

# South Asia Statement on Beijing +15

**Weaving Wisdom Confronting  
Crises Forging the Future**

**adopted at**

New Delhi, India  
**18 December, 2009**

## STATEMENT of the South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15

We, the participants (Number from Countries) of the South Asia Consultation on Beijing+15 *having* met in Delhi on 17 and 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2009 *reviewed* progress on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on women by the governments of the region, and *reflected* on the concerns of the women of South Asia. Democracy means rule of people, and women must be equal participants in the running of the country. If women are not in its mechanism, it is not democracy.

We acknowledge some of the measures that have been taken since the Beijing Conference in 1995 such as:

- the ratification of CEDAW, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the commitment to the MDGs
- increased political representation of women, with the exception of Sri Lanka, and legislative measures to address discrimination against women *particularly the enactment of legislation on domestic violence (with the exception of....)*
- *Nascent efforts to engender developmental programs*
- the efforts in place to improve the female literacy rates, the health status of women, and to address poverty
- the entry of women into diverse professions

We also acknowledge the contribution of the women's movement and civil society organizations in their continued and relentless efforts to lobby and advocate for ensuring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

However, we note with concern:

- the roll back by states of their responsibilities to their citizens particularly in the core social sectors of livelihood, health, education and agriculture.
- *the inability of governments to ensure security and justice*
- the partisan role played by international financial agencies and UN bodies, that negatively impact our development, economies and social structures
- the interplay of fundamentalisms and assertion of identities
- *the inadequacy of measures taken to improve the status of women* since the lives of women and girls in the region remain largely unchanged.

We express deep disappointment that our governments have failed to address the major underlying causes for the continued unequal status of women in our region.

South Asian governments must address the contributory factors which are:

- the dominant development paradigm of a market driven economy
- *fundamentalism in the name of culture and tradition*
- internationalization of conflict and the war industry
- climate change and its impact on sustainable development, food and nutritional security and livelihoods.

The dominant development paradigm adopted by all our governments has resulted in the large scale economic displacement of women, disruption of the social fabric, increase in the burden of work and responsibilities of women as family sustainers which has adversely affected their nutrition and health status.

Women lack of ownership of assets such as land/property, lack of opportunities, lack of access to and control over resources account for their disempowerment.

Man made and natural disasters and globalization of the economy has resulted in food insecurity, threatened livelihoods, etc.

*Regressive cultural and customary practices have shrunk women's democratic spaces thus making it difficult for them to access the tools of progress .Such discriminatory practices while underscoring patriarchy are a threat to women's person and lives.*

Globalised militarization coupled with regional and global vested interests has made South Asia the theatre for the play of both inter and intra-state problems resulting in resource based conflicts. This leads to the suspension of the normal rule of law and the legitimization of repression affecting the freedom of movement and control of sexuality of women. Decreased personal security, increase in rape and sexual abuse, violence and harassment torture, arrest, detention, disappearances have a specific impact on women. This also results in a culture of impunity and also increases in incidents of domestic violence – a continuum of violence from the state, society to the family.

Geography coupled with high levels of poverty and population density has rendered South Asia especially vulnerable to climate change. In the last two decades, 50% South Asians( more than 750 million people), have been affected by natural disasters. With climate change the frequency and incidence of such natural disasters is projected to increase. Deaths from natural disasters are directly related to women's economic and social rights.

Women's lives are an integrated whole and all their concerns whether for poverty, education, health, violence, human rights are impacted by the interconnectedness of all these areas and their underlying causes enumerated above.

To confront these challenges and crises and to forge a better future, we envision a South Asia that is truly democratic, just and peaceful where:

- equality of citizenship is ensured so *that identity, dignity and entity of women and men are respected equally*
- *human rights are not violated in the name of culture tradition or custom*
- forces of capitalism are controlled and sustainable development becomes the touchstone for all policies and programmes
- *women have equal and equitable access to the benefits of development*
- women's daily lives are improved and secure in the home and the workplace
- *food and nutritional security of the women is ensured*
- education is emancipatory
- *access to adequate health care is ensured*

- democratic spaces for women are expanded
- women are ensured participation in decision making in all institutions
- *peace prevails with the end of conflicts*

*We, the participants (Number from Countries) of the South Asia Consultation on Beijing+ 15 resolved to initiate a SAARC Women's Assembly which will be an effective platform for women of the region to interact, cooperate and network on issues of commonality.*

*South Asian Women: Together for Equality with Dignity, Progress with Sustainability*