conferences. The ILO's work toward the development of labour regulations had a brisk start, as early as the 1920s, with women participating intensively right from the beginning.

The activities of women's organizations during that time can be compared to the large-scale NGO conferences arranged in connection with recent UN world conferences. In Paris in 1919 a handful of newly-established women's international organizations arranged the first parallel NGO conference to coincide with an inter-governmental conference. The aim of the parallel conference was to make women's voices heard in governmental discussions. It was not until 25 years later, at the founding of the UN, that some of the proposals made in 1919 by women reached the ears of the governments. Women's early proposals included international collaboration in fields such as education and health care; but the world had to wait until 1946 to see the UN establish the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to address these issues. Women also had clear demands regarding disarmament and arms control—issues that were to become fundamental elements of the UN's work from the outset.

In recent decades, parallel NGO conferences have become a permanent feature in connection with UN world conferences and gather thousands of people from around the world to monitor the inter-governmental events. These people's fora create massive publicity for issues that activists from around the world want to bring to the public's attention. NGO events parallel to UN conferences on women have attracted the greatest participation.

Latin American Women as Forerunners

Latin American women were instrumental in the International Conference of American States decision in 1928 to create the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW), the first inter-governmental body to address issues related to the status of women. The IACW prepared, and its member governments adopted, the Montevideo Convention on the Nationality of Married Women in

1933. This was the first inter-governmental convention providing women and men with equal status in respect to nationality. In 1935 the League of Nations approved the Convention and urged all Member States to ratify it.

The IACW also prepared the 1938 Declaration of Lima in Favor of Women's Rights. At this time the IACW encouraged its member governments to establish women's bureaux, revise discriminatory civil codes, and take women's initiatives regarding these issues to the League of Nations (Galey, 1995).

Perhaps the most concrete example of women's ability to make an impact at the international level was the Committee of Experts on the Legal Status of Women. Established by the League of Nations in 1937, it was authorized to conduct a "comprehensive and scientific inquiry into the legal status of women in various countries of the world." The Committee's work had barely begun when the Second World War broke out. But its founding was an important step toward putting women's human rights on the agenda of inter-governmental cooperation. The Committee was also the predecessor of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) later established by the United Nations.

Pacifist and Feminist Aims

To summarize the relationship between women's organizations and the League of Nations, Carol Miller, researcher on gender issues, refers to two ground-breaking achievements.

First, women created a model for cooperation and interaction between non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations. Formerly only Heads of State, foreign ministers and diplomats were entitled to participate in inter-governmental conferences. Women, however, demanded the right of access to meetings in

the conference hall and to official documents, and the right to distribute their statements in the hall and interact with official delegates—literally to lobby. They were first granted these rights at the League of Nations World Disarmament Conference in 1932, and later at other meetings.

Second, through their well-prepared proposals and what were perceived as credible actions, women's international organizations were able to establish so-called women's issues on the agenda of international cooperation. In other words, issues related to the status of women became international issues, not purely domestic concerns. This principle was established at the League of Nations at a time when women in many Member States did not even enjoy political rights, and when women were not accepted as diplomats (Miller, 1995).

Although pacifist aims, disarmament and peace were important reasons women supported the League of Nations, Miller points out that feminist objectives—the essence of which was the legal recognition of women's equality—were clearly equally significant. From this perspective, the founding of the Committee of Experts mentioned above was in itself a victory. It showed that securing equality between women and men, and the status of women, were issues that could not be left to governments alone. These early days saw systematic work toward convincing the League of Nations to draw up and adopt an international equal rights convention.

These were the beginnings of the formulation of a "dialectic," indirect and two-way strategy that has been used to advance women's objectives throughout the history of the United Nations. When women found it very slow or impossible to promote their objectives at the national level in their own countries, they took their issue to inter-governmental organizations. Such collaboration within these organizations has often resulted in resolutions and recommendations, even international conventions, that are more advanced than

those adopted at national levels. These accepted inter-governmental instruments then have been used effectively by women to pressure their governments and legislators to adopt and implement compatible laws in their respective countries.

As British pacifist and feminist Vera Brittain said in the 1920s, “The time has now come to move from the national to the international sphere, and to endeavour to obtain by international agreement what national legislation has failed to accomplish” (Miller, 1994).

The League of Nations’ attitude toward women’s activism was based on the realization that women were a valuable lobbying and support group for the League in almost every Member State. Women, on the other hand, saw the League as a new and powerful arena for advancing their objectives: peace, human rights and women’s equality in all countries. Thus due to women’s tenacious and clever diplomacy, the League of Nations was soon in advance of most of its Member States concerning women’s issues.

Chapter 2

THE FOUNDING MOTHERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The existence of the League of Nations ended with the onset of the Second World War. In retrospect, however, the work carried out during its existence was not in vain.

History shows that the basis and models for inter-governmental cooperation created by the League of Nations formed a firm base on which to build a new inter-governmental peace organization, which was already being planned by the Allied Nations during the war. During the time of the League of Nations, models of cooperation between international NGOs and inter-governmental organizations were also created. Furthermore, so-called women’s issues had gained visibility and began to appear more often on the international community’s agenda.

Due to the actions in the 1920s and 1930s, a substantial number of women gained experience and expertise in the international arena and networking. Women in official government delegations, representatives of women’s organizations and women in significant positions in the League of Nations kept in touch with each other and acted in consort to further their common objectives.

Women’s experience was also an indispensable asset when the founding conference of the United Nations was held in 1945 in San Francisco. Consequently, women were appointed to several of the government delegations participating in the conference. There were four Latin American women serving as delegates: Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Amália Caballero de Castillo Ledón (Mexico), Bertha Lutz (Brazil) and Isabel P. de Vidal (Uruguay). In addition, two women in the Venezuelan delegation, Lucila L. de Perez Diaz and Isabel Sanchez de Urdaneta, served as

advisors. Other women delegates included Cora T. Casselman (Canada), Jessie Street (Australia) and Wu Yi-Fang (China). The United States delegation had five women, with Virginia Gildersleeve as a delegate and the others as advisors. Ellen Wilkinson and Florence Horsbrugh were assistant delegates for the United Kingdom.

Four of the women delegates—Minerva Bernardino, Bertha Lutz, Wu Yi-Fang and Virginia Gildersleeve—were also among the 160 signatories of the UN Charter as representatives of their governments.

Dispute Over the Basic Concepts

Many of these women had several overlapping mandates, which added weight to their contributions. Ms. Caballero de Castillo Ledón was the chair of the Inter-American Commission on Women mentioned above, and both Bertha Lutz and Minerva Bernardino were members. They were instrumental in the movement that demanded the Preamble to the UN Charter reaffirm not only nations' "faith in fundamental human rights" and "the dignity and worth of the human person," but in "the equal rights of men and women."

Consequently, this wording was incorporated into the Charter; later generations have regarded it to be of crucial importance since the Charter legitimized from the beginning demands for full equality and equal rights for women and men alike. The fact that four different Articles—1(3), 55, 68 and 76—in the Charter affirm that human rights and fundamental freedoms belong to all "without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" gave strength to the initial wording.

Jessie Street, an Australian with the backing of a powerful network of women's organizations in her country and good connections with

women from several other countries, made a strong impact in San Francisco. She pushed for inclusion of an article in the Charter that corresponded to the stipulation in the Covenant of the League of Nations, which makes all positions in the United Nations equally open to men and women. The proposal was widely supported and was formulated as Article 8: "The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs."

Article 8 was incorporated into the final text of the Charter, although an attempt was made to remove it by those opposed to any special endorsement of women's eligibility. Women activists in those days regarded this Article as another highly significant achievement for the advancement of women. In the years thereafter, however, they must have felt disappointed when observing how the Article was ignored. Only since 1970s has it been given appropriate recognition, and in recent decades the number of women in high positions in the UN system has been steadily increasing (United Nations, 1999a). As of 30 June 2005, women occupied 37.1% of professional and higher positions and 16.2% of the Under-Secretaries-General were women.

The actual work of the United Nations began with an inaugural session of the General Assembly in London in early 1946. The issue of women's rights reappeared in the session as a prominent item on the international agenda for the first time since the beginning of the Second World War. Seventeen women participated in the session as delegates or advisers to delegations. They prepared a document entitled "An Open Letter to the Women of the World" (see Annex I), from the women delegates and advisers at the first Assembly of the United Nations. The letter introduced the UN to women as "the second attempt of the peoples of the world to live peacefully in a democratic world community." It called on women to take "an important opportunity and responsibility" in promoting these goals in the United Nations and their respective countries.

Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux of the French delegation initiated the letter, but it was delivered to the Assembly by a delegate of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt urged governments to take the letter home and encouraged women everywhere to come forward and “share in the work of peace and reconstruction as they did in war and resistance.” She expressed her conviction that the United Nations “can—if we give to it as much work as we have given in the past to winning the war—be an instrument to win the peace.”

This letter was the first formal articulation of women’s voices in the UN and an outline of the role for women to play in a new arena of international politics and cooperation. The letter was neither discussed, nor formally adopted. However, several delegates spoke about it or gave statements supporting it. The letter and the statements were recorded, with the hope expressed by the President of the session that the issue “will be taken into very serious consideration” (United Nations, 1995b, pages 93-98).

New Dimensions for the United Nations

The UN Charter established three new substantive elements of crucial importance for women, which had not been features of the League of Nations. The issues concerning economic and social development, codification and the advancement and monitoring of human rights were given a prominent status in the new world organization; furthermore, the importance and collaborative status of non-governmental organizations was recognized.

1. Economic and Social Council as a principal organ: In addition to political tasks, the UN was given the mandate “to promote economic and social progress and development.” As one of the five principal organs, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established to be in charge of these operations. It was also mandated to establish subsidiary bodies, such as the United Nations Children’s

Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). And through ECOSOC, specialized agencies such as the ILO, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Health Organization (WHO) were linked with the UN system (Articles 55-60 of the Charter).

2. Human Rights mandate: The Commission on Human Rights was established under the auspices of ECOSOC with the broad mandate to work for the codification, advancement and protection of human rights and monitoring their implementation: “... the UN shall promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion” (Article 55c).

3. The Status of the Non-governmental Organizations: The collaborative relationship between non-governmental organizations and the UN was legitimized and a framework provided within which NGOs can acquire consultative status with ECOSOC. This opportunity was utilized from the very beginning by, among others, all of the women’s international organizations that already had been collaborating actively with the League of Nations (Article 71).

The issue of creating the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) as a separate entity under ECOSOC represented a considerable struggle. Although, as previously mentioned, the CSW had a precedent in the League of Nations, in the UN founding conference it was initially set up as a sub-commission of the Commission on Human Rights, contrary to the wishes of participating women.

However, the first chair of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women, Bodil Begtrup—President of the Danish National Council of Women and a former delegate to the League of Nations—did manage at the second session of ECOSOC to push through a resolu-

tion establishing the CSW as an autonomous entity. Therefore, despite failure to reach a decision on this in San Francisco in 1945, CSW was able to commence its operations as an autonomous Commission as early as 1947. Ms. Begtrup continued as the chair, and Jessie Street was elected as the first vice-chair of the Commission. The members included Ms. Caballero de Castillo Ledón and Ms. Urdaneta, who had been active members of their national delegations in San Francisco.

Why was it that women, right from the very beginning, persistently demanded a special Commission on the Status of Women instead of pursuing their cause through a sub-commission of the Commission on Human Rights? Ms. Begtrup argued that women did not want to be dependent on the pace of another commission. They believed that through a commission of their own they could proceed more quickly than in the Commission of Human Rights, where their proposals would end up “in the queue” with many other human rights issues.

In fact, time has shown that in the independent Commission on the Status of Women, the proposals by women have gained a totally different weight and significance than would have been the case in the Commission on Human Rights. As an independent commission, CSW was entitled to set its own agenda, decide its priorities, and report and make proposals directly to ECOSOC.

John P. Humphrey, the first Director of the UN Secretariat Division of Human Rights, gives an interesting account of CSW in his memoirs: “[More] perhaps than any other United Nations body the delegates to the Commission on the Status of Women were personally committed to its objectives...[and] acted as a kind of lobby for the women of the world...There was no more independent body in the UN. Many governments had appointed...as their representatives women who were militants in their own countries” (Morsink, 1991).

Concerning the significance of the UN Charter to women, it “gave

[them] slim, formal recognition, but the human rights provisions gave women constitutional-legal leverage to renew their quest for improvement of their status, achieve full citizenship with men, and enter the world’s political stage” (Galey, 1995).

Mission and Mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women

In the years from 1946 to 1962, CSW focused on mapping out the legal status of women in the Member States and later on the preparation of legislation and international conventions for the advancement of the status of women. The resources of the Commission were extremely small, and the assistance provided was limited to a Section on the Status of Women with a very small staff within the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Department of Social Affairs. The shortage of resources was partly compensated by the motivation and enthusiasm of members of the Commission.

In the initial session, the Commission began to specify its mission and mandate. Its two basic functions were to “prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women’s rights in the political, economic, civil and educational fields,” and to make recommendations “on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women’s rights.” The Commission also has the mandate to make proposals on the further development of its functions and mandate (E/RES/2/11, 21 June 1946).

The CSW, as part of the UN system, is by definition an inter-governmental institution. However, from the beginning it also has had direct contacts with women’s international non-governmental organizations. They were the channel through which the Commission aspired to establish direct contact with the women of Member States. The women’s international NGOs had already manifested their

interest and resourcefulness when the Commission was being founded. Through the acquisition of consultative status granted by ECOSOC, representatives of these NGOs received the right to participate as observers at Commission sessions and have access to its reports and documents. Upon the Commission's approval, they could also address the sessions.

At its first session in February 1947, the Commission heard 12 women's international organizations. Most of these were organizations that had already established a relationship with the League of Nations and had been active at the United Nations founding conference. The Commission also expressed its willingness to collaborate with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), American Federation of Labour, and the International Cooperative Alliance, although these were not women's organizations.

From the Commission's inception, women's international organizations have been very eager to attend its sessions and monitor its work. Many organizations have appointed permanent representatives to the Commission who have attended sessions over a long period of time and have acquired considerable expertise and vital personal contacts within the Commission and UN Secretariat.

Getting proposals onto the Commission's agenda was often a difficult task for the different NGOs. However, it rapidly became clear how they could do so. Since only governments are official members of the Commission, they have the exclusive right to propose items for the Commission's agenda. NGO representatives who utilize their connections and negotiation skills, however, can persuade government delegations to adopt NGO proposals and submit them to the Commission. Over the years this is how countless issues have begun as NGO initiatives and ended up as UN resolutions and recommendations. One main example of this is the initiative for the International Women's Year (IWY) in 1972. Collaboration between representatives of NGOs and governments has been close and fruit-

ful from the start, and official delegates often have been grateful for well-prepared proposals submitted by NGOs.

The mandate of the CSW was expanded by ECOSOC in 1987 (E/RES/1987/24) to include activities for advocating the triple theme of "Equality, Development and Peace;" monitoring the implementation of internationally-agreed measures for the advancement of women; and reviewing and appraising progress at the national, regional and international levels. This expansion was based on experiences and outcomes of the 1975 International Women's Year, the 1976-85 United Nations' Decade for Women and the 1985 Nairobi Conference.

Human Rights or "Rights of Man"?

Activists and the CSW had a decisive role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights between 1946 and 1948. They wanted to make sure that the phrase "equal rights of men and women," incorporated through great effort in the UN Charter, would not be watered down in the Declaration's Preamble. Minerva Bernardino¹ of the Dominican Republic questioned use of the term "everyone" in the Preamble; she argued that "in certain countries the term 'everyone' did not necessarily mean every individual, regardless of sex." In the end, Member States voted on whether the Declaration should reproduce the exact phrase contained in the Preamble to the UN Charter. Thirty-two voted in favour, with only two against (China and the United States) and three abstentions.

1. Minerva Bernardino (1907-1998) was a delegate of the Dominican Republic to the UN founding conference in San Francisco in 1945 and her country's first UN ambassador until 1957. Her positions included the Chair of CSW and First Vice President of ECOSOC. She was the only woman of those present at the UN founding conference who also took part in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the UN in 1995 in San Francisco.

Women monitored the drafting of the Declaration paragraph-by-paragraph in order to prevent the inclusion of any sexist phrases. It took extensive debate to erase the word “man” when referring to all people. In fact, it was during this time that the English word “man” was recognized as only meaning men. Women said the word represents gender, not species; it therefore excludes women. Thanks to the unyielding efforts of women during the process of drafting the Declaration, Article 1 reads, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” instead of “All men...” And in place of “every man” and “no man,” the words “everyone” and “no one” are used throughout the text.

Another problem was the text’s use of the masculine pronouns “he,” “him” and “his,” which remained unsolved; the masculine pronouns are still in the text. In other languages that use gender-neutral pronouns, such as Finnish, this problem doesn’t exist. In fact, the “universal” Declaration appears somewhat different in different translations. For example, in French it still includes wording such as *Droits de l’Homme* (Rights of Man) to signify “human rights.”

Ms. Bernardino, who was interviewed by *INSTRAW News* in 1992 at the age of 85, said: “I am very proud to have been instrumental in changing the name of the Declaration of the ‘Rights of Men’ to the Declaration of Human Rights.” She believed women who fought for this were “conscious that they were making a revolution.” This revolution continued in the 1950s and included issues such as the right to live with dignity. “In interpreting these words,” she said, “we denounced, in the United Nations, the horrible mutilations of women in certain religious/cultural rituals in certain regions in Africa. We started a job that has not yet ended. Women have not really worked in solidarity to end it.” Ms. Bernardino placed emphasis on solidarity “because it is the key to success. Just causes in general always win, I am convinced, but without solidarity you do not achieve your specific goals.”

In hindsight one can only imagine the kind of a document the Universal Declaration of Human Rights might have become had it been written solely by men—even though the drafting commission was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. The adoption of the Declaration by the General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 was a triumph and a defining moment for the CSW. Ever since, the Commission has used the Declaration as a basis for action for promoting equal rights and freedoms. At the United Nations, the Declaration is the basis for codifying human rights into numerous well-known, legally binding international conventions.

Chapter 3

HUMAN RIGHTS ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The United Nations Blue Book² on the advancement of women divides UN work focused on equality and the advancement of women into four different periods: securing the legal foundations of equality (from 1945-1962); recognizing women's role in development (from 1963-1975); the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985); and "Towards Equality, Development and Peace" (from 1986 onwards) (United Nations, 1996a).

The Legal Status of Women in the World

The first task of CSW was to conduct a global survey on the status of women's rights, which the League of Nations had worked on a decade earlier. Seventy-four governments—including some that were not even members of the UN—responded promptly to the questionnaire. The survey revealed four areas of particular concern:

- political rights of women and the possibility to exercise them;
- legal rights of women, both as individuals and as family members;
- access of girls and women to education and training, including vocational training; and
- working life.

By 1962, several conventions focused on these issues had been prepared by the United Nations, UNESCO, and the ILO. The most significant of these included the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; the 1951 ILO Convention Concerning Equal Remuneration

2. Volume VI of the United Nations Blue Book Series *The United Nations and The Advancement of Women 1945-1996* is a collection of the most important documents and resolutions on women in the United Nations during 1945-1996.

Eleanor Roosevelt:

Where do human rights begin?

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

—Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady of the United States, was a member of her country's delegation in the first sessions of the UN General Assembly in 1946-48. She chaired the Commission on Human Rights which drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. She regarded the Universal Declaration as her greatest accomplishment. More information is available online (www.udhr.org/history/Biographies/bioer.htm).

for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value; the 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women; the 1957 Convention on the Nationality of Married Women; the 1960 UNESCO International Convention Against Discrimination in Education; and the 1962 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage, and Registration of Marriages.

The titles and realities behind these conventions are a sad reflection of the problems women faced in the first half of the 20th century. For example, in the 1940s only 30 of the 51 countries that had signed the UN Charter acknowledged political rights of women. (The number now stands at 118 countries.) Often if a marriage was not registered and hence legitimized, a wife had no security and could be abandoned at any time, thrown out of her home, and separated from her family without any economic or social support. For this reason the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages obliged Member States to create legislation to that effect.

The Right to Family Planning—A New Human Right

As mentioned earlier, when women couldn't achieve their goals at the national level they took the issues to the international level. They have used this strategy in connection with the right to family planning, women's rights over their body and deciding on the number and spacing of their children. The family planning issue was not discussed when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up. However, it has become a recognized basic human right, which has had a major impact on the advancement of women's status and their lives during the past century. Women's right and means to control their own fertility also improves the possibility of controlling their lives in general and realizing their other human rights. These include the right to education and training, to undertake economic activities of their own, and to participate in the political, cultural and

social spheres in their countries.

The right to family planning is a "latecomer" when compared with women's political and legal rights; as late as the 1960s it was still a fairly new issue around the world. However, it rapidly gained support within the women's movement of the industrialized countries. The UN and some densely populated countries—with India in the forefront—began to take an interest because population growth was regarded more and more as a major problem. However, family planning was very controversial within the UN, where it was categorically opposed by many nations strongly influenced by Catholicism—led by the Holy See—and by Islamic countries.

The right to family planning was recognized for the first time as a human right in the 1968 Declaration of Teheran, which resulted from the International Conference on Human Rights. In the following year it was included in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development by the UN General Assembly. In the 1970s the issue was constantly debated at the General Assembly and in world conferences.

Countries opposing promotion of and education in family planning for women, as well as the provision of contraceptives, threatened to withdraw all support from agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) if they included family planning in their programmes.

Political controversy managed to slow down the process of promoting family planning, but not to bring it to a standstill. Women's organizations and development agencies continued to support and demand it. Development aid organizations in the United States and politicians in particular regarded birth control in the developing countries as one of the most important forms of development aid. Women delegates to UN conferences and women's NGOs created networks with UN organizations and kept the issue alive, while dis-

putes in the General Assembly persisted. Women activists saw this as a major issue for women in general and not just for those from the developing countries.

The right to family planning became a major issue at the first UN World Population Conference in 1974. Very precise formulations on the issue were adopted by the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year (IWY) in Mexico. Its World Plan of Action and Declaration said that "every couple and every individual has the right to decide freely and responsibly whether or not to have children as well as to determine their number and spacing, and to have information, education and means to do so" (United Nations, 1975).

The right to family planning is more specifically defined in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It reaffirms this right as a binding obligation of the Member States. In the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, the concepts of "reproductive rights and reproductive health" were further defined and adopted. These new formulations expanded understanding of the issue.

According to the Cairo Programme of Action (United Nations, 1994), "Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this are the rights of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice" (paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3). Reproductive health and rights received even more precise and extensive formulation in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which reconfirms the definitions formulated in Cairo (paragraphs 94-96).

A heated discussion took place in Beijing on the concept of "sexual rights," which was supposed to cover all of the above in addition to the issue of various sexual orientations. Although the concept was not acceptable to many countries and was not adopted, the essential content—as formulated in Cairo and further developed in Beijing—was finally adopted by consensus. However, 12 Catholic countries, the Holy See and 19 Islamic countries expressed their reservations to paragraphs related to this issue in the final document.

With the right to family planning, another basic human right becomes a reality: the right to be born a wanted child. It is easy to understand how infinitely important this is as a fundamental human right at the beginning of a new life. A recent study in Finland has shed light on the physical and practical importance of this; for example, the risk of being born prematurely is lower with children wanted by their parents, they are breastfed longer than unwanted children and have fewer health problems later. The study also reveals that in 1966 12% of children were born unwanted in Finland whereas in 1988 the corresponding figure had dropped to 1%, with the number of premature babies also dropping by half during the same period (Järvelin, 1997).

In practice, the right and access to family planning is an asset for entire families—men, women and children—the world over. First of all it is the means of preventing unwanted pregnancies and thus making abortions unnecessary. It is important even from the economic point of view because it will provide families with better options to plan for nourishment, care, housing and education of their children.

When policies promoting reproductive health and rights are implemented, even controversial issues such as abortion and teenage pregnancy become easier to address. In Finland abortion has been legal since 1970, and at the same time education and family planning services have been greatly improved. In the meantime teenage and

unwanted pregnancies have greatly decreased. In the beginning of the 1970s the number of legal abortions increased but then began to decline due to the fall of unwanted pregnancies. The abortion rate in Finland is now one of the lowest in the world: in 1973 there were 41 abortions for every 100 live births, and in 1993 this had dropped to 15 (Finnish Government, 1994).

The right to family planning is an example of an issue fought for on many fronts over decades. From 1968 onwards it was brought up in every relevant context at UN conferences and in resolutions—despite often forceful protests. Debate over the issue quickly gained prominence in, among other things, national and international media, women’s magazines and development aid publications.

Women’s reproductive rights were still hotly debated at the Beijing Conference in 1995, and at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Beijing+5 in June 2000. They were again strongly debated during the 2005 UN World Summit in September where world leaders resolved to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015—as envisioned at the 1994 Conference on Population and Development; promote gender equality; and end discrimination against women. The Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1)³ calls for integrating universal access to reproductive health in strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (paragraph 57g) and as a means to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment (paragraph 58c).

Progress on this issue could not have been achieved without women’s collaboration, despite borders separating them and government’s opposition. Nevertheless, the struggle to achieve implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women continues, even in countries that have ratified it.

3. The 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document is available online (www.un.org/summit2005).

However, the Convention and Plans of Action of recent UN world conferences have proved indispensable tools for women’s efforts to press governments for implementation.

Convention on the Rights of Women

From women’s point of view, the single most important international legal instrument adopted by the UN is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, also known as the Convention on the Rights of Women (United Nations, 1979).⁴

In fact, the Convention does not imply any specific women’s rights but is a reflection of the reality that universally-recognized human rights are still not enjoyed equally by women and men. If they were, no convention on the elimination of discrimination against women would be needed. The very necessity of this Convention is revealing and paradoxical, and it bears witness to continuing discrimination.

The predecessor of the Convention was the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which was initiated by CSW in 1963. This was the beginning of a process similar to those of many other UN conventions wherein the first step was the preparation of a Declaration, which only offered recommendations. The Declaration was adopted in 1967.

4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is available online (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw). The significance of an international convention lies in the fact that it reinforces universally-adopted legal norms on the issue concerned. Among other things it provides an indisputable justification for the efforts of NGOs, women’s movements and legislators when they work toward exposing human rights violations and call for rectification in their respective countries. An international convention also provides indisputable grounds for demanding that the Convention be ratified, and that corresponding national legislation to remedy the grievances be created by governments. Without an internationally adopted framework, the work toward the advancement of women’s legal and social status would be even more difficult than it is today in many countries.

Selected Conventions of Concern to Women

Adopted		In Force	Ratifications as in 2004
1949	Convention for Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others	1951	78
1951	Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (ILO No. 100)	1953	161
1952	Convention on the Political Rights of Women	1954	118
1958	Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (ILO no. 111)	1960	160
1960	International Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO)	1962	91
1962	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage, and Registration of Marriages	1964	51
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	1981	184 (2006)
1981	Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (ILO No. 156)	1982	36

The long process of preparing the Convention started in 1973. After it was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, it was to become binding for the countries that ratified it. Processes such as this often help in the development and maturation of the views and positions of decision makers in the UN and Member States alike towards acceptance of previously controversial issues, despite the occasional need for fundamental changes in values and legislation. They can also help shape public opinion worldwide.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women incorporates the principles of women's rights and gender equality into international law. It includes all provisions aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women previously covered by separate conventions. It also contains provisions covering issues that had been omitted from earlier conventions. The Convention recognizes the right to family planning as one of the basic human rights.

The Convention was unanimously adopted in 1979 and entered into force two years later following ratification by the required 20 governments. Ratified by 184 governments as of March 2006, the Convention has become one of the most widely-ratified UN human rights conventions. Although this does not necessarily guarantee implementation in all countries, it provides an invaluable instrument for women everywhere as they work toward the development of national legislation and the elimination of discrimination against them.

In addition, the Convention provides for follow-up by the UN regarding practical implementation in Member States. It calls for the establishment of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which is composed of 23 experts of high moral standing and competence nominated by States that have ratified the Convention, and elected by States Parties for a

term of four years. Members of the Committee serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their governments.

The States Parties to the Convention are obliged to report to the Committee on progress of implementation every four years. The CEDAW Committee also has the right to invite governments individually to a hearing about their measures toward implementation of the provisions.

The governments of some countries also consult representatives of women's organizations and arrange hearings as part of the preparation of their report to CEDAW before submitting it. Women's organizations can also send CEDAW "shadow reports" about their government's actions toward implementation of the Convention.

Furthermore, in October 1999 the General Assembly endorsed an Optional Protocol to the Convention. It provides CEDAW with the mandate to hear petitions and complaints of individual citizens, groups of individuals and concerned NGOs about violations of the Convention. In practice this Protocol enables women victims of gender discrimination to submit complaints to an international treaty body. The Protocol entered into force in December 2000 after ten States had ratified it. As of September 2005, the Protocol has 72 States Parties. Upon entry into force, it put the Convention on an equal footing with other international human rights instruments that have individual complaints mechanisms.

The Missing Link in the Chain

During the past years, greater awareness of a missing link in progress on women's rights within the UN system has emerged: violence against women. When the Convention on the Rights of Women was being prepared in 1970s, this issue was overlooked both in the UN and elsewhere. Consequently, the Convention does not include a

single mention of it. However, since the 1985 Nairobi Conference to review and appraise achievements of the UN Decade for Women, the UN has encouraged discussion to help break the silence concerning the issue of violence against women. In 1993 the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women after a long and thorough preparation process directed by CSW. This Declaration is an important step towards the preparation of a binding Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, as suggested by the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his message on International Women's Day in 1995 (United Nations, 1996a).

In 1994 the Organization of American States (OAS) had already adopted the Inter-American Convention on Violence Against Women (known as the Convention of Belem do Para). It entered into effect in 1995. This Convention establishes many important precepts for tackling the task of eliminating violence against women.

Two features of this Convention distinguish it from others. Firstly, the fact that of all the binding (legally obligatory) inter-American instruments on human rights, it is the one which has the highest number of ratifications within the region with 31 ratifications by a total of 34 active OAS Member States, the exceptions being Jamaica, the United States and Canada. The OAS has a capacity to develop treaties—which served as an example to other regional organizations including the Council of Europe. Secondly, it is the only binding international instrument in the world that specifically addresses the question of violence against women. The Inter-American Commission of Women, made up of delegates from each State, is currently drafting a proposed mechanism for following up implementation of the Convention in the respective States Parties so that analyses and recommendations can be generated to reduce and one day eliminate altogether the remaining gulf between the formal requirements of the Convention and the daily lives of women in the continent.

The decisive impetus toward making further progress on this issue was provided by the Beijing Platform for Action. One of the Platform's key objectives is "the elimination of all forms of violence against women." As many as three of the 12 strategic objectives of the Platform of Action are directly connected to the elimination of violence against women and girls, and include violence against women, women and armed conflict, and the girl-child. Also the detecting and eliminating economic, structural, social and cultural violence against women runs throughout the Platform for Action.

As part of the process to implement the Platform for Action, in 1997 four high level conferences were held, in which the violence against women was dealt from a new viewpoint.⁵

In these conferences violence against women was examined as "a male problem," as part of the male culture and its consequences to men themselves and society in whole (Pietilä, 1998). Since then, men's movements—such as the White Ribbon and others—have grown in their work against male violence in general, and violence against women in particular, in an increasing number of countries such as Canada, Namibia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, and the Nordic and South-East Asian countries. Also, current research is gradually spreading and analysing the role of men and masculinity in the same way as women's research has worked on pre-conceived women's roles in various cultures.

5. The following conferences were held: "Is Violence Masculine? – Conference on men and violence." Swedish government in Stockholm; "Promoting Equality: A common Issue for Men and Women". Council of Europe in Strasbourg (France); "Domestic Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, Costs, Programs and Policies", Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Washington DC (USA); "Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace," Expert Group Meeting on Male Roles and Masculinity in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace, UNESCO in Oslo (Norway).

From the Battle Field to the Peace Table

The Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women is still missing, but progress on other dimensions of this issue has taken place rapidly since the early 1990s and also as part of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The UN Security Council has expressed its views strongly and effectively on this issue for the first time in its history. Resolutions and decisions of the Security Council are strong indications of the change in attitudes: Violence against women is no longer an issue of private life, but an issue of security, human rights and war crimes.

In 1992 the Security Council condemned strongly "the acts of unspeakable brutality of the massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina." In May 1993 the Security Council decided to establish an International War Crimes Tribunal to deal with "serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia" after January 1991. The mandate of this tribunal includes the "massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women." This implies that rape and violence against women in war are now recognized as war crimes: the aim for which women's peace movements had worked for years.

Later the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda broke new ground in the area of jurisprudence by convicting individuals of rape as an instrument of genocide, a form of torture and a crime against humanity. The Rome Statute of the new International Criminal Court (ICC) takes gender concerns into account in their definition of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In January 2002 the statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone includes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and any other form of sexual violence among the constituent elements of crimes against humanity. The Special Court decided in 2004 that even forced marriage would be prosecuted as an "inhuman

act,” i.e. a crime against humanity (E/CN.6/2005/2).

A further sign of progress is that the negotiation table of the Security Council has been opened to women’s voices. In October 2000 a coalition of women in five peace organizations – Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, International Alert, Amnesty International, Women’s Commission for Women Refugees and Girls, and the Hague Appeal for Peace – joined with UNIFEM to draft a resolution that calls for the protection of women and girls during armed conflicts, for gender sensitivity in all UN missions, including peacekeeping, and for women to equally participate at all negotiation tables.

As a result, Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” was unanimously passed by the Security Council on 31 October 2000. Resolution 1325 calls for integration of women in all conflict resolution processes as well as actions for resettlement, rehabilitation and post-conflict reconstruction. It also recommends special training for all peace keeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations (S/RES/1325).

It is particularly important that this kind of resolution was adopted by the Security Council because its resolutions are binding to Member States contrary to the other conferences and meetings, whose resolutions are only recommendations. Since October 2000 the Security Council has held several open debates to discuss progress and challenge to implementation. Four presidential statements (in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2005) recognized the link between peace and gender equality and called for action to implement the resolution by those concerned and for an end to the culture of impunity. Shortly after the Resolution was adopted, Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, appointed Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf “to conduct an independent assessment of women, war and peace so that people throughout the world will know and understand

not only what women have suffered but what they have contributed for building peace and reconstruction.” The report was published in 2002 and has received a lot attention around the world (UNIFEM, 2002, www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=17).

During the five-year anniversary debate of Resolution 1325 held in October 2005, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented his UN system-wide action plan for implementing resolution 1325 (S/2005/636), structured around 12 areas of action: conflict prevention and early warning; peacemaking and peacebuilding; peacekeeping operations; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; preventing and responding to gender-based violence in armed conflict; preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse by UN staff, related personnel and UN partners; gender balance; coordination and partnership; monitoring and reporting; and financial resources (www.un.org/Docs/sc/sgrep05.htm).

The action plan will be used by UN entities to formulate concrete strategies, actions and programmes to advance the role of women in peace and security areas; ensure more efficient support to Member States and other actors in national and regional level implementation of Resolution 1325; strengthen the commitment and accountability of the UN system at the highest levels; and enhance inter-agency cooperation.

Women around the world have eagerly used the resolution in connection with present conflicts in their respective hemispheres. It has been translated into many languages and women’s groups are very active in demanding that governments implement the resolution in training of personnel for peacekeeping and crises management. Women in Africa have been the first ones to sit at the negotiation tables for the resolution of conflicts and implementation of peace agreements in their continent.

Additional Resources:

1. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) website: (www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women).
2. Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: (www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/subsidi/tf_gender/gbv.asp).
3. The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS brief, *What's Real*, provides information on women, violence and HIV/AIDS: (<http://womenandaids.unaids.org/themes/docs/UNAIDS%20VAW%20Brief.pdf>).
4. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) publication on gender-based violence, *Broken bodies—broken dreams: violence against women exposed*, is available online (www.irinnews.org/broken-bodies/default.asp).
5. Security Council Resolution 1325: (www.un.org/Docs/scres/2000/sc2000.htm). Presidential Statements on Resolution 1325 are available online: (www.un.org/Docs/sc).
6. Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) website on Security Council Resolution 1325: (www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/5years1325).

Chapter 4

THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN (1976-1985): A DECADE OF DEVELOPMENT

A critical change in thinking at the UN Secretariat and among Member States concerning the status of women and attitudes toward them began in the early 1970s. Until then women had been seen as “objects” of support and measures. However, people began realizing that women had a central, even critical role as subjects and actors in relation to many development goals and aspirations.

New Trends with New States in the UN

As the proportion of developing countries grew among UN Member States, development issues became increasingly prominent on the UN’s agenda. As early as the 1960s, developing countries began attempting to shift the focus of debate in the UN from political and security issues to development issues. The world food situation was again critical in the early 1970s, and there was general agreement that something had to be done about population growth. These problems made the UN system realize that women were the key factor in their solution. Unless the situation of women was addressed and their status and conditions improved, there would be no hope for alleviating food and population problems. Thus the hard reality of the world’s situation brought women into the spotlight.

At the same time, the feminist movement was growing stronger and becoming very active in the industrialized countries. The excitement generated by a new discipline, women’s studies, brought the status of women and their thinking into public discussion. This was also reflected in the United Nations. Kurt Waldheim, appointed United

Nations Secretary-General in 1971, faced demands from many quarters to increase the proportion of women in the Secretariat and in senior positions. The UN, approaching its 30th anniversary at the time, still did not have even one single woman in a high-level position.

For several years the Commission on the Status of Women had tried to transfer attention from the conference tables of New York and Geneva to women in the villages and fields of the South. However, the first International Development Strategy, adopted for the Second International Development Decade of 1970-1980, only included a minor clause about women. CSW's impressive "countermove" was to propose to the General Assembly a comprehensive resolution outlining "a programme of concerted international action for the advancement of women," to be implemented during the Decade. The resolution (A/RES/2715 XXV) was unanimously adopted on 15 December 1970.

In early 1972, the Secretary-General appointed Helvi Sipilä from Finland as the first female UN Assistant Secretary-General. In the same year the General Assembly declared the year 1975 as International Women's Year, with the objective of focusing attention on the status of women both within the UN system and in the Member States. In addition, two years later in 1974 a decision was made to organize the World Conference of the International Women's Year, to be held in Mexico City in 1975. All these decisions and events set off an avalanche of activities and consciousness-raising about women's issues.

1975 International Women's Year as an Engine for Change

The International Women's Year (IWY) is an example of how an NGO initiative was taken up by the UN and resulted in a massive mobilization process.

In the early 1970s, the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), led by its president Hertta Kuusinen from Finland, actively utilized its consultative status in the CSW. Ms. Kuusinen also represented her organization as an observer at the CSW, and brought to the March 1972 session of the Commission a WIDF proposal for proclamation of an "International Women's Year." The aim of the Year would be to bring the needs and views of women to the attention of the UN system and the world.

The proposal was backed by other NGO observers, and the Romanian delegate, with the support of her government, presented it to the Commission. Helvi Sipilä, the Finnish government representative at that time, seconded the proposal. Thus the Commission recommended to the General Assembly the proclamation of 1975 as International Women's Year. The General Assembly adopted the recommendation in December 1972.

IWY was just one in a series of UN theme years, most of which had hardly been noticed. The General Assembly adopted IWY with scepticism and reluctance, but women and women's organizations welcomed it with enthusiasm. It came at a time when many other factors were converging in the same direction: finally women's problems had to be considered, and their role in the development of every country recognized. IWY became a framework within which these issues could be the object of global attention and, at the same time, it highlighted previously ignored aspects of many issues in a way in which they could not be forgotten or denied. The success of IWY exceeded all expectations, and it made the world's women more aware than ever of the existence and potential of the UN system for advancement of their aims and aspirations.

IWY provided the UN with a framework within which women's needs and views could be promoted. It proved an excellent tool with which the newly appointed UN Assistant Secretary-General Helvi

Sipilä could justify in every possible context measures designed to promote the advancement of women. It also provided NGOs, operating within and outside the UN system, with an excellent additional impetus to their efforts on behalf of women the world over.

IWY, in fact, had significant influence before it even started. The preparations for two important UN world conferences were already well underway when the decision about IWY was taken. These were the World Population Conference to be held in Bucharest (Romania), and the World Food Conference to be held in Rome (Italy), both in 1974. These were focused on two key issues from the point of view of women: population and food.

When Helvi Sipilä became involved in 1972 with preparations for the World Population Conference, she worked to convince the preparatory committee that no population policy could be effective without the involvement of women. An unofficial preparatory meeting was organized, to which she invited one prominent woman from each Member State; 116 women attended the meeting. It aimed to ensure that government delegations to the World Population Conference would include women who would see to it that their crucial role in population issues would get due consideration in conference proceedings.

Preparations for the World Food Conference were at an advanced stage at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) when the proclamation on IWY was adopted. FAO already had a section on household and nutrition that was well aware of the vital role of women in food production, especially in Africa. With the World Food Conference approaching, NGOs—including the International Peace Research Association's Food Policy Study Group—arranged a meeting in Rome, which succeeded in influencing the official conference. As a consequence, the conference adopted an extensive and comprehensive resolution on Women and Food, which indicated how women could contribute to the improvement of

food supplies if they had better access to land, education, technology and funding.

Unfortunately most of the 11 other world conferences on major issues organized by the UN in the 1970s did not take women into account. On the contrary, it was by chance if women's voices were heard in the "male enclaves" of these conferences, which aimed to assess and draw up long-term action plans for the key problem areas of development (Palmer, 1980).

The primarily male delegations did not address women's contributions and needs, even when they were provided with excellent background material. A case in point was the Water Conference held in Mar del Plata (Argentina) in 1977. Both the UN Secretariat and the FAO had prepared outstanding documents proving in many countries that women were the only existing "water supply system" and literally carried the water required by their villages for drinking, cleaning and irrigation, often from distant locations. The final documents adopted by the conference did not include a word about women's crucial role in water procurement.

A decisive influence on the outcome of the conferences in the 1970s was whether or not a delegation happened to include an informed woman who would take the initiative—preferably beforehand during her government's preparation process—and get women's issues to the discussion table. As a member of a delegation, even a single woman could be in a position to prepare a draft resolution or amendment to conference papers on women's concerns and persuade her delegation to introduce it in the conference. For NGOs participating in parallel conferences, on the other hand, making an impact on the official conference proceedings on the spot was very difficult or almost impossible (Pietilä and Vickers, 1996).

The UN World Conferences on Women in 1975, 1980 and 1985

The UN world conferences for the advancement of women in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985) were part and parcel of a series of 20 major UN conferences organized in the 1970s and 1980s. However, although each conference focusing on women was unique in character, they form a consequent series and systematic process towards the aim of advancement and empowerment of women.

The 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City was the first-ever global inter-governmental conference specifically organized to address women's issues and world problems from women's perspectives. Even though it could not be called a women's conference—since official participants were governments—it was still the first major UN event in which a vast majority (73%) of the 1,200 delegates were women. In addition, women headed 113 of the 133 delegations present. However, the proportion of men (27%) among the delegates was higher than the usual proportion of women at other UN conferences at that time.

The World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of International Women's Year adopted by the conference was intended as a programme for the advancement of women to be implemented during the forthcoming decade in all areas and all countries. It crystallized the past and present long-term objectives of the women's movement under the theme Equality—Development—Peace. This became the overall theme of the UN Decade for Women and all other world conferences on women afterwards. From the beginning, these three objectives were considered interrelated and mutually reinforcing, such that the advancement of one contributes to the advancement of the others. This interaction is emphasized throughout the document adopted by the conference in Mexico City (United Nations, 1976; United Nations, 1996).

The General Assembly, endorsing the Declaration of Mexico and the World Plan of Action, proclaimed the years 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women. The objectives of the Decade were set out in the World Plan of Action. It also decided to review and appraise the implementation of the outcome of the conference at regular periods in the future. A decision was also taken to hold the World Conference in Copenhagen (Denmark) in 1980 for the first mid-decade review and to define further the objectives for the second half of the Decade.

The experiences gained, obstacles encountered and results achieved during the entire UN Decade for Women were thoroughly assessed and evaluated at the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace in Nairobi in 1985. The evaluation showed that the objectives set forth in Mexico had not been achieved during the Decade, but that plenty of other significant results had been attained.

One of the major achievements was that the situation of the world's women was "mapped out" better than ever before. During the Decade the UN system collected an enormous amount of information, facts and figures on the lives, problems and conditions of women in different countries. However, this revealed the problem that, as a rule, national and international statistics did not provide gender-disaggregated data. Thus it was impossible to get a real picture of the status of women and disparities between men and women in the Member States. Therefore, the UN requested governments to revise their statistics and provide the UN with data disaggregated by sex. With such data the scale of inequality and discrimination would become more visible and women's contributions to society better acknowledged. The "invisibilities" of women's lives began to become visible.

Another great step forward during the UN Decade for Women was that the very concept of “development” came under scrutiny from the point of view of women. Before the Nairobi Conference, two comprehensive surveys on development had been produced. The General Assembly decided in 1981 that an interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral world survey should be prepared on the role of women in overall development (United Nations, 1986).

In August 1984 Devaki Jain, a well-known development economist and thinker from India, initiated a brainstorming session in Bangalore (India), which led to the founding of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), a network of women social scientists who provided an alternative framework for understanding the location of and advancing the cause of women of the South. For the Nairobi Conference DAWN produced an alternative report on development, bringing together these social scientists’ experiences with development strategies, policies, theories and research. Their point of departure was the awareness “of the need to question in a more fundamental way the underlying processes of development into which we have been attempting to integrate women” (Sen and Grown, 1985).

The survey and alternative report were produced parallel to each other. The DAWN report on *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions* is critical in a straightforward manner. The *UN World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* is more diplomatic and subtle. However, the publications’ findings support each other, and their basic message is the same: development is not serving the needs of women and does not correspond to women’s values and aspirations.

These reports became important background documents for the 1985 Nairobi Conference. They also represented a turning point in dealing with women’s issues in the UN system. They brought the role of women in development into focus as an indispensable new dimension and questioned the prevailing pattern of development from the

point of view of women.

In general, attitudes toward women began to change both within the UN system and the Member States as a result of the UN Decade for Women. A manifestation of this was the fact that the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (NFLS) were adopted by consensus by 157 Member States (United Nations, 1985), whereas the World Conference in Copenhagen had resorted to a vote. When the General Assembly later endorsed the NFLS, it also decided that world surveys on the role of women in development would be prepared every five years as part of the follow-up of the Nairobi Conference.

Although the objectives of the UN Decade for Women were not achieved during the ten years, setting new objectives was not deemed necessary. The NFLS document included new definitions of key concepts such as Equality, Development and Peace from women’s perspectives, and it approved improved strategies for the attainment of the goals of the UN Decade for Women by the year 2000. Thus the UN Decade for Women became an “extra long decade” and continued until the year 2000.

Review and Appraisal as a Regular Practice

During the first UN Conference on Women in 1975, governments decided to have the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Mexico World Plan of Action in five years. It would take place in the form of another world conference in order to give women’s issues publicity and visibility and to encourage governments to prepare their reports and to attend. It was agreed that the Second World Conference on Women would be held in 1980. Thus began the practice of periodic reviews and appraisals of conferences on women in the UN system. It allowed governments to create rules and measures, and to make themselves accountable in the eyes of “the

world community.” In later decades this review practice has also been applied to the other major conferences and summits, in particular the major conferences in 1990s that constituted the Global Agenda.

While governments know that they have to report on the results and outcome of the implementation of respective programmes at a definite time, they are also incited to undertake serious efforts in order to have something to report about. As such, this system also puts some pressure on governments to attend the review conference because the absence of a government could be interpreted as its failure to implement the programme.

Data collection from the Member States for the review and appraisal usually takes place through questionnaires sent to the governments. The questions are not general but detailed and concrete according to the nature and structure of the outcome document of respective conferences. They ask for the government’s own assessment of their achievements in implementation as well as the obstacles and challenges they have faced. The summaries of these reports are made either at the regional and global level or only at the global level within the UN agency in charge. Furthermore, in drawing conclusions on achievements and shortcomings, the UN Secretariat uses other sources of information in addition to the reports, including international statistics, reports of the bodies and agencies of the UN system, regional reviews, etc. The final conclusions and decisions for further action are then approved by governments at regional and global levels.

In the beginning of the 1990s it was felt that separate reviews and appraisals on various fields of development were not enough. The follow-up results of sectorial conferences—like sustainable development, population policies, food or housing, etc,—needed to be integrated and coordinated with each other in order to give a coherent picture of the global process. Therefore it was decided that the final

stage of global reviews would take place in the integrated and coordinated manner at substantive meetings of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

INSTRAW and UNIFEM Emerge from the Mexico Conference

Until the 1970s there was only one small section within the UN system focusing on women’s interests and needs. This section was upgraded in 1974 to the Branch for the Promotion of Equality between Men and Women. During the Mexico City Conference, this situation was considered inadequate for maintaining the momentum created around the world by the International Women’s Year and the conference. Delegates stressed the need to strengthen the institutional structures devoted to women within the UN system.

After the conference the Branch was renamed the Branch for the Advancement of Women, which later evolved into the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in 1988, and is now part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in New York.

During the Mexico City Conference, delegates had already called for the establishment of a special fund for the 1976-1985 decade, which then became the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women. This initiative was thought to have promising prospects for funding. First, it appeared that there were some money left over in the IWY Trust Fund, which had been created through voluntary contributions from Member States for financing the IWY and the Mexico Conference. The delegates were also encouraged by several pledges made at the conference, including US\$1 million by Iran for the Fund and other purposes, and another US\$1 million for the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which was to be established in Teheran (Iran).

After a series of complicated procedures, the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women was officially established in 1976 to give support to “the poorest women in the poorest countries” in their efforts to implement the goals of the World Plan of Action. When the Decade ended in 1985, the mandate of the Fund was expanded to become the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), a separate and identifiable entity within the UN system in autonomous association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas: reducing feminized poverty; ending violence against women; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war. Within the UN system, it promotes gender equality and links women’s issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment strategies.

In addition to governments’ voluntary contributions, women in different countries have also raised funds for the work of UNIFEM. This activity has been formalized by the establishment of UNIFEM National Committees to raise funds and disseminate information about UNIFEM’s work. These committees now exist in 15 countries.

The recommendation to establish INSTRAW was adopted by the Mexico City Conference. Furthermore, the formal decision to establish INSTRAW was made by ECOSOC in 1976 (Resolution 1998 LX of 12 May 1976). Due to the political developments in Iran, the plan to locate the Institute in Teheran did not materialize. The Institute initiated operations in New York in the beginning of the 1980s and finally established its permanent headquarters in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) in 1983.

INSTRAW, according to its mandate, is the only institution within

the United Nations system to serve at the international level to promote and undertake research and training programmes to contribute to the advancement of women and gender equality worldwide. Its activities cover all Member States of the UN, both industrialized as well as developing countries. INSTRAW, in consultation with civil society, governments and the UN system, has identified emerging and crucial themes for the integration of women into development. Studies promoted by INSTRAW have shown the effects of globalization in processes such as migration, the impact of structural adjustment policies on women’s access to work, health and education, and violence against older women. Themes related to human rights, gender-based violence and the role of women in processes of peace have also been approached through different research projects.

INSTRAW is funded exclusively through voluntary contributions from Member States, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, foundations and private sources. It is not entitled to financing through regular contributions of UN Member States, which is the method of funding of other UN agencies; nor is it funded by an endowment, as is the case with some other UN research institutions. These ambiguities in its financing have hampered INSTRAW in reaching the scope and role it was originally intended to have. In order to revitalize and strengthen its work, the Institute received in 1999 an additional mandate to carry out its activities through the utilization of new information and communication technologies (ITCs). As a result, it developed a new operational methodology for the production, management and dissemination of gender related knowledge and information.

Women’s Own Global Fora

The parallel NGO fora held in connection with major UN conferences on women have become the “real” world conferences of participating women. From the first one in 1975, these parallel events

consisting of NGOs—mainly women’s organizations, researchers and activists in the women’s movement—took on proportions not seen in NGO events held in connection with other UN conferences. The International Women’s Year Tribune organized in Mexico City in 1975 had approximately 4,000 participants, while the official conference had about 1,200 delegates. The 1980 NGO Forum in Copenhagen brought together some 6,000-7,000 participants, and the 1985 Nairobi Forum broke the records by bringing together 16,000 participants. One of the largest global conferences until then was the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing with some 17,000 participants in the main event, including 6,000 delegates from 189 countries, over 4,000 accredited NGOs, a host of international civil servants and about 4,000 media representatives. Together with about 40,000 participants in the Huairou Forum, they numbered over 50,000.⁶

The programmes of parallel NGO events include seminars, lectures, workshops, exhibitions and even theatre, concerts and other artistic performances mostly drawn up by NGOs and participating groups themselves. An international planning committee is usually formed to make arrangements for facilities and logistics for the suggested events and can also organize large-scale plenary gatherings if neces-

6. NGO forums in connection with major UN conferences became common in the 1970s. The first large parallel forum was held with the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm in 1972. The UN world conferences on women created huge interest from the beginning among women both at international and national levels. Under the auspices of CONGO (the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with ECOSOC) a special planning and preparatory committee was established to organize and prepare, at the international level, participation of NGOs in the conferences on women. Also in collaboration with local NGOs there was established in hosting countries preparatory committees, which had the task of making practical arrangements in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi.

NGOs wishing to observe and participate in UN processes and events can apply to ECOSOC for Consultative Status. Then they will be entitled to be accredited as observers to UN world conferences. This kind of participation has been available to NGOs since the founding of the UN.

sary. Massive events like these are also characterized by a multitude of improvised meetings, events, demonstrations and processions.

For example, at the 1985 Nairobi Forum some 125 workshops and meetings were scheduled each day—about 1,200 altogether in ten days—and there was a constant flow of unplanned gatherings, discussions and group meetings of all kinds. During the Nairobi Forum networks were sown in the heart of the event, the Peace Tent, on the green lawns and under the shadowing trees of the Nairobi University campus, in hotels and dormitories; no one knows the total number of such gatherings.

What characterizes women’s NGO fora is the enthusiasm and activism of participants. Women themselves are actively organizing, participating, presenting, discussing and also singing, dancing and performing. They don’t just passively sit and listen as is generally the case in so many conferences. Participants are all natural “experts” on being women, and on women’s lives in their own countries. Therefore the exchange of information and experiences is easy, and all are also interested in sharing the knowledge presented by researchers on women’s conditions and lives from all over the world. It is at these fora that the separation of theory and practice is eliminated, as both contribute to the enrichment of the total experience.

At the Nairobi Forum the strength and dignity of African women made an unforgettable impression upon European and American women. African women’s visible self-confidence and determination proved that they are not the “second sex” but the first one in their own world. The Nairobi Forum was also the first of these large conferences where the proportion of participants from different parts of the world was becoming more balanced. There were so many women from Asia and Africa—and their contribution was so impressive—that white Western women no longer represented the dominant majority of participants.

However, NGO fora are not merely big celebrations. It was apparent in Nairobi that the experiences gained in Mexico City and Copenhagen had taught women a great deal about influencing and lobbying inter-governmental conferences. They had learned that it is extremely difficult to influence inter-governmental decisions on the spot during a world conference and therefore knew that this work had to be done beforehand in each country. In many countries women had been active beforehand, lobbying their governments and giving suggestions to inter-governmental bodies.

Women's ability to communicate is crucial to the success of their efforts. The better NGOs prepare their initiatives and tactics at home and in collaboration across borders, the larger the number of governments their suggestions can reach. Nevertheless, it is also important to be present at the conference itself, in order to monitor and witness progress of the official proceedings. Events and discussions at NGO fora can also have an indirect impact on the official UN conferences.

At the Nairobi Forum, a seed was planted that such women's events should also be organized independently and irrespectively of the inter-governmental conferences. This idea, while at that time only a dream in the minds of many participants, started to evolve.

In 1987 a World Congress of Women was organized in Moscow by the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) with the support of the Soviet government. It brought together more than 3,000 women from all over the world and revived the spirit of Nairobi. A Nordic Women's Forum was organized in 1988 by Nordic women's organizations in collaboration with the Nordic Council of Ministers and their governments in Oslo and was attended by some 10,000 women from the region as well as other parts of the world. There have also been several smaller events. For example, the International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women is held every three years in different parts of the world and brings together some thousands of women researchers and activists every time.

The United Nations World Conferences on Women

- 1975 Mexico City, 19 June–2 July
The World Conference of the International Women's Year
Outcome: The Declaration of Mexico and the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year
Attendance: Conference, 133 States, c.1,200 delegates NGO Tribune, 6,000 (4,000) participants
- 1980 Copenhagen, 14-30 July
The World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women
Outcome: Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women
Attendance: Conference, 145 States; c. 2000 delegates
NGO Forum, about 6,000-7,000 participants
- 1985 Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985
The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace
Outcome: The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1986-2000
Attendance: Conference, 157 States
NGO Forum, about 16,000 participants and attendants
- 1995 Beijing, 4-15 September 1995
The Fourth World Conference on Women
Outcome: Beijing Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace; Beijing Declaration
Attendance: Conference, 189 States, c.17,000 delegates and observers; NGO Forum, c. 35,000 (40,000) participants

More information on these conferences is available on the WomenWatch website (www.un.org/womenwatch/asp/user/list.asp?ParentID=40).

The impetus behind these events is the emerging and growing global women's movement, which is influencing and mobilizing a continuously increasing number of women. In many countries it is nourished by women's research, which builds awareness and provides new information and indisputable arguments for women when trying to make the "invisible" worlds of women more visible to all.

The United Nations Decade for Women Changed the World

The UN Decade for Women in 1976-1985 was the most successful to date of all such theme decades. The time was ripe for it. The process that began to mature in the early 1970s became concrete in Mexico City in 1975, underwent mid-term stocktaking in Copenhagen in 1980, and was established as an acknowledged part of the UN operational agenda in Nairobi in 1985. The Mexico World Plan of Action was followed by the Copenhagen Programme of Action and the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, which together formed a consistent policy process to proceed systematically for the advancement of women towards the year 2000.

Much took place during and due to the UN Decade for Women around the world. Women's awareness and self-confidence was gaining strength everywhere. In world conferences women had reached out to each other across borders, global sisterhood was becoming a concrete reality, and at home it was conveyed on to those who had not been able to attend the international events.

At the same time, decisive change was taking place in the tone and approach in UN debates and documents addressing women's issues. Women's contribution to development and their own advancement was addressed in the UN Development Strategies for the Third and Fourth Development Decades for the 1980s and 1990s. These were also recognized in the programmes and resolutions adopted in other major UN conferences such as the UN Conference on Science and

Technology for Development in Vienna 1979 and the Third General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in New Delhi in 1980.

As already mentioned, in the early years of the UN women were seen in a paternalistic manner as objects whose legal status and situation needed to be improved. The 1970s brought into discussions the potential contribution of women to development efforts in each country. The phrase "integration of women into development" was adopted, and women were seen as a resource that should be used more effectively. For this purpose it was necessary to improve not only their status, but also their nutrition, health and training.

However, in a way, women were still seen as instruments for development, and it was even claimed to be "a waste of human resources" if women were not fully integrated into the so-called development efforts. The human rights and dignity of women were not yet seen as values in their own right. Then a trend toward seeing women as equals, "as agents and beneficiaries in all sectors and at all levels of the development process," finally emerged in the International Development Strategy for the Third Development Decade of the UN in the 1980s.

The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies represented in many ways a turning point concerning the history of women in the UN. The NFLS recognize women as "intellectuals, policy-makers, decision-makers, planners and contributors, and beneficiaries of development" and obligate both Member States and the UN system to take this into consideration in policy and practice. The essential principle of the NFLS is formulated in paragraph 16, which explains the meaning of what is described as women's perspective.

"The need for women's perspective on human development is critical, since it is in the interest of human enrichment and progress to introduce and weave into the social fabric women's concept of equal-

ity, their choices between alternative development strategies and their approach to peace, in accordance with their aspirations, interests and talents. These things are not only desirable in themselves but are also essential for the attainment of the goals and objectives of the Decade.”

Since the 1980s, UN reports, programmes and resolutions have begun to reflect recognition and understanding of the fact that women’s equitable participation in all walks of life is no longer only their legitimate right; it is also a social and political necessity in making progress towards a more humane and sustainable future.

Chapter 5

ALL ISSUES ARE WOMEN’S ISSUES IN THE 1990s

Women’s enthusiastic participation in the parallel events to UN world conferences shows how active and interested they are around the world in issues such as equality and peace. This also demonstrates the expectations and faith women place in the potential of the United Nations. However, it was often a matter of chance if women’s voices were articulated and heard at inter-governmental conferences in the 1970s and 1980s, when international women’s networks were not yet advanced enough to systematically ensure their voices were heard.

However, the Nairobi NFLS postulates the view that there are no specific women’s issues; instead, all issues in the world are also women’s issues. Women have the right to participate equally in the management of, and decision making about, all human affairs. A general understanding emerged that women were entitled to voice their views and impact all human issues, which concern their lives and future. Women wish to influence how all issues are handled—not just women’s issues—also within the UN system and at its world conferences.

Women for a Healthy Planet

In late 1989 it was decided that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), or the Earth Summit, would be held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)—20 years after the first UN Conference on Human Environment in 1972 in Stockholm. The report *Our Common Future*, compiled by the Independent Commission on Environment and Development and chaired by then

Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, was used as a conceptual and political basis for the Earth Summit. Environmental issues had been on the UN agenda since the Stockholm Conference, but women were seldom taken into account in connection with these, and their participation in debates on the use of natural resources and environmental protection was rare.

Environmental problems in developing countries were concrete, everyday issues that women had been dealing with for some time. In the US women regarded pollution and environmental degradation as the cause of many problems including women's health problems, especially increases in breast cancer. This is one of the reasons that ecological issues were often addressed in feminist agendas and in women's studies programmes. In contrast, eco-feminist thinking in Europe and the Nordic countries is rare, and there aren't any significant women's environmental movements.

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), established in the United States in 1990 with former US Congresswoman Bella Abzug as the leading figure, focused on environmental issues right from the beginning.⁷

Early in the 1990s WEDO called on women from all over the world to follow preparations for the Earth Summit. From the start the WEDO international task force was present at every single preparatory committee session for the conference.

7. WEDO started in 1990 as an International Policy Action Committee of 54 women, with almost half of its members from developing countries, nine from Europe and the rest from Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United States. Along with Bella Abzug, initiators were women who had been involved in organizing the NGO Forums in Mexico and Nairobi. They included Rosalind Wright Harris, Dorothy Slater Brown, Virginia Hazzard, Margaret Snyder and Catherine Tinker. The Women's Caucus network created by WEDO then mobilized hundreds of activities all over the world. Further information is available online: (www.wedo.org/index.aspx).

In November 1991, approximately six months before the Earth Summit, WEDO organized the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, held in Miami (United States). Attended by 1,500 women from 83 countries, this was the largest unofficial meeting held prior to the Earth Summit. The Congress adopted Women's Action Agenda 21, directly related to the main document prepared for the Earth Summit, entitled Agenda 21 or Agenda for the 21st Century. This text then was the basis for women's efforts to influence UNCED documents in Rio.

The Preamble of Women's Action Agenda 21 declared clear points of departure for women's actions on the environment:

“As caring women, we speak on behalf of those who could not be with us, the millions of women who experience daily the violence of environmental degradation, poverty, and exploitation of their work and bodies. As long as Nature and women are abused by so-called ‘free market’ ideology and wrong concepts of ‘economic growth’ there can be no environmental security.”

“We equate lack of political and individual will among world leaders with a lack of basic morality and spiritual values and an absence of responsibility towards future generations.”

“We will no longer tolerate the enormous role played by the military establishment and industries in making the 20th century the bloodiest and most violent in all of human history. Militarism is impoverishing and maiming both the Earth and humanity.”

An Infallible Strategy

Drawing from her experience in the US Congress and as a skilled lawyer, Bella Abzug founded within WEDO the Women's Caucus, which's operative capability was first “tested” in the Earth Summit

preparatory process and then used during the event itself. The Women's Caucus is a well-organized lobbying network comprising women from dozens of UN Member States from around the world. It proved an unprecedented success in Rio and was later instrumental in ensuring that women's voices were heard in several other UN world conferences in the 1990s. It also helped ensure that issues related to women were systematically and effectively promoted.⁸

At the Earth Summit, for example, the processing of the texts was an enormous effort as the conference document swelled into a massive pile totalling almost 800 pages. In the preparatory phase, the women organized into groups that concentrated on specific sections and suggested alterations. These were compiled and approved together within the Caucus, before they were brought to the official process. Furthermore, this process had to be repeated several times as the documents were constantly changed throughout the preparatory process.

Another challenging task was the process of negotiations in which the suggested amendments were "lobbied in." Their inclusion was not guaranteed by the mere fact that they were well-researched and written in the style of UN documents. Since the NGO representatives are not usually entitled to speak in the official subcommittees and negotiation groups, either government delegates or representatives of the secretariat have to be persuaded to adopt the suggested amendments and changes and then work them through in the official process. The success of such a large-scale lobbying operation requires plenty of "like-minded" partners in both the delegations and

8. The core team of the Women's Caucus often spent weeks at the conference site during preparatory committee sessions and the actual conference. They possessed language and lobbying skills, expertise, and the ability to create relationships with the delegations of like-minded countries and the UN Secretariat. They also acted as part of an extensive network. Many women were able to stay at the conference site for the time required due to backing from their organizations or at their own expense. The expenses of women from developing countries were covered by funding and grants collected in cooperation with donor governments, foundations and institutions.

the conference secretariat. Creating these collaborative relationships is crucial to the process and requires expertise and credibility.

The success of lobbying is also vitally dependent on the willingness of the Secretary-General of each conference to cooperate with women's unofficial networks. In the 1990s, conference Secretary-Generals such as Maurice Strong (Secretary-General of UNCED), Nafis Sadik (Secretary-General of the International Conference on Population and Development and Executive Director of UNFPA), Juan Somavía (Secretary-General of the World Summit for Social Development—WSSD), and Gertrude Mongella (Secretary-General of the Beijing Conference) were all well disposed to working with women's groups. They, together with several delegations, often expressed their satisfaction at the fact that women suggested many relevant and significant improvements to the conference texts.

As a result of the women's strategy, UNCED's Agenda 21 underwent great changes during the preparatory process and during the conference itself. The preliminary drafts of the document mentioned women in less than a handful of places—all in the "poverty" section or in the context of women and children as "vulnerable groups" or victims. In the final version of Agenda 21, the issues and concerns of women had been introduced in hundreds of places, most notably in paragraphs dealing with environmental policy, the use of natural resources, consumer policy and sustainable development.

At the end of the Earth Summit, Maurice Strong gave full credit to the women's lobby when he said, "I think we have moved the cause of women and the awareness of their importance a tremendous step forward, thanks to the women who have been with us all the way to Rio....And they've got to continue after Rio." Bella Abzug revealed the central rule that made the women's action so effective: "...to be the best organized and most unified and effective group can come from being the best informed." She went on to say that "the story of the global women's movement is, however, still a work in progress.

Mothering earth will take many hands and minds” (WEDO, 1993).

During the period of time that included the world conferences on women and other events held during the UN Decade for Women and thereafter, a practice started to emerge among the governments that women’s perspective should be considered in all organs and bodies of the UN system. Also the implications and impacts of decisions and policies on both men and women were to be taken into account, respectively (Pietilä and Vickers, 1996).

Diving into the Mainstream of World Conferences

With the development of a systematic and comprehensive strategy to influence inter-governmental conferences, the approach itself also became comprehensive. Even the very concept of equality gained new substance; mere statistical and technical equality on men’s terms in a men’s world was no longer the aim. Women began demanding that their views and objectives be taken equally into account in all the issues addressed by the conferences. Thus women have contributed to these events with totally new ways of conceiving issues that would not have been provided by men.

The topics of the series of large world conferences organized by the UN during the 1990s were all highly important for women. Consequently, the joint advocacy of women’s interests continued systematically from one year and one conference to another; women literally dived into the mainstream of the inter-governmental process.

Women’s advocacy work continued at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993. Since preparations for a world conference usually take at least a couple of years, the women’s preparatory campaign for the Vienna Conference was already underway alongside preparations for the 1992 Earth Summit. This campaign was led by another US-based organization, the Center for

Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL), headed by the dynamic professor and activist Charlotte Bunch.

The campaign was launched with a worldwide petition demanding that the conference take women into account with regard to human rights issues in general, and that it address violence against women in particular. The petition was circulated in late 1991 and signed by 250,000 people from 120 countries. The petition campaign worked in two ways: it alerted women all over the world to human rights issues, and mobilized them to influence the Vienna Conference. It also helped disseminate information about the Vienna Conference, of which most people were unaware.

At the Vienna NGO Forum, violence against women was addressed so forcefully and consistently that it was not possible to ignore the issue anymore. A special chapter on women’s human rights was included in the Programme of Action adopted by the conference, and the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women later in the same year (A/RES/48/104).⁹

The conference also prompted the UN Commission on Human Rights to appoint, in 1994 (1994/45), a Special Rapporteur to investigate and report on violence against women, and to provide the Commission with proposals regarding the issue.

Later the international *Human Rights Tribune* gave credit to the women’s campaign and described it as a “great success story” in a special issue dedicated to the Conference on Human Rights. The campaign had been a vital contribution to publicity for the conference in general, and it had forced UN Member States to take wom-

9. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104): (www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/21.htm). The Secretary-General’s *In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women* (A/61/122/Add.1) is available online: (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/violenceagainstwomestudydoc.pdf).

UN WORLD CONFERENCES IN THE 1990s

Women were actively participating in all these conferences.

UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)

Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992:

(www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm)

World Conference on Human Rights (WCHR)

Vienna, 14-25 June 1993: (www.ohchr.org/english/law/vienna.htm)

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

Cairo, 5-13 September 1994: (www.iisd.ca/cairo.html)

World Summit for Social Development (WSSD)

Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995: (www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd)

Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW)

Beijing, 4-15 September 1995: (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/fwcw.htm)

Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II)

Istanbul, 4-15 June 1996: (www.unhabitat.org/habitat_agenda.htm)

World Food Summit (WFS)

Rome, 13-17 November 1996: (www.fao.org/wfs/homepage.htm)

en's human rights into account, the paper said (*Human Rights Tribune*, 1993).

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, September 1994, evaluated developments in population issues since the first Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974. The Cairo Conference dealt with, among other things, the issue of woman's right to decide on the number and spacing of her children. This had been a controversial subject for years,

despite the fact that it had been accepted as a basic human right in several UN programmes and conventions since 1968.

It is obvious that environmental and population issues are inseparable: how many people can be supported on the earth sustainably and humanely? A woman's right and opportunities to control the number of her children, and the need to produce food for her family were key questions. UNFPA was the body within the United Nations system responsible for the Cairo Conference preparations, and UNFPA Executive Director Nafis Sadik was appointed as its Secretary-General. Activities of the Women's Caucus were once again coordinated by WEDO.

A major task at the Cairo Conference was to ensure that the decisions pushed through by women at the Earth Summit and at the Human Rights Conference were not watered down or withdrawn. Women's "advocacy" was so successful that the Population Conference was called another major step forward for women's and girls' right to control their own lives and status in the family.

The ICPD document was the first in which governments recognize and acknowledge the fact that people are treated differently from the very beginning of their lives, depending on whether they are born female or male. Therefore, there is a need to place emphasis on the girl-child's right to be born, get enough care and food, have access to education, and not become the target of sexual abuse or the victim of exploitation in pornography and prostitution.

The document also calls for men's equal responsibility in family planning, and duties such as childcare and household chores. A strong emphasis is put on men's responsibility for implementing these principles since they still hold the overwhelming power in most societies and almost all walks of life.

It has been said that the 20-year Programme of Action

(A/CONF.171/13/Add.1) adopted by the ICPD speaks “feminist language.” No wonder the Holy See and a group of the most patriarchal governments were upset with the consensus in which the Programme was finally adopted. In her closing words, Nafis Sadik stated that “this Programme of Action has the potential to change the world...over the next 20 years [it] will bring women at last into the mainstream of development.”

On 14 October 2004, the General Assembly commemorated the 10th anniversary of the ICPD and its Programme of Action. Governments underscored that the commitments made in Cairo and those pledged at the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000 [Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)] were mutually reinforcing. On 13 October 2004, a statement by world leaders and more than 30,000 signatures from citizens in Europe and the United States expressing support for the Cairo Consensus was presented to the United Nations. The statement calls on the international community, national governments and private philanthropic organizations to prioritize and fund the ICPD Programme of Action.

The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), held in March 1995 in Copenhagen was a cry for social development and human values in the impersonal world of unfettered market forces in the 1990s, when social structures were eroding both in industrialized and developing countries. Eradication of poverty is the first and foremost concern of women since the majority of the poor in the world are women, and the feminization of poverty is a reality in poor and rich countries alike. The Social Summit brought up the issue of increasing poverty in the midst of plenty, and it aimed to, among other things, convince Heads of State and Government to commit themselves to policies toward the eradication of poverty.

One of the initiators of the Social Summit, and its Secretary-General, was Juan Somavía of Chile. His career as a supporter and advocate of social development dates back to President Allende's

time and the progressive atmosphere of the UN in the 1970s. Mr. Somavía described the Social Summit as “a deep cry of alarm...and a moral and ethical challenge to governments, business, media, trade unions, political parties, religious traditions, intellectuals, civil society in general, and all of us individually [to give social development] the highest priority both now and into the 21st century” (Somavía, 1995).

Women activists were on the move naturally in Copenhagen, too. Once again, they ensured that achievements of the three previous world conferences of the 1990s were not watered down or deleted. Mr. Somavía was pleased with the contributions of women in support of the Social Summit's objectives, and he collaborated with them right from the beginning.

“The Copenhagen Summit was the international community's most forthright acknowledgement that the problems faced by women lie at the heart of the global agenda,” the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in his assessment of the Social Summit (United Nations, 1995b).

During the Social Summit WEDO launched a campaign—entitled 180 Days/180 Ways Women's Action Campaign—to mobilize women to distribute information on the outcomes of the Vienna, Cairo and Copenhagen conferences and to prepare for the Fourth World Conference on Women six months later in 1995. The campaign included daily events, and on International Women's Day, March 8, thousands of women marched in a torch procession “on the way to Beijing” from the city hall in Copenhagen to the Forum '95 in nearby Holmen.

In February 2005, the Commission on Social Development held its ten-year review of the implementation of commitments agreed upon in Copenhagen. Member States called for renewed momentum in meeting the objectives of the Copenhagen Declaration and

Programme of Action (PoA), with a special focus on the core issues of poverty eradication, social integration and promotion of full employment.

Chapter 6

THE BEIJING CONFERENCE: A GRAND CONSOLIDATION

The series of UN world conferences held in the 1990s were from the very beginning intended to create an integrated global agenda for development. They were designed not only to achieve concrete programmes of action, but also to open the world's eyes to the reality that the issues they addressed were interconnected. As mentioned earlier, all of them were also strongly linked to women's lives: the environment, human rights, sexuality and family planning, social development and poverty, as well as food and human settlements.

Furthermore, the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated in his introductory Overview to the *UN Blue Book Series on The Advancement of Women* in early 1990s that "the goals they [the conferences] seek are all dependent upon the advancement of women" (United Nations, 1995b, paragraph 220). With this statement the Secretary-General made it clear that the Fourth World Conference on Women 1995, being one of the series, was also a very particular one, since its outcome were to be decisively important to the implementation of all the others.

It was already known from December 1990 that the Fourth World Conference on Women would be held in 1995. This awareness influenced and gave direction to the work of preceding conferences, and women's activism in connection with them. But it was particularly effective to mobilize women and raise their awareness with the view to the forthcoming Conference on Women. In December 1992 the General Assembly accepted China's invitation and confirmed that the Fourth World Conference on Women would be held in Beijing from 4-15 September 1995.

However, the gathering of the world's women in China's capital would prove more complicated than anticipated. The challenges were both political and practical: political reasons were often presented by the Chinese hosts as "technical problems," and practical organizational problems were turned into, and interpreted as, "political problems."

Women all over the world were asking themselves if holding a world conference in Beijing would imply supporting the Chinese government, which many regarded as totalitarian and a major violator of human rights. They wondered which would be the best way to support change in the lives of Chinese women: go there and participate in the conference in order to bring the diversity of women's thoughts and views to the doorsteps of the Chinese, or boycott the Chinese government by staying at home?

Originally the NGO Forum was to be held in a large sports stadium in central Beijing, a site considered appropriate for accommodating tens of thousands of people. However, the Forum ended up being located in Huairou, a small town some 60 kilometres (about 40 miles) from the centre of Beijing. In Huairou the necessary meeting facilities and accommodation would have to be constructed. Transport connections from Beijing were by no means adequate to serve the large number of people who would be attending the Forum. The Chinese government promised that all necessary structures would be built and transport problems solved in time.

The Greatest Success of All Time

The Beijing Conference was a massive success both in terms of its size and results. The official conference was attended by the delegations of 189 governments, more than any other UN conference. It had some 17,000 participants with 6,000 government delegates, more than 4,000 accredited NGO representatives, about 4,000 journalists, and many officials from all the organizations of the UN system.

The NGO Forum also broke all records, despite the fact that meeting facilities in Huairou were limited and hotels still uncompleted. In addition, its streets and alleys were turned into mud baths every other day by torrential rains. Some 30,000 participants came from all over the world, in addition to 5,000 Chinese. Around 40,000 people including journalists, visiting official delegates, lecturers, performers and Chinese police and security officers swarmed around Huairou every day.

Notwithstanding these problems, those present at the NGO Forum regarded it as something to always remember because of the diversity of the women and the hundreds of well-known women who could be seen and heard in person from all parts of the world. There were also thousands of interesting and colourful events and meetings, as well as personal encounters, new friendships made and reunions with old friends. It was an unforgettable experience for the "first-timers" as well as for those with experience of previous fora.

It was also easy to see at the Forum why it was worthwhile to organize the official conference and parallel events in China. First, this allowed for the participation of over 5,000 Chinese women and their interaction and discussion, as well as hearing experiences and views of women from other countries. In addition, a large number of young Chinese women and men worked at the conference and therefore got a chance to observe, establish contacts and gather impressions—which they probably never would have had the opportunity to do otherwise. Coverage of the conference by the Chinese media provided a constant flow of information to Chinese society at large; such large-scale exposure to an international event was no doubt another comparative advantage of holding the conference in China.

The 4,000 NGO representatives accredited to the official conference were provided with good working and meeting facilities in the immediate vicinity of the Beijing conference site. The facilities were used daily by 40 to 50 issue caucuses, each focusing and lobbying

on their chosen section of the basic documents. Many had already participated in every preparatory committee session, studied successive drafts of the final document, and worked on it in the different preparatory stages for two years.

At the official conference site the work of these issue caucuses was coordinated by the Linkage Caucus, which comprised about 1,300 women from over 70 countries. At eight o'clock every morning a "morning assembly" was held by the Linkage Caucus, at which the UN Secretariat gave an update on progress of the conference proceedings, and representatives of different caucuses reported on the progress regarding their respective issues. The joy experienced by members of the caucuses as they managed to push an amendment through was shared by all in these meetings. The more difficult the issue the greater the sense of accomplishment!

Around 85% of the recommendations that were not approved at the preparatory committee meetings and that were still in square brackets at the beginning of the conference—including the concept of "gender"—were adopted for inclusion into the final document by government delegations (WEDO, 1995).

In Bella Abzug's words: "We did not get everything that we want.... But it is the strongest statement of consensus on women's equality, empowerment and justice ever produced by the world's governments. It's a vision of a transformational picture of what the world can be for women as well as men, for this and future generations" (WEDO 1995).

The Beijing PFA—An Agenda for Women's Empowerment

The official document adopted by the Beijing Conference is called the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace (PFA). The mission statement at the begin-

ning of the PFA says that "the Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment" (United Nations, 1996b). Thus, the emphasis is no longer merely on achieving equality and eradicating discrimination but on the empowerment of women so that they become full and equal partners in all policies and decision-making processes in their communities. Equality with men in a male-dominated culture and society alone is not enough. Women need to be empowered to bring their own views to policy making and the development of society, and to set their own priorities in accordance with their inherent values.

The PFA provides first an introduction to and assessment of the global situation at the time from women's viewpoints. It then specifies 12 Critical Areas of Concern, which are interrelated and interdependent, and sets strategic objectives and proposals for actions to be taken for the achievement of these targets.

"Governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, are called upon to take strategic action in the following critical areas of concern:

- The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women;
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training;
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services;
- Violence against women;
- The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation;
- Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources;
- Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision making at all levels;
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;

- Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women;
- Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media;
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment; and
- Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.”

In the final analysis, the Beijing PFA is a grand consolidation of all the decisions that had already been made by the preceding world conferences on women and the world conferences on environment, population, human rights and social development held during the 1990s. According to projections about the results of the Beijing Conference, it would have been a “good” outcome if gains made could be maintained and not watered down, given the alliance of conservative forces present at the conference.

But the Beijing PFA proved to be much more than this. It compiles the previously adopted decisions into a coherent Platform for Action, supplements and specifies them, and brings them forward. The PFA defines women's reproductive rights more specifically than the Cairo document. One of the largest chapters of the PFA deals with violence against women. It is the first-ever programme adopted by governments that addresses discrimination against and the exploitation, abuse and other problems of girl-children thoroughly and in great detail. It also calls for men's equal responsibility as sexual partners and partners sharing family responsibilities, and demands that these objectives be taken into account in early childhood in the home and school. It demands that these issues be taken into account and addressed everywhere.

In adopting the PFA governments committed themselves to effective mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout their operations,

policies, planning and decision making. The principle of “mainstreaming a gender perspective” is emphasized throughout the PFA. Governments also adopted the obligation to carry out gender impact assessments of the effects of government bills or political decisions on women and men respectively before the decisions are taken. The clause to this effect is specifically repeated in connection with every critical area in the PFA.

“In addressing [the issue], Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively” (Platform for Action, 1996, paragraphs 79, 105, 123, 141, 164, 189, 202, 229, 252 and 273).

The Beijing PFA is such a wide ranging, comprehensive and demanding programme that it will guide the work of Member States in the years to come for the empowerment of women, mainstreaming the gender perspective and bringing forward more balanced development.

The Breakthrough of the Gender Concept

The concept of gender did literally break through in Beijing in 1995. It did not appear in the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies as they were adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. However, a group of women development researchers and thinkers from the Global South presented their report *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era* (DAWN) during the Nairobi Conference, which challenged the underlying processes of development as it was generally understood (Sen and Grown, 1987). They used both gender and class as vantage points to examine development programmes and strategies.

After Nairobi, the gender concept slowly began to appear in UN language. One of the signals of its forthcoming was given when UNDP changed the name of its Women in Development Unit to the Gender in Development Programme in 1992. Around the same time, the drafting of the *Third World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* was beginning and it was to become the basic background document for the Beijing Conference. In fact, it was then the major document to launch the new language into the UN process (United Nations, 1995c).

The *World Survey* confirmed what the DAWN report had pointed out ten years earlier: “Policies that target women only cannot achieve the best results. Nor can those which assume that public actions are gender-neutral in their effects. Hence, promoting gender equality implies a profound change in the socio-economic organization of societies: not only in the way women work, live and care for the other members of the households, but also in the way men do, and in the way their respective roles in the family and community are articulated with the need to earn a living.”

However, the term “gender” was so disputed among government representatives during the drafting process of the Beijing Platform for Action, that all references to the word gender were in square brackets when the Conference started in 1995. But during the process in Beijing, all square brackets were removed, gender literally broke out, and the concept of gender became accepted UN language.

The issue is not only about words and concepts, it is also about perceptions and understandings concerning the relationships of men and women in society and culture. It is about recognizing that men also have gender, which influences their thinking, attitudes and behaviour. This new perception and way of thinking has become part of UN thinking. Today, the gender perspective has partially replaced traditional equality thinking as such, albeit the aim is the equality of men and women as a prerequisite for women’s empowerment.

Through the gender lens, equality is no longer only a technical and statistical perception. It is also an understanding that the views, values and experiences of men and women are different in many ways and, therefore, it is essential that both male and female views are equally heard and recognized in society, and in economic and political planning and decision making. Only then can men and women equally and democratically influence progress in society, which shapes the conditions and prerequisites of their lives. Thus, the equal participation and impact of women in society becomes not only their legitimate right, but also a social and political necessity for achieving more balanced and sustainable development.

As stated earlier in this chapter, by unanimously adopting the Beijing PFA in 1995, UN Member States committed themselves to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all areas of societal development in their respective countries in the years to come. Later in 1997, ECOSOC’s agreed conclusions placed this obligation on the entire UN system to apply gender mainstreaming throughout its work (see the following section).

During the Beijing+5 review and appraisal process, the *Fourth World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* in 1999 continued this discussion. It reviewed the consequent phases of progress in development discourses and studied the problems of the Women in Development (WID) approach and policies (United Nations, 1999b). It also pointed out the inadequacy of WID programmes due to their emphasis on women alone, and for not addressing the basic structures of inequality between women and men.

This realization opened a whole new debate and resulted in greater emphasis being placed on the concept of gender, implying that all issues are to be studied from the point of both women and men. This new orientation has eventually paved the way for a new approach called gender and development (GAD), where “gender” as a category of analysis has taken the central stage. This approach has, to quite

an extent, replaced the former WID perspective over the years.

The GAD approach differs from the WID approach in three ways:
—the focus shifts from women to gender and the unequal power relations between women and men;
—all social, political and economic structures and development policies are re-examined from the perspective of gender differentials;
—it is recognized that achieving gender equality requires “transformative change.”

In this conceptual reorientation, the politics of gender relations and restructuring of institutions, rather than simply equality in access to resources and options, have become the focus of development programmes, and “gender mainstreaming” has emerged as the common strategy for action behind these initiatives.

The *Fourth World Survey* elaborates the consequences for society: “Achieving gender equality requires that gender roles and the basic institutions of society—the market, Government, and the family—are reorganized. During the 1990s, with the shift to GAD, political rather than economic aspects of development have become the main issues of concern. Now women have to take initiative as equal partners in a participatory and ‘bottom-up’ process of development.” It also has to be seen that enabling women to take their equal position in society does require supportive institutions and services, and for men to take a greater share of family responsibilities.

Empowerment, first and foremost, requires awareness which is created by knowledge. Thus, gender mainstreaming involves a dual strategy. One type of action places gender at the centre of the global agenda. A series of UN world conferences held in the 1990s have been especially effective in this regard. Another type of action is focused on producing gender-aware knowledge, mainly in the fields that directly concern relevant economic and social policy. In this respect, the *1999 World Survey* gives particular credit to the growing

work of feminist economists and non-governmental organizations.

The UN System as a Pioneer in Gender Mainstreaming

As mentioned above, by unanimously adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 Member States committed themselves to implement this programme in their respective countries. Ultimately, the realization of the UN programmes and decisions depends on the citizens in each of the countries and their ability and awareness to claim accountability from their governments. After all, the governments made commitments to their citizens, in this case particularly to women citizens in each country.

Furthermore, two years after the Beijing Conference Member States made another unanimous decision whereby they obliged the whole UN system to mainstream a gender perspective in all their activities, which implies, in fact, the implementation of the Beijing PFA throughout. This crucially important decision on “Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system” was made in the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC (ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2, A/52/3, pp. 27-35).

This obligation covers the whole UN system, all decisions and activities as well as their implementation, including the major UN conferences, their reviews and appraisals. The ECOSOC decision even gives detailed guidance to gender units and focal points—DAW, UNIFEM, INSTRAW, etc.—to support and give their expertise in this task to all other entities of the UN system. ECOSOC monitors the implementation of this obligation in its substantive sessions every year.

In the UN system hardly any other decision has been made that is as comprehensive and firm in its decisiveness and targeting as the

ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2. This particular resolution is a large and detailed document that lists by name a large number of UN bodies and institutions that are obliged to see to it that gender mainstreaming is incorporated into their decisions and actions. In several points it also emphasizes the need to mobilize “adequate and, if need be, additional human and financial resources” for this purpose.

The bodies and units in the UN system dedicated to the advancement and empowerment of women and mainstreaming gender have been strengthened in recent years and new positions have been established in the Secretariat. This applies to the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), which is assisting and facilitating the Commission on the Status of Women, the political organ in charge of gender mainstreaming and all other gender-related issues in the UN. It now also has the task to follow up and coordinate gender-related issues within the work of other functional commissions.

Since the Mexico City Conference in 1975, there have been two autonomous agencies within the UN system that work for women. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the autonomous fund in association with UNDP, undertakes concrete work in many forms with women in the South as well as monitoring the gender-related issues in the political process. The other autonomous agency, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), works on gender-related issues but is still struggling within the limits of its extremely scarce resources due to its inappropriate financing procedure. Both of these agencies have distinct roles in looking after the advancement and empowerment of women within the UN system.

One of the enhancement measures has been the promotion the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) to the status of a standing sub-committee for coordination and collabora-

tion of Gender Focal Points in United Nations offices, specialized agencies, funds and programmes. In 1997 Secretary-General Kofi Annan established a new, high-level post — the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)—to advise him on integrating gender issues into the policies of the United Nations. In January 1998, the Secretary-General established another high position, next to his own, of Deputy Secretary-General and appointed a highly merited woman to that position.

The work and resources of these organs within the UN system can be seen within the framework of the overall obligations of the whole UN system to implement the Beijing PFA and mainstream a gender perspective into all of its policies and programmes. In recent years the proportion of women in decision-making positions within the UN Secretariat has increased significantly. Progress made within the UN in this regard probably exceeds any administration in the Member States (United Nations, 1999b).

The progress described above indicates that the UN system itself is, indeed, making every possible effort to implement the recommendations and decisions made on gender mainstreaming and advancement of women within its own proceedings—contrary to often repeated prejudices about the UN failing to implement its own decisions and betraying women. Unfortunately, the UN often gets the blame for the failures and shortcomings appearing in implementation of programmes and resolutions at the country level in Member States. Therefore, it is crucially important to make clear who is accountable for what and at which level.

After all, the UN system today is a pioneer not only in processing and adopting multilateral gender-related programmes and recommendations but also in implementing them in the global process. The UN has the legitimate mandate to follow up and review regularly implementation of these programmes and recommendations by the governments in Member States. This has an imposing effect on

the governments not to forget their commitments agreed upon at the UN. Consequently, civil servants in charge of gender-related issues in each national administration have to acquire awareness and knowledge of existing UN programmes and recommendations and work towards their implementation in their respective countries. Thus the process trickles down through the inter-governmental structures from the UN to the national level in the Member States.

On the other hand, women citizens in each democratic Member State are entitled to hold their governments accountable for the promises they have made in the UN. These women constitute the global women's movement to widely inform their sister citizens—and brothers, too—in all countries about intergovernmental agreements and instruments and to exert the necessary political will. Civil society organizations and NGOs in each country are the channels and frameworks through which citizens can take actions for change.

The unfortunate fact is, however, that the vast majority of civil society—and the private sector in particular—are unforgivably ignorant about the revolutionary process taking place in gender thinking in recent times due to the UN system. This lack of knowledge is an enormous obstacle to progress in gender mainstreaming, the advancement of women and more equal and balanced development altogether.

Reorganization and Reorientation of Women's Worlds

At beginning of this publication, it was noted that women's voluntary agencies were the path breakers for cooperation between NGOs and inter-governmental agencies as early as the founding of the League of Nations in 1919. In recent decades, since the 1970s, the women's movement has reactivated this cooperation and participation in politics at the macro level with the United Nations system.

Quite a number of new women's organizations and networks have emerged along with the process taking place around gender-related issues in the UN. Actually this process has provided a genuinely mutual exchange between the world's women and the UN system; the UN had to recognize women's role in development and politics in the early 1970s and the actions of the UN—beginning with the International Women's Year and Mexico City Conference in the 1970s—which stimulated and empowered women around the world to recognize how efficient an agency the UN could be for the sake of the advancement of women.

In this exchange with the UN, women's approaches and perceptions have become increasingly comprehensive and holistic. Equality between women and men, which has been very much an aim on its own merits, has become a baseline requirement for equal participation of women in decision making. Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming form a new formula, which goes much beyond ordinary equality as a goal. However, mainstreaming must not result in "malestreaming," that is women's integration into men's world. In order to transform the patriarchal culture women must speak in their own voice, and act on the basis of their own experiences and values.

The purpose of mobilization, networking and reorganization is to activate women to learn about the politics at large and the ways and means of how the UN system operates. Only then can women participate in the process, not only by attending UN events and conferences, but by also seeing the importance of constantly following the politics in the making, at both the country and UN level. Only then women can influence the outcomes of the UN and other international organizations' events. Furthermore, national and international NGOs provide the machinery to organize women's participation in the meetings and conferences, both at the national and international level.

Below are a few examples of organizations and networks that are

conducting worldwide activities directly related to the UN and global processes. Contact information on these organizations is provided in Annex IV.

—**Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)** was established in 1982. It is a network of women and men, researchers, academics, students, educators, activists, business people, policy-makers, development practitioners, funders, and other professionals in the field. AWID’s mission is to connect, inform and mobilize people and organizations committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women’s human rights around the world. Its flagship event, the AWID International Forum, is held every three years. The Forum is the largest gathering of this kind outside of the UN. AWID’s headquarters are located in Toronto (Canada).

—**ISIS International** was formed in 1974, in Rome and Geneva, and aims to create opportunities for women’s voices to be heard, strengthen feminist analyses through information exchange, promote solidarity and support feminist movements across the globe. Since 1991 Isis International has three independent offices in Asia (Manila, Philippines), Africa (Kampala, Uganda) and Latin America (Santiago, Chile), reflecting a commitment towards South-South cooperation and South-North linkages. With connections in over 150 countries, ISIS keeps up with changing trends and analyses concerning women worldwide.

—**The International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC)** is an international non-governmental organization established in 1976 following the UN International Women’s Year World Conference in Mexico City. With a philosophical commitment to empowering people and building communities, IWTC provides communication, information, education, and organizes support services to women’s organizations and community groups working to improve the lives of women, particularly low-income women, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and

Western Asia. IWTC is based in New York, just opposite United Nations headquarters.

—**The International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC)** was founded in 1984 and is based in New York. IWHC works to generate health and population policies, programmes, and funding that promote and protect the rights and health of girls and women worldwide. IWHC believes that global wellbeing and social and economic justice can only be achieved by ensuring women’s human rights, health, and equality. At the 1994 Cairo Conference, IWHC was instrumental in shifting the focus of population policies from simply numbers of people to the health, empowerment and rights of individuals.

—**Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)** is a network established in 1984 by women scholars and activists from the economic South, who engage in feminist research and analyses of the global environment and are committed to working for economic and gender justice and democracy. DAWN works globally and regionally in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific on the themes of the Political Economy of Globalization; Political Restructuring and Social Transformation; Sustainable Livelihoods; and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, in partnership with other global NGOs and networks.

—**International Women’s Rights Action Watch (IWRAP)** was organized in 1985 at the World Conference on Women in Nairobi (Kenya) to promote recognition of women’s human rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention), a basic international human rights treaty. IWRAP now is the primary international non-governmental organization that facilitates the use of international human rights treaties to promote women’s human rights and rights within families. IWRAP is based at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in the United States.

—**The Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL)** was established in 1989 as part of the Institute for Women’s Leadership at Rutgers University in the United States. The Center’s programmes promote the leadership of women and advance feminist perspectives in policy-making processes in local, national and international arenas. Since 1990, CWGL has fostered women’s leadership in the area of human rights through women’s global leadership institutes, strategic planning activities, international mobilization campaigns, UN monitoring, global education endeavors, publications, and a resource center. The Global Center works from a human rights perspective with an emphasis on violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and socio-economic wellbeing. Its programmes cover two broad areas: policy and advocacy and leadership development, and women’s human rights education.

—**Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)** came about in the early 1990s during the preparatory process for the Earth Summit in Rio. Within that process, a systematic and effective NGO lobbying strategy was developed and used successfully in connection with the Earth Summit, and with other world conferences since. WEDO defines itself as an “international advocacy network to transform society to achieve a healthy and peaceful planet with social, political, economic and environmental justice for all through the empowerment of women.” In order to achieve these goals, WEDO brings together women from all around the world to take action in the United Nations and other international policy-making forums, supports the efforts of women’s organizations worldwide, and engages US women on foreign policy. WEDO is based in New York.

—**Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML)** is an international solidarity network that provides information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam. WLUML

was formed in 1984 by nine women coming together from nine Muslim countries, and it evolved into its present form in 1986. In two decades WLUML has become a network linking individual women and organizations from more than 70 countries. WLUML responds to, circulates and initiates international alerts for action and campaigns as requested by networking groups and allies. WLUML also provides concrete support for individual women in the form of information on their legal rights, assistance with asylum applications, and links with relevant support institutions, psychological support, etc. WLUML’s International Coordination Office is located in London and has regional offices in Pakistan and Nigeria.

—**The KARAT Coalition** is a regional coalition of organizations and individuals. It works to ensure gender equality in the Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries. It was established in 1997 in Warsaw as a network of women’s NGOs to promote implementation of the Beijing PFA. Now it monitors implementation of international agreements and lobbies for the needs and concerns of women in the Region at all levels of decision-making fora. KARAT has NGOs from 21 countries as members.

An important fact to consider is that today women’s organizations and networks appear in all regions of the world, which was not the case in the early years of the United Nations. Most of the organizations mentioned above are global in their scope. These few examples give an idea of the variety of functions, structures and modes of operation of women’s movement in the area of gender-related and equality issues in the context of the UN system. They do reflect both the basic commonalities and present disparities among women in the world today. The multitude of women’s NGOs involved in the efforts and activities around the UN also attests (continued on page 90)

Some UN Definitions for Basic Concepts

Gender

Gender refers to socially constructed roles of women and men ascribed to them on the basis of their sex, whereas the term sex refers to biological and physical characteristics. Gender roles depend on a particular socio-economic, political and cultural context, and are affected by other factors, including age, race, class and ethnicity. Gender roles are learned, and vary widely within and between cultures. Unlike a person's sex, gender roles can change. Gender roles help to determine women's access to rights, resources and opportunities.

—*Report of the Secretary General: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, A/51/322.*

Gender is defined as the social meanings given to biological sex differences. It is an ideological and cultural construct but is also reproduced within the realm of material practices; in turn, it influences the outcomes of such practices. It affects the distribution of resources, wealth, work, decision-making and political power, and the enjoyment of rights and entitlements within the family as well as public life. Despite variations across cultures and over time, gender relations throughout the world entail asymmetry of power between men and women as a pervasive trait. Thus, gender is a social stratifier, and in this sense it is similar to other stratifiers such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and age. It helps us understand the social construction of gender identities and the unequal structure of power that underlies the relationship between the sexes.

—*1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, paragraph 16. A/54/227, United Nations, 1999b.*

Empowerment of Women

The purpose of the Beijing Platform for Action is declared in the very first sentence of Mission Statement: "The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment." Thus the BPFA launched firmly the concept of the empowerment of women, and defines it in the very first paragraph as follows:

Women's empowerment "aims at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared

power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace" (Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 1).

The UN has also developed a gender empowerment measure (GEM), an index that focuses on three variables that reflect women's participation in political decision making, their access to professional opportunities and their earning power. A country may rank high in basic human capabilities according to the human development index (HDI), or even gender-sensitive development index (GDI), but the GEM is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities in life.

This indicator was launched in the 1995 *Human Development Report*, published by the UN Development Programme. Using GEM, the ranking of countries may change dramatically and surprisingly, and some developing countries outperform much richer industrial countries.

"In no society today women enjoy the same opportunities as men," says the *Human Development Report*. "Gender equality does not depend on the income level of the country. Equality is not a technocratic goal—it is a wholesale political commitment." And finally, the report draws a conclusion: "Human development, if not engendered, is endangered." (For more information on the GEM index, see *Human Development Report, 1995.*)

Gender Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

(Agreed Conclusions on Gender Mainstreaming, ECOSOC, 1997)

to the constant hope and faith of women in the UN as the world organization for equality, development and peace.

Also the orientation of women's organizations in the North is slowly changing. They are becoming more critical and putting the economies and policies of their own governments under more scrutiny. Development assistance is no longer enough—nor has it ever been. Solidarity and sisterhood are needed. Talk about making change must also imply change in the North including changes in the policies and actions of rich countries *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world.

The power structures are increasingly centralizing in the North due to globalizing trade and economies and there are growing threats against people and the living environment everywhere. More importantly, the borderline between North and South is vanishing in women's worlds, and the increasing inequalities and growing demands for competitiveness affect all in globalizing economies.

Chapter 7

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF PROGRESS— BEIJING+10

Ten years after the Beijing Conference (1995), and thirty years after the Mexico City Conference (1975), a special review and assessment of global progress made in the advancement of women took place in March 2005. It was once hoped that this stock-taking exercise would take the form of the Fifth UN World Conference on Women, but due to political changes in some Member States and an unfavourable political climate in general, the Ten-Year Review and Appraisal took place in the form of a special 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. The UN wanted to make it much more than a regular annual session of the CSW, and to give the session as high-profile as possible without it being a world conference, as Kyang-wha Kang, the Chair of the CSW Session, stated in the NGO consultations on the eve of the session.

All UN Member States were invited to participate in this session together with the 45 regular members of the CSW. Governments were requested to be represented by high-level delegations. As a consequence, this session was attended by 165 Member States in which 80 delegations were led by ministers and the number of delegates reached 1,800. The star participants were the First Ladies from seven countries. This high and extended level of participation clearly signalled the large amount of interest and expectations related to this CSW session.

Another manifestation of the significance of the session was the quantity and diversity of over 300 parallel events organized mainly by the non-governmental community and the presence of almost 3,000 non-governmental representatives from 430 NGOs from all over the world.

The highlight of the meeting was the observance on 4 March of the 30-year anniversary of the First World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City in 1975. The tribute brought together distinguished speakers including Nobel laureates Rigoberta Menchu and Wangari Maathai and former Secretaries-General of the four World Conferences on Women: Helvi Sipilä from Finland by video (Mexico, 1975); extracts of speech read on behalf of Lucille Mair, from Jamaica (Copenhagen, 1980); Leticia Shahani, from the Philippines (Nairobi, 1985) and Gertrude Mongella, from Tanzania (Beijing, 1995). The programme also included music, dance and other cultural performances from different parts of the world.

Global Census for Beijing+10

The timing of the Beijing PFA was to establish “a basic group of priority actions that should be carried out during the next five years” (PFA, para 7). Thus the first five-year review and appraisal of its implementation was held in 2000 in the form of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century.” The crucial decision then was to reconfirm the Beijing Platform for Action for another five years and to unanimously agree:

“to regularly assess further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action with the view to bringing together all the parties involved in 2005 to assess progress and consider new initiatives 10 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and 20 years after the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies.”

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing PFA, the so-called Beijing+10, took place in 2005, along with anniversary celebrations for Nairobi (20 years) and Mexico City (30 years).

The questionnaires for the review and appraisal were sent to Member States in October 2003 and the deadline for receiving the replies was April 2004; however, the reports were still counted until October 2004. The questions aimed at detailed and substantive answers about the achievements, as well as obstacles and challenges, on each one of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. Altogether, replies were received from 134 countries, or 71% of the Member States participating during the Beijing conference.

Summaries of the country reports were compiled by the UN’s five regional commissions (Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) and at UN Headquarters by the Division for Advancement of Women in New York. There were interesting differences in achievements and also in proportions of the countries replying from various regions. The highest response rate was from Western Asia (11 of 13 States). The second was Africa (43 of 52), the third was the ECE-region with Europe and North America (43 of 55 States) and then Latin American and Caribbean States (23 of 33), the last one being the huge Asia-Pacific area (15 of 39) with China and India included. Maybe this tells something about the interests and intensity of the countries in respective regions in the implementation of UN programmes in general, and the Beijing PFA in particular.

It is worth mentioning the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa in the 1970s, which was already very active working on women’s issues even before the Mexico conference. The Commission established the African Center for Women (ACW)¹⁰ in March 1975, the first one of the five UN regions. Within the UN

10. African Center for Women (ACW): (www.uneca.org/fr/acgd/en/1024x768/acgd.htm).

system, the ACW is the only regional structure directly responsible for the coordination of women/gender and development programmes in Africa. Regional conferences have been organized ever since, the one dealing with Beijing+10 in 2004 was the seventh African regional conference on women. The African region has been remarkably active in implementation of UN programmes, and the Beijing+10 review and appraisal was thoroughly prepared at different stages and sub-regions of the continent.

An integral part of the Economic Commission for Africa, the ACW was raised to the rank of Division in 1999. In August 2001, the African Center for Women changed its name to the African Center for Gender and Development (ACGD).

The Secretary-General's Global Summary of the country reports on Beijing+10 (E/CN.6/2005/2) is a rich source of information and gives a comprehensive picture of progress made around the world. The first part of the report gives the global overview of major trends in implementation as well as achievements, obstacles and challenges. It also provides a number of global conclusions. The report is then structured according to the 12 critical areas of the PFA and respectively the achievements, obstacles and challenges are outlined. The critical observations and shortcomings are listed in the conclusions of each chapter.

“Over the past 10 years, the status and role of women has undergone a significant change on a global scale although not at an equal pace in all regions,” states the report. It also draws attention to a number of issues that are not actually dealt with in the Beijing PFA, such as “major global trends including globalization; market liberalization; privatization; migration; and the use of new technologies such as ICT.” An interesting remark is made that “governments increasingly address matters previously considered private, such as violence against women in all its forms” and “trafficking [in women and children] is acknowledged as a major global concern.”

Improvement has taken place, and governments have reiterated “their commitment to gender mainstreaming as the main strategy for achievement of gender equality and to the involvement of women as full and equal participants in all areas of development.” This statement can be compared with the Beijing+5 report in 2000, which pointed to the lack of gender mainstreaming. After all the 2005 report deplores that “A large gap remains between policy and practice in promotion of gender equality. Public attitudes towards the advancement of women and gender equality have not changed at the same pace as policy and legal and institutional framework.” This is again an indication of the trickle down effect in this process where action flows downward from the UN system to the governmental system, and is ahead of civil society—except the women’s movement—in the transformation of attitudes concerning gender equality and mainstreaming in Member States.

Several other reports were produced to facilitate the Beijing+10 review and assessment. An important one is the *2004 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women and International Migration* (A/59/287/Add.1, United Nations, 2005b). The *World Surveys* on the role of women in development have been published every five years since 1984. They provide excellent sources of analyzed and assessed information on evolving development thinking and theories from women’s points of view. These surveys, based on research and data from all relevant UN organizations and statistics, have different relevant and topical themes in respective periods of years, such as women and international migration in 2005.

Another report was produced by the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), entitled *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, which is an outcome of the contributions of more than 60 feminist scholars from various countries and regions. It focuses on the ten years of implementation of the Beijing PFA and presents critical as well as optimistic perspectives, arguing that many of the economic and political reforms of the 1990s had

contradictory gender implications. One of its findings is that “the gains made in women’s human rights during 1990s remain as fragile as the democratic institutions and procedures that should give them legitimacy and protection.” The report challenges the complacency around achievements in gender equality, and underlines the fragility and precariousness—particularly in the current global context—of many of the gains that have been made. It claims space for “an alternative institutional and policy framework that is premised on a serious rethinking of key neoliberal tenets” (UNRISD, 2005).

The UN Development Fund for Women publishes highly useful publications on a regular basis. Every other year UNIFEM produces a report measuring progress of the world’s women. The 2005 issue is entitled *Progress of the World’s Women: Women, Work and Poverty* (UNIFEM, 2005). The previous report came out in 2002 with the subtitle *Gender Equality and the Millennium Goals* (UNIFEM, 2002b). As a supplement to this series of reports, a separate selection of indicators and targets was published in 2000 *Targets and Indicators. Selection from the progress of the World’s Women* (UNIFEM, 2000a).

Also in 2000 the UN Statistical Division produced a new edition of *The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, as the third issue in a series published in 1991 and 1995, which examines the status of women through statistical data and analyses (United Nations, 2000b). *The World’s Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* analyses statistics from 204 countries during the past 30 years and sets out a blueprint for improving them (United Nations, 2005c).

Beijing PFA and the Millennium Development Goals

Since 2000 another significant process and campaign has been launched and is gaining momentum in the UN system parallel to the Beijing+10 review and appraisal. The Millennium Campaign, which

aims to inform and encourage people’s involvement and action for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by 189 Member States during the biggest global summit ever held in the United Nations to commemorate the new Millennium in 2000. The main goals of the Millennium Campaign are the eradication of poverty and hunger, promotion of health and education, particularly in the countries left behind in development, and creating a new, fair partnership between the countries of the North and South (see box page 99).

Women have forever contributed to the wellbeing of their families and societies in all human cultures. In the early 1970s women’s vital role in alleviating hunger and poverty was recognized. Therefore it is obvious that the women’s movement is intricately linked to the Millennium Goals, but the MDG campaign should not take place at the expense of the implementation of the Beijing PFA. The continuously ascending process for the advancement of women since the Mexico City Conference has at the same time provided a solid platform to help achieve the MDGs as they are now defined, making the Beijing Platform for Action an excellent tool in the work for the MDGs. The well-chosen motto for the UN/MDGenderNet-website makes an essential point: “Without progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, none of the MDGs will be achieved.” In fact, five of the eight Millennium Development Goals are directly drawn from or inscribed in the Beijing PFA. All of the MDGs are highly relevant for women, and their work is crucial for the achievement of each one of them.

As a result, women’s movements around the world have worked hard in recent years to spread awareness of the key importance of the Beijing PFA to help achieve the MDGs. In order to be successful, a gender perspective should be fully mainstreamed within the MDG campaign, and implementation of the Declaration and Goals should be thoroughly integrated with the Beijing PFA and the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), all

within a human rights framework.

These arguments have received strong support from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who emphasized the interaction between the Millennium Declaration and Beijing PFA very strongly in his address to the opening of the Beijing+10 Session of the CSW by saying:

“Sixty years have passed since the founders of the United Nations inscribed, on the first page of our Charter, the equal rights of men and women. Since then, study after study has taught us that there is:

- no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women;
- no other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, or to reduce infant and maternal mortality;
- no other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health - including the prevention of HIV/AIDS;
- no other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation;
- no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended.

“But whatever the very real benefits of investing in women, the most important fact remains: women themselves have the right to live in dignity, in freedom from want and from fear.”

He appealed directly to the world’s leaders to take these facts seriously into consideration when they gathered in New York from 14-16 September 2005 to review progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2015

1. ***Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger***
Halve the proportion of those living on less than a dollar a day and those who starve.
2. ***Achieve Universal Primary Education***
All boys and girls complete primary school.
3. ***Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women***
 - Eliminate discrimination of girls in primary and secondary schools.
 - Increase the number of women in parliaments/power.
4. ***Reduce Child Mortality***
Reduce by two-thirds the mortality of children under five.
5. ***Improve Maternal Health***
Reduce by three-quarters the number of women dying in childbirth.
6. ***Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases.***
Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases.
7. ***Ensure Environmental Sustainability***
 - Integrate the principle of sustainability into policies and programmes,
 - Double the number of people with access to safe drinking water.
8. ***Develop a Global Partnership for Development and Sharing of Resources.***
 - An open trading and financial system with commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction;
 - Decent solutions for developing country debt problems;
 - Increase net commitments of rich countries to 0,7 % GNP annually for aid;
 - Access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries;
 - and other goals.

The Political Declaration: Recommitment and Continuation

The Secretary-General's Report on Beijing+10 redefines the PFA as "a global agenda for women's human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, developed through a process of dialogue and exchange within and among Governments, international organizations, including the United Nations, and civil society. The Platform for Action builds on commitments made at the United Nations world conferences on women held in Mexico in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985, as well as other commitments made at the United Nations global summits and conferences in the 1990s" (E/CN.6/2005/2).

The Secretary-General's report makes it clear that 30 years of progress in implementation of this "global agenda" constitutes an unparalleled achievement for the advancement of human rights, the equality of women and men and other crucial human values and aims. It was for this reason decisively important that the Beijing+10 Session, bringing together all partners—governments, international organizations and civil society—reach an unequivocal and unconditional consensus for recommitment and continuation of their efforts to implement the Beijing PFA in the years to come. Beijing+10 saw the adoption of a Political Declaration, whereby governments:

— Reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;

— Emphasize that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and stress the need to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the (forthcoming) high-level plenary meeting on the review of the Millennium Declaration;

— Recognize that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfilment of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women (E/CN.6/2005/L.1).

This declaration not only reaffirms the Beijing agreement and enforces the mutually reinforcing effect of the PFA and the CEDAW Convention, but also recognizes that full implementation of the Beijing programme is essential for achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

The US delegation initially tried to hamper reaffirmation of the Platform by submitting an amendment that not only threatened consensus but also attempted to undermine the human rights underpinning of it. The proposed amendment to the draft declaration reaffirmed the Beijing documents but specified "that they do not create any new international human rights, and that they do not include the right to abortion." Half of the two-week session was spent struggling to reject the US amendment. Finally, at the end of the first week, the Political Declaration was approved by consensus, without any reservations, when the US withdrew their amendment as it had not garnered support from any other government.

At the end of the session, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Chair of the Commission, expressed her firm belief in the strength and importance of the declaration by saying: "This concise and powerful declaration is an unqualified and unconditional reaffirmation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and a pledge of further action for full and accelerated implementation of Beijing."

Rachel Mayanja, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues, said in her closing remarks that "the session had taken stock of women's accomplishments during the past ten years and showed how effective women could be when they were equal partners at all

levels. Member States, NGOs and the United Nations system confirmed, loud and clear, that all issues concerned women. Women must carry out their rightful and equal role in shaping new economic and social programmes, preventing conflict, or establishing and maintaining peace.”

She believed that the significance of the session went far beyond the adopted documents. First, it showed that the “spirit of the Beijing consensus” was very much alive. Second, the session demonstrated that “what unites us is bigger than what divides.” Third, the session had started a new era in implementation. “We cannot rest, we must continue to work hard to implement the Platform for Action and link it to the Millennium Declaration. We must ensure that there is never any slipping back.”

However, the Political Declaration adopted during the 49th Session of the CSW in 2005 represented only the minimum of what had to be agreed in order to save the continuation of the process for further implementation of the Beijing PFA and gender mainstreaming in all activities of the UN system, including the Millennium Development Campaign. With the situation as it was, it was not possible to establish concrete plans for the continuation of work at the UN level.

Therefore the 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (27 February – 10 March 2006) had the crucial task of deciding what would be the most effective way to maintain momentum and continue implementation of the PFA, as well as addressing new problems and issues in forthcoming years. Two specific themes were addressed at the 50th Session: the enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work; and equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels. The 50th Session of the CSW in 2006 saw the adoption of a resolution on future organization and methods of work of the Commission

that aims to strengthen the connection between policy recommendations and implementation of the PFA and the Beijing+5 outcome document. Starting in 2007, each session of the Commission will consider only one priority theme from the Platform and the +5 outcome document in order to reduce the time spent on negotiations.

For the next three years the priority themes will be “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” (2007); “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” (2008); and “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS” (2009).

Women and UN Reform

In recent years the reform process of the UN system has become a crucial issue on practically all UN agendas. During the 50th Session of the CSW, the International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation organized a NGO panel discussion on the implications of the UN reform process for women and women’s advocacy worldwide as a contribution to efforts in broadening the UN Reform debate, particularly in creating spaces for more women’s voices to be heard. The panel discussion highlighted a need to provide more information about the ongoing reform steps and—more importantly—provide a space for dialogue on the promise that this process holds for women.

The discussions in the panel resulted in a publication by several contributors, *UN Reform: What’s in it for Women?*,¹¹ that examines the UN reform agenda and its relevance for women from many different

11. *UN Reform: What’s in it for Women?*, produced by the International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, is available online (www.iwtc.org/reform_report.pdf).

angles and experiences, ranging from the newly set up Peacebuilding Commission, to women's advocacy perspectives in the new Human Rights Council, to transformation of the multilateral system, to a proposed vision for a Women's Commission on UN Reform. On the basis of this publication and discussions in the panel, a concise paper was prepared in July 2006, entitled *Gender Equality Architecture and UN Reforms*, and submitted to the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence as the contribution of women's organizations into the reform process of the UN system (see Annex II).

Governments' Reports Double Checked by NGOs

The shadow report-strategy, which had been used earlier within the system where governments reported on their implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, was also used by NGOs during the Beijing+5 process in 2000. The shadow reports contain the findings and views of people in comparison with the official reports prepared by the Member States. In fact, NGOs can verify the official reports of their governments as well as bring in their own findings and experiences in implementation of CEDAW or the Beijing PFA in their own country.

A collateral outcome of the preparation of shadow reports—or alternative reports as they are also called—is that an increasing number of women are mobilized to study the Beijing PFA and their governments' reports and put them under scrutiny. The work accomplished and ideas collected in this process provide NGO women with more competence and experience to participate in UN processes, both at the national as well as the international level. In some countries it has resulted in the government inviting NGOs to participate beforehand in the preparation of the national report to the UN, i.e. the government wants to hear women's views at an early stage.

The alternative reporting process in connection with Beijing+10 doubled. The shadow reporting was launched by the NGO Committee on the Status Women in New York by sending the UN questionnaire through various channels to NGOs inviting them to prepare their responses. The questionnaire was the same as the one sent to governments. Somewhat later, the NGO/CSW Committee prepared a simplified version of the questionnaire in order to facilitate the process.

In 2003, the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) established an International Advisory Group to prepare and guide national and international NGO follow-up processes on Beijing+10. The Group included regionally diverse feminist activists with a wide range of expertise on a number of issues and who often had previous experience from earlier operations led by WEDO in the 1990s.

The WEDO Group prepared their own questionnaire, which also covered new issues that have emerged since 1995, such as peace and security; trade and finance; sustainability; and HIV/AIDS. They also felt that the linkages of the 12 Critical Areas of the PFA are now even more complex and intertwined. Therefore, they combined them into seven different themes: Human Rights; Peace and Security; Power and Decision-Making; Poverty Eradication; Education; Natural Resources and Environment; and Health.

The WEDO initiative was received with enthusiasm; women everywhere affirmed the need for a new global monitoring report to impact the 2005 Beijing+10 Review and the 2005 UN World Summit. However, it was soon clear that "one size does not fit all" when it comes to the international women's movement. The process was organized regionally according to five UN Economic and Social Regions and in some of them the reports were prepared by several sub-regions. All the contributors used the WEDO questionnaire as their starting point, but they took different approaches and empha-

sized different themes depending on sub-regional priorities and the rich diversity of women's daily life and experiences.

Such a thorough and diversified process demanded an enormous effort and involved hundreds of organizations and thousands of women as contributors within the process that took about two years. The overwhelmingly rich amount of material was summarized and merged together in New York and made into an impressive report—*Beijing Betrayed: Women Worldwide Report that Governments Have Failed to Turn the Platform into Action* (WEDO, 2005).

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women received 42 shadow reports covering 112 organizations. The number of countries covered is difficult to specify as some of the reports were sub-regional and a few country reports were prepared collectively by several NGOs. The summary report, *Ten Years After Beijing: Still More Promises than Progress 1995-2005: Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action*, was prepared for the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in New York (NGO/CSW/NY, 2005). The report is systematic since it is structured according to the 12 Areas of Critical Concern in the PFA. In the beginning of each chapter there are references to the strategic objectives of the respective PFA sections, and there are also comparisons to the corresponding sections of the *NGO Alternative Global Report* produced in 2000 (CONGO, 2000).

NGO Reports Reflect Women's Realities

Both of the NGO summary reports are so rich in substance that it is impossible to further summarize them. The following extracts provide a few highlights from both of them.

The WEDO report starts by saying: "This report presents women's realities—their concerns, experiences, perspectives and analyses—in

the implementation process and contrasts sharply with the more formal and often abstract reports governments have presented." The NGO/CSW/NY report begins by characterizing the main features of the reports they received: "The NGO reports keep their sights clearly focused on gender mainstreaming and efforts to achieve equality between men and women as the central issues of review at this ten-year benchmark. They pay close attention to the means by which their governments do and do not hold themselves accountable for the commitments they made at Beijing."

The NGO/CSW/NY report also notes that gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment were the highest cross-cutting policy commitments governments made at Beijing. "The gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a means to prevent and overcome discrimination based on culturally and socially determined roles. It is not a one-time operation but an ongoing process demanding heightened awareness and training. These are of paramount importance to the effective implementation of mainstreaming." NGOs cite good efforts by governments to promote gender mainstreaming but they also give many examples of limited implementation: a lack of systematic data collection and gender impact assessment; failure to set and meet clear benchmarks and timeframes; inadequate budget allocations; inconsistent integration of gender into policy measures, etc. "A key indication of support for gender equality and mainstreaming is the degree of commitment to funding and resources through allocated amount. One recurring theme throughout the reports is the discrepancy between commitment and reality of funding for both women's programmes and NGOs dealing with women's issues," the NGO/CSW/NY report finds.

Violence against women in its various forms is clearly a universal, acute problem affecting some two-thirds of women worldwide. Until the 1985 Nairobi Conference, it was a carefully silenced issue both in the private lives of women and in wars and conflicts. It was taken up openly in a few paragraphs of the Nairobi Forward-Looking

Strategies and through various UN efforts thereafter violence against women has become a burning issue in public debate and part of the UN agenda. During the Beijing+10 process it was the most frequently raised issue in the NGO reports from various regions. For example, in West Africa women's rights organizations mobilized against female genital mutilation (FGM) and won positive legislation in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo. The opposite occurred in Bangladesh where law enforcement authorities found themselves ineffective to contain gang rape, acid violence, dowry deaths and trafficking.

The trafficking of women and children into bonded sweatshop labour, forced marriages, forced prostitution, domestic servitude and other kinds of work has become large global concern since Beijing. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of women being trafficked from the former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE/CIS countries) as up to 175,000 women from these countries are being drawn in sex industry in Western Europe each year. Prostitution and trafficking in women and children was the most crucial problem discussed during the Beijing+10 preparatory conference of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Region held in Geneva in 2004. So far, governments seem to be fairly helpless to combat these crimes and to protect women affected by them.

In the field of education positive results have been achieved for some years in many parts of the world. According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2005*, so far five regions are close to universal enrolment in primary education, with an enrolment rate of 90% or higher (UN, 2005c). Achieving the goal will require dramatically scaled-up efforts in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Oceania. However, the first countries to make the crucial step of abolishing school fees at the primary level are Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Efforts to increase adult literacy are continuing in many countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. On the other end of the scale, in many European countries women's qualifications in educa-

tion are on average higher than men's. However, this is not reflected in women's academic positions and incomes in the labour market.

Concerning women and economics, the WEDO report describes the situation: "A combination of global trends – the predominance of the neo-liberal economic framework, growing militarization, and rising fundamentalism – have created an environment that is increasingly hostile to the advancement of women's rights. Since Beijing, the neo-liberal economic model and market driven policies have increased poverty and intensified inequalities between and within nations, with the harshest impact falling on women, the majority and poorest of the poor. Women's work in the care economy remains unaccounted for in gender-blind macroeconomic policy and poverty reduction strategies that further exacerbate the feminization of poverty."

The consequences are most tragic in former socialist countries. They have deregulated their economies, decreased the role of the State in monetary and fiscal policies and linked their national economies to world economic processes. Shock privatization had led in many cases to the plundering of privatized assets. Rising poverty and unemployment have spurred prostitution and trafficking in women and children. Almost half of women in those countries consider themselves poor: in Moldova and Ukraine the figure is close to 70%; and in Kyrgyzstan women made up roughly 57% of the total number of unemployed in 1999.

The WEDO report also takes up increased militarization and revival of both secular and religious fundamentalism, which have created a stifling climate for progressive change. "Increased militarization comes on top of an increase in regional ethnic and communal violence in many parts of the world. Fundamentalist parties, often led by or supported by the US, seek to rollback the gains of Cairo and Beijing, particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to limit the freedom and opportunities of women and girls

around the world. The devastating impact of all of these trends intensifies women's social and cultural vulnerabilities, especially the poorest and those coping with the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic."

The WEDO report deems that the inaction of the governments in the face of such intense opposition to women's rights justifies its conclusion: governments have betrayed the promises they made in Beijing.

An Experiment of Global Democracy through Internet

During the Beijing+5 process, three UN agencies—the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW—introduced in 1999 the WomenWatch website (www.un.org/womenwatch), a direct gateway for women around the world to global information within the system of UN websites. Through WomenWatch, these UN agencies also launched global online working groups on implementation of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern in the Beijing PFA, inviting men and women from around the world to participate in the review and appraisal process by contributing their views and experiences through the electronic discussion groups directly to the inter-governmental institution, the UN, thus feeding into the global process.

This innovative use of the Internet was a successful and exciting exercise that could be considered an experiment in global democracy. In late 1999, most of the working groups were open for about six weeks, except the End Violence Against Women working group, which started in October 1998 and lasted until February 2000. The highlight of the whole process was a global video conference on "A World Free of Violence Against Women," held in the General Assembly Hall at the UN in New York on International Women's Day (8 March) 1999. This unique event connected live presentations and interviews from several distant parts of the world. It lasted about

two hours and was broadcasted directly through hundreds of TV stations.

The question might be asked if this was just another privilege for women of the North, who had access to new information and communication technologies. However, it was found that participation in the groups was spread quite evenly between the South and the North. Altogether about 45% of the participants were from the South and about 52% were from the North, while only around 19% of all Internet users were then located outside Europe and North America. In some of the discussion groups, for example on environment and decision making, more than half of contributions came from the South (E/CN.6/2000/PC/CRP.1, United Nations, 2000c).

This was first time that this kind of follow-up exercise was provided as part of the review of a UN world conference or summit. Almost 11,000 individuals from over 120 countries subscribed to these virtual working groups, and more than 1,000 contributions were posted. Many others participated in direct one-on-one exchanges that contributed to the overall dialogue. It was interesting how this kind of open and personal interaction of truly international and multicultural participants generated information, experiences and ideas, which would hardly come out in any formal discussion.

A similar exercise organized in connection with the Beijing+10 review and appraisal was held from November 2004 to January 2005. The aim was again to provide input from civil society into the ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action. There were online discussions on 11 subjects adapted from the Beijing PFA and they lasted three to four weeks each. The discussions were hosted by WomenWatch and sponsored, organized and moderated by the various agencies of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE).

More than likely due to fewer resources available, this time it was

less publicized and fewer people participated, with only about 2,600 participants, while the number of contributions was not indicated. The discussions on Violence against Women and Women and Health gathered about 600 participants, but most of the groups had less than two hundred. Each moderator and her sponsoring agency provided a report on the respective subject but no conclusions were drawn on the whole. The outcome of the online discussions seem to have remained in the shadow of the enthusiastic experiment five years earlier.

However, since the experiences in 1999 of this kind of online participation in a global process were very exiting and promising, they could serve as an experiment for “global democracy” and therefore worthy of being developed further.

Chapter 8

EPILOGUE - WILL THE WORLD CHANGE?

There are two different ways of assessing the achievements of global progress. We can choose our point of departure from the future or from the past. Concerning progress in women’s lives, we can take as the baseline either the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action—to be achieved in the future—or the situation in the past, either with the founding of the United Nations in 1945 or the beginning of the 1970s when change gathered new momentum and large strides were made. Then the questions we might ask would be either how well the objectives have been reached, how far progress has come since then, or how much the situation has improved.

We will get very different pictures of the achievements depending on which way we choose to work. Although the Beijing PFA did set very few time-bound targets, it gave women great expectations about the future. Since those expectations have so far been only partly achieved, the global women’s movement is expressing their disappointment. “Beijing betrayed! Governments have failed!” is the message of the alternative report by WEDO. “Still more promises than progress!” says the NGO/CSW/NY report.

For ten years now, the Beijing Platform for Action has been giving direction and providing practical guidance on how to achieve its objectives—and towards advancing the dreams of women—but no one knows how long it will take for these objectives to be met.

Women Changing the United Nations

If we compare the situation of real life about 35 years ago with real life today, or between the world of 1945 and the world of today, we can see how much women’s conditions have improved; but it has

taken place very unevenly, somewhere a lot, somewhere else less, and many places barely at all.

We can put the question still another way: How much have women changed the UN? What kind of the UN would we have today if women had not participated and made any impact through the decades since 1919? The whole world might be very different today if we had not had the United Nations at all, or if women had not left their imprints on world development through the years at the United Nations.

This book highlights progress made in the status and situation of women since 1919, and the role of women in this progress, whether it be through their strenuous efforts, or their skills and clever strategies in bringing about change through the UN and outside of it.

The first interventions of women in the language of the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights have had far-flung consequences through the history of the UN. The 1970s was a development decade particularly for women with the International Women's Year, the first UN World Conference on Women, the adoption of the CEDAW Convention and the beginning of the UN Decade for Women.

Women's struggle for the right to command their own bodies, to control their fertility and thereby their whole life started in late 1960s. This issue was brought out of total secrecy and became recognized as a women's basic human right - a revolutionary achievement still in need to be guarded at each and every occasion that "no slipping back" occurs.

Then, in 1995, came the grand consolidation of the past achievements with future aims in the Beijing Platform for Action. While violence against women was openly acknowledged in Nairobi 1985, the issue broke through forcefully in Vienna 1993 and it is an inte-

EQUALITY - DEVELOPMENT - PEACE

Milestones on the Road 1945 - 2005

1945	United Nations Charter
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
1970	Resolution of Concerted International Action for the Advancement of Women (A/RES/2716, XXV)
1975	International Women's Year The World Conference of IWY, Mexico City, World Plan of Action
1976-1985	United Nations Decade for Women (UNDW): Equality, Development and Peace
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination against Women
1980	World Conference of the UNDW, Copenhagen
1985	World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UNDW, Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for Advancement of Women (NFLS), 1985 - 2000.
1993	World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
1994	International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)
1995	World Social Summit for Development, Copenhagen
1995	Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
2000	General Assembly 23rd Special Session "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace in the 21st Century," or Beijing+5, New York Millennium Summit, New York
2005	49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on Beijing+10, New York UN World Summit, New York

gral part of the Beijing PFA, it is still in its many forms the worst plague for women globally. Anyhow from an eternal silence it has become a loudly condemned universal crime everywhere.

The important role of women in sustaining societies during armed conflicts and as major stakeholders in peace has garnered international attention, especially in light of Security Council Resolution 1325. More recently, women's indispensable role in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals was recognized at the highest level during the UN World Summit held in New York from 14-16 September 2005.

These are just a few of the major issues women have brought to the global agenda during the United Nations' 60 years of existence. The UN conferences on women have literally empowered women and given them opportunities to express their views, both on the burning issues of their own life, as well as the issues of general concern in the world. Since the early 1990s women have actively participated in all major UN conferences, not only in those focusing on women. They have acted through official channels and lobbying alike, and in their respective countries they have systematically followed up the implementation of the decisions made by Member States. In fact, women have served the inter-governmental system in these roles since the time of League of Nations, but the scale of their involvement has expanded according to the growth of the inter-governmental system.

The importance of the active participation of women was already well recognized by the UN system when the series of world conferences, the "Global Agenda" for development was planned in the early 1990s, making it no longer possible to ignore the extent and significance of their impact on UN operations. With the ECOSOC Conclusions in 1997, gender mainstreaming was confirmed to be a cross-cutting, integrating and coordinating element to be applied throughout the entire UN system, including the implementation of

the other major conferences and summits. This meant the gender mainstreaming policy would permeate the whole multilateral system and facilitate the integration and coordination of the activities of the UN programmes, funds and specialized agencies.

During the Beijing+10 review and appraisal process, issues such as economic globalization, terms of trade and development, the applications of new technologies, armed conflicts and terrorism, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the resulting consequences on women emerged heavily, although they were not yet topical in 1995. There is obviously a strong need to provide an appropriate opportunity for dealing with these issues among women at the global level.

This leads back to the recurring question: what kind of forum would be needed for dealing with these and other emerging issues appropriately? Would it finally become possible for the UN to organize the Fifth World Conference on Women? Or would it be realistic to contemplate the long-lived idea of having a "Women's Conference on the State of the World" outside and irrespective of inter-governmental plans? When will it be feasible to have another worldwide women's gathering to expand and accelerate the progress achieved and reinvigorate the momentum created in the Beijing+5 and Beijing+10 follow-up processes?

A Global Women's Movement Created

Since the 1970s women have mobilized on a global scale and at an accelerated pace, leading to the birth of a worldwide women's movement. The NGO Tribune in Mexico City in 1975 was described as the "largest consciousness-raising session ever held." The NGO Forum in Nairobi in 1985 has been referred to as the "birth of global feminism" (United Nations, 2000d). *The NGO Alternative Global Report* states that "as we moved beyond the

1980s, it became clear that what we had created was a global women's movement and what we had set in motion was nothing less than a revolution" (CONGO, 2000).

The global conferences of the 1990s were pivotal in the development of a politically-able and astute global women's movement. According to CONGO, "Strengthened by the three women's world conferences of 1975, 1980 and 1985, women moved to the forefront in these conferences [in the 1990s] claiming a space and voice in the resulting policies. These conferences served as training grounds for a new leadership by bringing hundreds of women into the public policy process and resulting, in many countries, in a 'critical mass' of women with political clout."

In past decades the majority of women participating in women's international gatherings were mainly from the Western middle-class, representing the white minority of women from the North. The activism and dynamics of the international women's movement has now shifted to the South. Ever since the Nairobi Conference, the proportion of women from developing countries has increased in UN conferences and their parallel events. Through their enthusiasm, motivation and preparedness for action, Southern women are providing new inspiration and faith.

Improved communications and rising levels of education and knowledge have provided more and more women with the opportunity to take part in world events. In connection with the Beijing+5 process, women were invited by DAW, UNIFEM and INSTRAW through "WomenWatch" to use new information technology as a direct means to communicate online with the inter-governmental system. The same opportunity was opened also in connection with the Beijing+10, albeit in smaller scale. Furthermore, motivation and faith in the importance of participation are growing with empowerment and gaining strength through common actions during parallel events.

The importance of the Beijing PFA for the world's women was accentuated again by the intensity and extent of women's participation in the five-year review and appraisal processes in 2000 and 2005. The campaign for integration of the Beijing PFA and the Millennium Development Goals has been quite a demonstration of competence and strength of the global women's movement. The outcome of this campaign was seen during the 2005 UN World Summit in September 2005 that sought to strengthen the collective response to global challenges in development, in security and in human rights, and to revitalize the UN.

Every Government is Accountable to Women

But what will take place in practice at the country level in the UN Member States? Will documents such as the Beijing PFA and the Millennium Declaration with its eight goals agreed and adopted by governments be implemented? Will cultures change and will inequality, discrimination and violence against women soon be only a memory from the past in every corner of the world?

Everything that takes place within the UN system is based on cooperation between governments and the decisions they approve. Consequently, implementation of these decisions also depends on governments' commitment to realize them in practical terms at home. This is both the strength and the weakness of the UN: the system has no authority to implement decisions directly in any country, nor the power to force any government to comply with the decisions. The only exceptions are decisions by the Security Council and UN Conventions with compliance and enforcement mechanisms.

Ultimately, practical implementation depends on the extent to which the citizens in each Member State are aware of these decisions adopted by their government at the UN on their behalf. Women as citizens can make governments accept their responsibility and

accountability, but only if they know what the PFA and other programmes entail and what these imply in practice in women's lives. The formal decisions made by a world conference are only recommendations. However, they can be regarded as politically binding, particularly when adopted unanimously as was the case with the PFA, the outcome document of Beijing+5 and the Political Declaration of Beijing+10.

The weakest point of women's strategy lies at the national level. Although tens of thousands of women from around the world have participated in the events parallel to the world conferences, they are still only a small fraction of all women. The great majority of women do not know the potential power behind these programmes, platforms and resolutions adopted by their governments. They are not empowered to use them as effective tools in their country to change their lives and the lives of others.

Therefore, an immense amount of work is required to prevent the decisions adopted by governments at the UN from being forgotten to gather dust on shelves. It is our task, of women and men committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, to ensure that governments do not forget their commitments. We should question governments' credibility unless they meet the objectives they have adopted. And when governments change, incoming ones should be made aware of commitments already made since international commitments remain valid in spite of change in governments.

Implementation of the Platform for Action, gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessments have to take place separately in each country. In this process every one of us can take her/his part of the responsibility. It is crucial that the Platform for Action is "operationalized" and transformed into practical action in schools, organizations, political parties and all respective institutions. It is the responsibility of everyone to see to it that governments implement their own decisions. Without citizens' activism and contribution—

and in this case without women's activism and contribution—UN decisions may not be implemented in practice, no matter how good they are on paper.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has commended women's participation and contributions in numerous events. His words are always very encouraging. At the beginning of Beijing+5 Special Session he praised the Beijing PFA as "one of the most remarkable documents since the United Nations Charter itself." And already before the Millennium Summit in 2000 he said that the outcome of the Beijing PFA "will not only be crucial to the rights and lives of women everywhere: it will also be crucial to the achievement of the goals at the Millennium Summit." Then he put the world on notice when he said, "the future of this planet depends on women."

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Annex I

The first session of the United Nations General Assembly in London, 12 February 1946:

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WOMEN OF THE WORLD

“An Open Letter to the women of the world from the women delegates and advisers at the first Assembly of the United Nations:

This first Assembly of the United Nations marks the second attempt of the peoples of the world to live peacefully in a democratic world community. This new chance for peace was won through the joint efforts of men and women working for common ideals of human freedom at a time when the need for united effort broke down barriers of race, creed and sex.

In view of the variety of tasks which women performed so notably and valiantly during the war, we are gratified that seventeen women representatives and advisers, representatives of eleven Member States, are taking part at the beginning of this new phase of international effort. We hope their participation in the work of the United Nations Organization may grow and increase insight and in skill. To this end we call on the Governments of the world to encourage women everywhere to take a more active part in national and international affairs, and on women who are conscious of their opportunities to come forward and share in the work of peace and reconstruction as they did in war and resistance.

We recognise that women in various parts of the world are at different stages of participation in the life of their community, that some of them

are prevented by law from assuming full rights of citizenship, and that they therefore may see their immediate problems somewhat differently.

Finding ourselves in agreement on these points, we wish as a group to advise the women of all our countries of our strong belief that an important opportunity and responsibility confront the women of the United Nations: first, to recognise the progress women have made during the war and to participate actively in the effort to improve the standards of life in their own countries and in the pressing work of reconstruction, so that there will be qualified women ready to accept responsibility when new opportunities arise; second, to train their children, boys and girls alike, to understand world problems and the need for international cooperation, as well as the problems of their own countries; third, not to permit themselves to be misled by anti-democratic movements now or in the future; fourth, to recognise that the goal of full participation in the life and responsibilities of their countries and of the world community is a common objective toward which the women of the world should assist one another.”

Signed by:

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, United States

Mrs. Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux, France

Miss Minerva Bernardino, The Dominican Republic

Mrs. Bodil Begtrup, Denmark

Mrs. Frieda Dalen, Norway

Mrs. H. Verwey, The Netherlands

and 11 other women delegates to the General Assembly

Annex II

Gender Equality Architecture and UN Reforms¹

For submission to the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)²

17 July 2006

This paper briefly outlines the successes and failures of the current UN system in addressing gender equality and women's rights, and puts forth several principles and characteristics that are critical to reforming the gender equality architecture in order to deliver consistent positive gender equality outcomes

I. Introduction: In the last decade, efforts to make the development, human rights and peace/security “mainstreams” work for women have resulted in impressive gains as well as staggering failures. In the ten years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA), a number of strategic partnerships forged between women's movements and policy reformers have placed equity and women's human rights at the heart of global debates in areas such as the International Criminal Court, Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and in the Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality. In some regions, women have made striking gains in elections to local and national government bodies, and in entering public institutions; girls' access to primary education has

1. This paper was commissioned by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). It was drafted by Aruna Rao, Founder-Director, Gender at Work, and substantially revised by CWGL and WEDO.

2. See end of paper for list of endorsing organizations.

increased and women are entering the labour force in larger numbers; access to contraception is much more widespread; gender equality has been mainstreamed in some countries into law reform processes and statistical measures; and violence against women has been recognized as a human rights issue and made a crime in many countries.

However, gains for women's rights are facing growing resistance in many places and too often positive examples are the exception rather than the norm. They usually occur because an individual, a network, an organizational champion, or a unique confluence of "push" factors is responsive and receptive to change. Even then, these changes only come about when women's rights advocates invest extraordinary interest, time and effort and, where required, take significant risks. For instance, it took nearly five years of advocacy by women with support of a small number of donors to get Burundi women included at the peace table and, at the eleventh hour, it was the advocacy of Nelson Mandela that made it finally happen. This ad hoc approach, which too often requires high-level intervention, is not effective in producing consistent positive outcomes to support gender equality and women's human rights.

II. Identifying the Gaps and Problems: Ten years after Beijing and 30 years after the first world conference on women in Mexico City, gender equality has a growing number – but still too few – advocates in the corridors of power at international, national or local levels where critical decisions are made. For decades, women have relied on the United Nations as an important venue for the promotion of human rights and social justice, demanding that the UN set global norms and standards in these areas. Just last year at the World Summit, governments reaffirmed that gender equality is critical to the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals, and re-committed to its promotion in Goal #3. But too often there is insufficient implementation of these commitments, as demonstrated by the failure to achieve universal primary education in 2005—the first MDG target.

Many women's rights advocates now fear that the political championship at a global level for social justice and women's rights is eroding. Evaluation after evaluation shows that countries, bi-lateral donors and the multilateral system consistently fail to prioritize, and significantly under-fund, women's rights and equality work.³ Money talks, and in this case, it has voted with its feet. Equally worrying is the fact that new aid principles stressing national ownership and their accompanying aid modalities such as budget support and sector wide approaches, while laudable in some ways, make it even harder to specifically resource and track gender equality goals.

Current state of Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming at the UN: The present phase of UN reform provides an opportunity to take gender equality from the realm of rhetoric to the practice of reality. Most women's rights advocates agree that the normative frameworks for gender equality and women's human rights – legal frameworks, constitutional guarantees for equality, and gender equality policies – have advanced considerably in many countries as well as within the UN system. However, the lack of implementation and accountability repeatedly undermines these commitments.

"Gender Mainstreaming," promoted widely in the UN after the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, was transformative in its conception. But it has been extremely limited in its implementation. Gender mainstreaming has often only been reluctantly adopted by "mainstream" agencies because top leadership has not adequately supported this agenda; it has too often become a policy of "add women and stir" without questioning basic assumptions, or ways of working.

It has been implemented in an organizational context of hierarchy and agenda setting that has not prioritized women's rights and where women's units usually have limited authority to initiate or monitor

3. UNIFEM Assessment: A/60/62 – E2005/10; UNDP Evaluation of Gender mainstreaming (http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/EO_GenderMainstreaming.pdf).

gender equality work, and no authority to hold people and programmes accountable.

Gender mainstreaming is sometimes even misused to simply mean including men as well as women, rather than bringing transformational change in gender power relations. At best, it has meant such things as adopting a gender policy, creating a gender unit to work on organizational programmes, mandatory gender training, and increasing the number of women staff and managers. In the worst cases, gender mainstreaming has been used to stop funding women's work and/or to dismantle many of the institutional mechanisms such as the women's units and advisors created to promote women in development, in the name of integration. Both national and international institutions have had this experience.

The UN system is replete with examples of structures and personnel mandated to do gender equality work that are under-resourced and under-prioritized. They constantly must fight an uphill battle as a result of their low place in organizational hierarchies, small size, limited mandate, and the lack of autonomy and connection to key constituencies. Currently, there are several under-resourced agencies focused exclusively on women's issues (United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)). For example, UNIFEM, the only unit with a (limited) field presence, is a fund, not an independent operational agency, that reports to the UNDP [United Nations Development Programme] administrator, which means that it doesn't have a seat at high-level decision-making tables. Gender units – from OSAGI to those in the specialized agencies – have limited ability to provide critical feedback or speak out on gender equality performance; too often these special advisor or gender focal points in the UN are used to defend the status quo rather than change it. Their limited budgets, their limited access to

decision making, and their limited terms of reference do not position them as critical players in their own entities.

Other larger agencies, including UNDP, UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund], UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund], UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization], the High Commissioners for human rights and refugees and others, sometimes do important work on gender equality, but it is only a part of their mandate, and often receives low priority. According to a 2002 UNIFEM/UNDP scan, of the 1,300 UN staff who have gender equality in their terms of reference, nearly 1,000 of these are gender focal points that are relatively junior, have little substantive expertise, no budgets, and who deal with gender as one element of a large portfolio. In other words, these structures are designed to fail or falter.

Funding for gender equality work within both mainstream agencies and women's specific mechanisms such as UNIFEM is grossly inadequate for the task at hand. In 2002, UNIFEM's resources totaled US\$36 million. In comparison, UNFPA's budget for the same year was US\$373 million; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' budget was US\$64 million and UNAIDS' [Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS] budget was US\$92 million. UNICEF's budget in the same year totaled US\$1,454 million. The message is clear: investment in women is of the lowest order. Most mainstream agencies cannot even track how much money they spend on women rights and the achievement of gender equality.

With decades of experience and in view of the challenges ahead, there is ample knowledge of how the UN system can be better organized and structured to facilitate positive change for women and families. Currently there are a variety of options that are being discussed. We see some as a backward step, such as the absorption of UNIFEM into a larger agency such as UNDP, while others would bring only cosmetic change, such as simply combining current man-

dates, activities and budgets of UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW. These we reject.

We believe that the current system is no longer acceptable. Therefore, we have focused on the approaches that have the greatest potential to bring about coherence and positive systemic change. Our preferred approach would be the creation of a well-resourced independent entity with normative, operational and oversight capacity, a universal country presence and led by an Under-Secretary-General. An alternative approach would be the creation of a specialized coordinating body with similar functions, drawing on the UNAIDS model.

III. Recommendations for Transforming the UN Gender Equality Architecture: There are many ways to carry out these approaches, which this paper does not spell out in detail. However, whatever approach is taken, the principal functions and characteristics that we believe are essential to an effective gender equality machinery are described below. Such an entity must be a strong, **women-specific entity** mandated to work across the whole UN system – one that has the capacity to lead, monitor and to act as a driving force, or catalyst, for the advancement of gender equality and women’s rights, at both the global and country level.

This system-wide women-specific entity must perform three critical functions. It must have **policy-setting** responsibilities on substantive issues of gender equality and women’s rights. It must have the capacity to monitor, with the **authority to ensure accountability**, on gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system. Finally, it must have a **field presence to conduct and shape UN operational activities** to ensure that gender equality and women’s rights programming are carried out effectively. This universal country presence is essential to bridge the biggest gap between commitments to women’s human rights norms and the realities of implementation.

In order to function effectively, this entity must be backed up with several critical components or characteristics. It must have **autonomy**; it must be **adequately and sufficiently resourced** (financially and in terms of personnel with high levels of substantive expertise); and it must have the **authority and clout** necessary for the entity to function as a substantive and political leader for gender equality at the global and national level.

A: The Framework for a Women-Specific Lead Entity

Women-specific lead entity: Realizing women’s rights and gender equality needs clear leadership on both the policy and the operational side and we believe that a more explicit and synergistic relationship between normative and operational work can best be achieved under one umbrella. Without a lead entity, gender equality continues to be everybody’s and nobody’s responsibility. Gender mainstreaming will work best only when it co-exists alongside a strong women’s agency that can demonstrate leadership and advocate at the highest levels and hold the system accountable. An entity with system-wide reach will improve the sharing of information, expertise and follow-up between the normative and operational arms. The artificial separation between the normative and operational does not work in practice, leaving the normative function isolated from work on the ground where real conditions inform policy and programme requirements. Moreover, policy advocacy has too long eclipsed the equally important business of institutional and operational change needed to deliver development benefits to women.

Despite the arguments of some critics, having a strong women-specific entity will not “ghettoize” women’s issues. Just as other issues have clear leadership (e.g., ILO [International Labour Organization] for labour, UNICEF for children, and UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] for refugees),

gender equality issues also needs a driving force. This is not a contradiction. The ILO does not ghettoize issues of labour. Just because UNICEF focuses on children doesn't mean that World Food Programme should not distribute food to children or that ILO cannot deal with child labour. At the same time, making it the mandate of every agency should not preclude resourcing a specific entity with a mandate to lead, catalyze and monitor the work. Every agenda needs a political driver to lead it and the gender equality agenda is no exception.

System-wide responsibility for gender equality: Effectiveness of such a high level women-specific entity is contingent not only on its own vision and capacity but also on the strengthened commitment (as measured through prioritization, resourcing and results) of existing agencies in the whole United Nations system toward gender equality goals. Women's lives around the world are touched by decisions ranging from small arms trade, climate control and macroeconomic policy to water and sanitation, health and education. The task is too broad and nuanced to be addressed by any one agency alone. In the case of HIV/AIDS for example, the whole UN system is mandated to address it with the support of UNAIDS (including a well-resourced global fund for HIV/AIDS) and similarly the whole system is mandated to address human rights with the support of a recently expanded OHCHR [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights]. So, too, for gender equality, system-wide responsibility is critical.

B: The Key Functions

Policy Development and Advocacy: The entity should have a comprehensive mandate dedicated to the full range of women's rights and concerns, derived from CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and other relevant policies. It must be able to create and set coherent global policy for gender equality across the UN system and

advocate for necessary changes at both policy and institutional levels. While the primary change must focus on implementation and accountability for commitments that exist, gender discrimination is still embedded in many legal and policy frameworks at all levels and normative work must continue to be a priority.

Operations: It is critical for this entity to work at the country and regional levels on strategic thinking, constituency building and programming. To enhance its leadership role, this entity must provide high quality substantive expertise buttressed by research and practice on the gender dimensions of a range of substantive areas from macroeconomic policy and governance to violence against women and sexual and reproductive rights. It should implement programmes, facilitate innovation, share lessons learned and enable institutional learning throughout the system. This work must be done in close collaboration with women's organizations and networks.

Monitoring and Accountability: Along with policy development and operations, the lead entity must be able to develop a corresponding action plan and set of performance indicators that are consistently tracked. It must have the capacity to monitor and the power to ensure accountability, in the form of a mechanism that would function at all levels of the UN system. Developing partnerships with NGOs and women's rights networks at global, regional and country level is a critical part of the governance structure of this accountability mechanism.

High-level systems at the country and regional levels need to develop and implement specific accountability mechanisms, incentives for promoting work on gender equality, and take action for non-compliance. The institutional architecture at the country level must be held accountable for gender equality goals using agreed-upon benchmarks not only for the process of gender mainstreaming but for progress toward women's rights and equality goals. Incentive systems are key as well as hiring more women in shaping the way staff

responds to these issues.

C: The Key Characteristics of a Women-Specific Entity

Agency Autonomy: In order to ensure accountability for gender equality and women's rights efforts, there needs to be an independent lead entity with the authority to take responsibility to tackle these issues and promote gender commitments effectively. Such an entity cannot be subsumed under another agency and must have its own governance structure.

High-level Leadership: The formation of a strong entity with the potential to drive and affect change requires a major up scaling of power, authority and resources. To guarantee this organizational stature and a voice for women at the UN decision-making table, it should be led by an Under-Secretary-General with substantive expertise in gender equality. In addition, this entity must participate in high-level decision-making bodies, such as the Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB), High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS).

Universal Country Presence: Every UN Country Team (UNCT), every regional centre, every UN peacekeeping mission needs to have a gender equality expert or team that is represented at the heads of agency level where decisions are made and must have an independent budget.

Adequate Resources: The lead entity must have substantial, regularized and predictable resources adequate to implement the mandate. This also includes well-trained substantive personnel at all levels of the UN system, and at the global and country level. An expansion in resources for work on gender equality, as well as concrete tracking mechanisms for allocations and expenditures in

every UN organization and every UNCT is a necessary component of reform. All UN agencies must also do gender budgeting to make transparent the resources they are allocating to gender equality goals. Funding for gender equality goals must come out of regular budgets and not extra-budgetary sources alone and new ways of leveraging funding for this work will need to be explored. For example, the United Nations should consider allocating a percentage of all voluntary contributions to operational activities for gender equality.

Donors need to reinforce implementation of these principles rather than create escape hatches for them. Too often, while donors are calling for gender mainstreaming, they provide cost-sharing resources to mainstream agencies, in spite of the fact that these agencies consistently fail to allocate core resources to gender equality. This takes funds away from women's rights advocates and encourages mainstream agencies to "hold out" on investing their core resources.

IV. Conclusion: This paper has outlined the structure, principal functions and characteristics of an effective gender equality machinery for the UN system. Making this vision a reality must involve not only governments and the UN system but also the creative thinking and vast experience of women's organizations and networks around the world. Time is running out and we must act together now.

Endorsing Organizations

1. ABANTU for Development (People for Development), Ghana
2. Action Canada for Population and Development, Canada
3. African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET)
4. African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)
5. Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh
6. Amnesty International

7. Asia Pacific Women's Watch
8. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
9. Aurat Foundation, Pakistan
10. Baha'i International Community
11. Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)
12. Concertacion Interamericana de Mujeres Activistas por los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (CIMA)
13. DAWN
14. Empower Children & Communities against Abuse (ECCA), Uganda
15. Engender, South Africa
16. Feminist Coalition, Serbia
17. Feminist League, Kazakhstan
18. Flora Tristan, Centro de la Mujer Peruana, Peru
19. FOKUS – Norwegian Forum for Women and Development
20. Fondo Alquimia, Chile
21. Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan
22. Gender Statistics Users Group (GSUG), UK
23. Global Fund for Women
24. INFORM Human rights Documentation Centre, Sri Lanka
25. Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), Russia
26. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
27. International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA)
28. International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
29. International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI)
30. International Planned Parenthood – Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF-WHR)
31. International Women's Rights Action Watch - Asia-Pacific Region
32. International Women's Tribune Center (IWTC)
33. Japan Women's Watch, Japan
34. KULU – Women and Development, Denmark
35. MADRE
36. National Women's Studies and Information Centre, Moldova

37. Network of Women in Black, Serbia
38. North America Masaba Cultural Association(NAMCA), Uganda
39. Norwegian Network for Women and the UN, Norway
40. Open Society Institute
41. Rights & Democracy, Canada
42. Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre, Canada
43. Rozan, Pakistan
44. Saathi, Nepal
45. Shirkat Gah – Women's Resource Centre, Pakistan
46. SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, USA
47. SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Montenegro
48. South East Asia Women Watch (SEAWWatch), Philippines
49. Stavropol Regional Human Rights Center, Russia
50. Thai Women Watch, Thailand
51. Toronto Women's Call to Action, Canada
52. UNIFEM/USA (U.S. Committee for UNIFEM)
53. Women and Media Collective, Sri Lanka
54. Women and Society, Bosnia and Herzegovina
55. Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)
56. Women in Peacebuilding Network – Africa (WIPNET-A)
57. Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
58. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
59. Women's Rights and Gender Equality Organizations, Armenia
60. WOMANKIND Worldwide

Annex III

UNITED NATIONS WORLD CONFERENCES

United Nations World Conferences (1972-1990)

Note: The titles in italics indicate conferences that focused on women or paid special attention to women-related aspects of the subjects concerned.

UN Conference on the Human Environment
Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972

UN World Population Conference
Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974

World Food Conference
Rome, 5-19 November 1974

World Conference of the International Women's Year
Mexico City, 19 June-2 July 1975

HABITAT: UN Conference on Human Settlements
Vancouver, 31 May-11 June 1976

*Tripartite World Conference on Employment, Income Distribution,
Social Progress and International Division of Labour*
Geneva, June 1976

Conference on Economic Cooperation Among Developing Countries
Mexico City, 13-22 September 1976
UN Water Conference

Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977

UN Conference on Desertification
Nairobi, 29 August-9 September 1977

World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination
Geneva, 14-25 August 1978

UN Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing
Countries
Buenos Aires, 30 August-12 September 1978

Primary Health Care Conference
Alma Ata, September 1978

World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
Rome, 12-20 July 1979

UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development
Vienna, 20-31 August 1979

World Conference of the UN Decade for Women
Copenhagen, 14-30 July 1980

UN Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy
Nairobi, 10-21 August 1981

UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries
Paris, 1-14 September 1981

*World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the
UN Decade for Women*
Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985

International Conference on Relationship Between Disarmament

and Development

New York, 24 August-11 September 1987

World Summit for Children

New York, 29-30 September 1990

United Nations World Conferences in the 1990s “The Global Agenda”

The global women’s movement made a significant impact on all the following conferences.

UN Conference on Environment and Development

Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992

World Conference on Human Rights

Vienna, 14-25 June 1993

International Conference on Population and Development

Cairo, 5-13 September 1994

World Summit for Social Development

Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995

Fourth World Conference on Women

Beijing, 4-15 September 1995

Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II)

Istanbul, 4-15 June 1996

World Food Summit

Rome, 13-17 November 1996

United Nations Major Conferences 2000-2005

World Summit for Social Development and Beyond: Achieving Social Development for All in a Globalized World (Copenhagen+5), Geneva, 26-30 June 2000

United Nations Millennium Summit,

New York, 6-8 September 2000

United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects,

New York, 9-20 July 2001

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance,

Durban, 31 August - 8 September 2001

International Conference on Financing for Development,

Monterrey, 18-22 March 2002

World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 26

August-4 September 2002

World Summit on the Information Society, Phase I, Geneva, 10-12 December 2003; Phase II, Tunisia, 16-18 November 2005

United Nations 2005 World Summit, New York, 14-16 September 2005

Annex IV

SELECTED UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL NGO RESOURCES

United Nations

Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
2 UN Plaza, DC2-12th Floor
New York NY 10017, United States
fax +1-212/963 3463
e-mail <daw@un.org>
website (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw)

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor
New York NY 10017, United States
telephone +1-212/906 6400
fax +1-212/906 6705
e-mail <unifem@undp.org>
website (www.unifem.undp.org)

United Nations International Research and Training Institute
for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
Calle César Nicolás Penson 102-A
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
telephone +1-809/685 2111
fax +1-809/685 2117
e-mail <instraw.hq.sd@codetel.net.do>
website (www.un-instraw.org)

Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of
Women (OSAGI)
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

2 UN Plaza, 12th Floor
New York NY 10017, United States
e-mail <osagi@un.org>
website (www.un.org/osagi)

Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)
2 UN Plaza, 12th Floor
New York NY 10017, United States
e-mail <ianwge@un.org>
website (www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/index.html)

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)
In Geneva:
UN-NGLS, Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
telephone +41-22/917 2076
fax: +41-22/917 0432
e-mail <ngls@unctad.org>
website (www.un-ngls.org)

In New York:
UN-NGLS
Room DC1-1106, United Nations
New York NY 10017, United States
telephone +1-212/963 3125
fax +1-212/963 8712
e-mail <ngls@un.org>

International NGOs

Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
215 Spadina Avenue, Suite 150
Toronto, Ontario W5T 2C7, Canada
telephone +1-416/594 3773

fax +1-416/594 0330
e-mail <awid@awid.org>
website (www.awid.org)

African Women's Development and Communications Network
(FEMNET)

PO Box 54562
Nairobi, Kenya
telephone +254-2/741320/741301
fax +254-2/742927
e-mail <femnet@elci.gn.apc.org>

Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

PO Box 442
Tunapuna, Trinidad & Tobago
telephone +1-868/663 8670
fax +1-868/663 6482
e-mail <cafrainfo@wow.net>
website (www.cafra.org)

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

Douglass College
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
160 Ryders Lane
New Brunswick NJ 08901-8555, United States
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Acronyms

ACGD	African Center for Gender and Development
ACW	African Center for Women
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CAFRA	Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CLADEM	Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights
CONGO	Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with ECOSOC
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CWGL	Center for Women's Global Leadership
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communications Network
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GA	General Assembly
GAD	Gender and Development
GDI	Gender-sensitive Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
IACW	Inter-American Commission of Women
IANWGE	Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality

IASC	Inter-Allied Suffrage Conference
IAW	International Alliance of Women
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICW	International Council of Women
ICWG	International Cooperative Women's Guild
IFBPW	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
IFUW	International Federation of University Women
IFWW	International Federation of Working Women
IGO	Inter-governmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
ITCs	Information and Communication Technologies
IWHC	International Women's Health Coalition
IWRAW	International Women's Rights Action Watch
IWTC	International Women's Tribune Centre
IWY	International Women's Year
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NFLS	Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women
NGLS	Non-Governmental Liaison Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women
PFA	Platform for Action
POA	Programme of Action
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	United Nations Conference on Human Environment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in Development
WIDE	Women in Development Europe
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WILFP	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WLUML	Women Living Under Muslim Laws
WSSD	World Summit for Social Development
WYWCA	World Young Women's Christian Association

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) is an interagency programme of the UN system that facilitates dialogue, cooperation and constructive engagement between the UN system and the NGO community worldwide on global development issues. NGLS has offices in Geneva and New York.

The work of NGLS is currently supported by:

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- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Department of Public Information (UN/DPI)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
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- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
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- World Health Organization (WHO)

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**UNITED NATIONS NON-GOVERNMENTAL
LIAISON SERVICE (NGLS)**

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), established in 1975, is a jointly-financed interagency programme of the UN system. NGLS programme activities deal with the full UN agenda on sustainable development, human emergencies and refugees, peace and disarmament and the Least Developed Countries and operate across the entire UN system of agencies, programmes, funds and departments concerned with these issues. NGLS works with national and regional NGOs from developing and industrialized countries and international NGOs.

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