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**REPORT OF FOURTH SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL MEETING  
'COMMEMORATING BEIJING'  
PARO, BHUTAN, MAY 2003**

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It gives me great pleasure to share the proceedings and the outcomes of the Fourth South Asia Regional Meeting, 'Commemorating Beijing', which was held in Paro, Bhutan in 2003, through this report.



The biennial regional review process was initiated by UNIFEM in the year immediately following Beijing, in an effort to preserve the momentum generated at Beijing. The process is a collaborative one, involving a close partnership with Governments of the South Asia region, the SAARC Secretariat, representatives from women's groups, gender experts, members of UN agencies, and key regional institutions. The fact that these reviews are jointly hosted by governments of the region and UNIFEM reflects a unique trust as well as a commitment towards the shared goal of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), as completely as possible. The fact that they have been held at such regular intervals is yet another measure of the level of commitment that marks the South Asia region. It is perhaps the only region where such reviews are held so consistently.

Indeed the success of the review process goes entirely to these special partnerships. In addition to tracking progress on implementation of the BPFA, the meetings provide space for collective introspection, the opportunity to identify gaps and challenges and to formulate a future framework for action. Giving participants a chance to showcase their commitment, it encourages coordination and regional cooperation on initiatives and programmes related to gender equality, gender justice and women's empowerment. Facilitating the process of regional sharing and learning, it draws upon regional trends and analysis to arrive at a regional prioritization of key concerns, as well as picking up on new and emerging issues of concern. Encouraging frank exchange and dialogue, this mechanism provides a unique platform for promoting gender rights.

Each biennial regional review in its own special way re-kindles the dynamism of the Beijing process and the dream encapsulated in the Beijing Platform for Action. This was evident in the meeting at Paro, so graciously co-hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan and captured in this publication. We have tried to produce as substantively and cohesively as possible, the entire proceedings of the meeting, so that not only is the milestone recorded, but also outreach facilitated to a much wider audience, providing as well, a take-off point for the next step.

At the Biennial Regional meeting at Paro, participants took stock of progress made on the last strategic document (The Maldives Forward Moving Strategies), and strategized on areas of concern. While being a continuation of the process of regional sharing and learning, it provided an opportunity to focus on key regional priorities, identified at Maldives. These included: trafficking in women and girls, gender analysis of budgets, knowledge-based advocacy on CEDAW and engendering the census processes in South Asia. The Report captures the panel discussions organized on these

issues and the presentations made by countries vis-à-vis implementation of the BPFA. It records the rich deliberations, tracing the journey of presentations, discussions and recommendations, which ended in the formulation of the Bhutan Forward Moving Strategies. These provide the beginning for the Fifth South Asia Regional Conference, scheduled to be held in Islamabad, in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan.

The Meeting represented an important turning point of this decade. On the one hand, it noted the considerable development that has occurred in the region and on the other; it recognized the continuing challenges in the realization of gender equality and women's rights with respect to the gendered impact of economic globalization and the resultant feminization of poverty, issues of unsafe and forced migration and increased trafficking in women and children, the inviolability of women's human rights, the need to develop gender budgets with a gender equality perspective and to intensify efforts to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS, using a multi-sectoral approach and building the capacity of individuals, institutions and networks in the South Asia region.

This Report presents an important step towards the next review, which will be just prior to the Beijing + 10 Review at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2005. The Beijing + 10 process, of which this is a part, provides a tremendous opportunity to once again turn the spotlight on the issue of gender equality. All stakeholders - the member states, UN and bilateral agencies, women's organizations, NGOs, activists and others who made pledges to the millions of women in the world, through the dynamics of the Beijing Conference and its build-up have the chance to use this opportunity to the optimum.

We hope this report will help us to re-look at issues, assisting us in pinning down the stumbling blocks and in effectively strategizing for the future. As in the past, our expectation is that boundaries will continue to be enlarged through this mechanism, commitment obtained and newer issues pegged to BPFA and CEDAW.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all the Governments of South Asia and our partners for their active participation, positive approach and lively debates at this Fourth South Asia Regional meeting in the true spirit of Beijing. I extend my heartfelt thanks to my team for the tremendous synergy they brought in hosting the meeting. I would like to acknowledge them and thank my colleague, Ms. Gita Gupta for putting together this comprehensive report.

Chandni Joshi  
Regional Programme Director  
7<sup>th</sup> April 2004

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, provided tremendous impetus to the advancement of women the world over. The Beijing Platform for Action (PFA), with its potential to transform women's lives, has been central to UNIFEM's activities. In an effort to keep the spirit of Beijing alive as also to track progress in the region, UNIFEM-South Asia Regional Office in collaboration with the Government of India hosted *Commemorating Beijing*, a review meeting which was held in New Delhi in September 1996. The meeting brought together governments, NGOs, and members of civil society. The main objective of this review meeting was to facilitate a participatory and collaborative South Asian regional dialogue on key issues concerning women's empowerment and to share experiences and perspectives. A strong recommendation of the meeting was that UNIFEM should host such meetings every alternate year to assist the process of following up on the implementation of the PFA in the South Asia region.

The second meeting, *Commemorating Beijing II*, was held in Kathmandu in 1998 in collaboration with His Majesty's Government of Nepal. In addition to tracking progress on the implementation of the PFA, the second biennial review sought to formulate a regional strategy to expedite its implementation. Regional partners and representatives shared modalities and experiences of gender mainstreaming carried out by different countries in their planning process. The review provided a solid opportunity for a thorough assessment of the progress on commitments, allocation of resources, obstacles and barriers to women's advancement, emerging trends, and required future actions.

*Commemorating Beijing III* was held at Bandos Island in 2000 in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs & Social Security, Government of Maldives. In addition to the past practice of sharing experiences and best practices, this review focused on two key regional priorities CEDAW implementation and reporting and combating the alarming rise in the trafficking of women and children. The meeting also provided an opportunity to collectively unpack the Beijing + Five Outcome Document in the South Asian context.

*Commemorating Beijing IV* was held at Paro in May 2003 in collaboration with the Royal Government of Bhutan. While being a continuation of the process of regional sharing and learning, it provided an opportunity for observations, insights and debate on the post Beijing + Five within the regional context. It also provided the chance to assess the opportunities for and impediments to the progress of South Asian women. The meeting sought to:

1. To identify and reiterate key regional priorities
2. To take stock and strategize at a regional level on key concerns, which included:
  - Trafficking in women and girls

- Impact of globalization
- Gender analysis of budgets
- Knowledge-based advocacy on CEDAW
- Engendering the census process

In addition, the regional review process provides a unique accountability mechanism, which has been successfully used by governments and civil society as a strategy to address the BPFA and CEDAW. These participatory and transparent review meetings between Governments and women's groups have entailed a process of introspection, gap identification, addressing challenges and developing a common South Asia agenda of priorities for action. This process has also successfully facilitated cross regional peer learning and sharing of best practices.

The Fourth South Asia Regional Meeting, 'Commemorating Beijing', was held at Paro, Bhutan, in collaboration with the Royal Government of Bhutan. The inaugural session took place on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2003 at Hotel Olathang, which crests a hill overlooking the beautiful Paro valley. Held at dusk, the event was ushered in with a traditional Bhutanese invocation, weaving a unique magic to the prelude to the conference.

The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency, Mr. Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji, Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Other eminent dignitaries included the SAARC Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Q.A.M.A. Rahim, Ministers and officials from the Royal Government of Bhutan, including Ms. Neten Zhangmo, Cabinet Secretary, and representatives from the Foreign Ministry, the Multilateral Division, the SAARC Division, the Planning Commission, the High Court, the Agriculture Ministry and Health and Education Ministry; Ministers of Women's Development from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan; Secretaries of the Ministry of Women's Affairs from the SAARC countries; senior government officials, key gender experts, civil society members and eminent members of women's groups from the region; Ms. Kunzang Chungyalpa, Chief, Asia Pacific Section, UNIFEM New York; members from the UN system in Bhutan, led by Dr. Orapin Singhadej of the WHO, and members of the press were also in attendance.



Welcoming all the distinguished delegates, Ms. Chandni Joshi, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM, in her welcome address expressed special gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan for co-hosting the biennial meeting and deep appreciation to H.E. Mr. Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji for his presence and support.

Ms. Joshi set the context of the meeting, by reiterating the regional priorities, which had been identified at the third biennial regional meeting held at Bandos Island in the Maldives in 2000, viz., the priorities of trafficking, gender analysis of budgets, knowledge-based advocacy on CEDAW and engendering census exercises in South Asia. This meeting, she said seeks to collectively take stock of the progress made toward reaching the goals set in Maldives, as well as to unpack the reasons of why feminized poverty persists.

Recalling the leadership role played by countries of South Asia in guiding international processes towards gender equality, she said this is also reflected in the concurrence given by SAARC countries to the MoU between SAARC and UNIFEM. This serves to further reinforce the commitments made in the Outcome Document of the Beijing + Five Review, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the Millennium Summit in 2000 and the Maldives Forward Moving Strategies.

South Asia is marked by diverse strengths “a strong commitment for gender justice, a great synergy of engagement among Governments, Parliamentarians, NGOs and the women's movement and considerable institutional development related to gender.” Emphasizing this, she said, the region has been witness to increased compliance of international standards like CEDAW and significant judicial and legislative activism, made apparent by the growing numbers of gender-friendly judgments. “The adoption of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution at the SAARC Summit, 2001 is a quantum leap in the history of the region”, she said. The daunting challenges in South Asia, she concluded, are juxtaposed with phenomenal strengths, and it is of the greatest importance to find that special push, which is needed, to transform the Beijing dream into a reality.



Representing the UN System in Bhutan, Dr. Orapin Singhadej of the WHO, emphasized the importance of following up on the Platform for Action (PFA) in her remarks. Speaking of the Beijing + 5 Review, she said UNIFEM's initiatives to follow-up on the PFA at the regional level in collaboration with governments are of equal importance. Giving an overview of the situation of women in Bhutan, she said, “socio-economic policies and strategies, and ratification of international instruments such as CEDAW and CRC, confirm the very high value attached to women and children in Bhutan.” The people of the Kingdom of Bhutan enjoy a relatively equal status, irrespective of gender, in both law and local practices.

She informed that the RGoB has taken several initiatives to mitigate potential gender disparities in the areas of literacy, employment, and decision-making positions in the public sector and representation in elected offices. Elaborating on this, she mentioned the Gender Baseline Study, the preparation and submission of the CEDAW Report, establishment of a network of Gender Focal Points across Government Ministries and

NGOs and the commitment of the RGoB to the MDGs. With Beijing + 10 approaching, it is important to track and document progress in the implementation of the PFA. The initiative to co-host the meeting with UNIFEM is a reflection of the commitment to gender equity, she said.

The SAARC Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Q.A.M.A. Rahim, in his address, acknowledged that though women constitute half of the world population, they do not enjoy equal status in terms of rights and opportunities. However, there is now a growing realization

“that no real progress of humankind is possible without the active involvement and equal participation of women in the mainstream of the development



process.” Stressing the importance of concerted efforts at national, regional and international levels, the SAARC Secretary General traced the journey of women's advancement through UN-led initiatives from Mexico to Beijing via Copenhagen and Nairobi. Despite commitment of SAARC countries to the PFA, he observed that women in South Asia face a multitude of problems, which include low economic independence, contributing to exploitation and domestic violence, as well as lower levels of education and vocational skills. It is important, he emphasized, for the progress in the implementation of the PFA to be monitored and reviewed, a process towards which UNIFEM's biennial process is very useful.

Tracing SAARC's initiatives to promote women's empowerment, the SAARC Secretary General gave a historical overview. This included the SAARC Integrated Programme of Action (SIPA) in 1986, which established the Technical Committee on Women in Development and its merger with the Technical Committee on Social Development, with the reorganization of SIPA in 1999. Among its many achievements, it formulated a regional plan of action for women. To highlight the plight of the Girl Child, 1990 was designated the SAARC Year of the Girl Child and the decade of 1991-2000 was observed as the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child. The current decade (2001-2010) is being observed as the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child. He spotlighted the Eleventh Summit in Kathmandu 2002, as an important landmark in addressing issues related to women. This witnessed the signing of two important Conventions: the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the Convention on Regional

Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. (The Summit also saw the signing of the MoU with UNIFEM to institutionalize co-operation between SAARC and UNIFEM). In addition, the Summit directed the formation of an advocacy group and of a regional task force to advance the social status of women and children. The Secretary General informed that the SAARC Social Charter, currently being reviewed by Member States is a further contribution to the advancement of women.



Ms. Kunzang Chungyalpa, UNIFEM Asia Pacific Chief, in her remarks referred to the change in the world order, post September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. This has led to the emergence of

several issues, the gender dimensions of which need to be specifically noted in order to evoke an effective response. She identified three overriding current global trends - globalization, national fragmentation and conflict and problems without borders. Focusing on globalization, she commented on its gender dimensions and its unequal benefits. She reiterated the words of UNIFEM Executive Director “We must make globalization work for all women, so that those relegated to badly paid jobs in the informal and casual sectors, or struggling for livelihoods in poor, rural areas can benefit.”

Elaborating on fragmentation, she spoke of the mobilization around ethnicity, language and religion, the increase in intra-state conflicts and of the rise in domestic violence, despite the gains made in terms of international frameworks and national plans of action. Focusing on problems without borders, she identified trafficking in arms, drugs, women and children, the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS and SARS. Highlighting the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS, she said that governments, by dismantling social services and social protection are passing the costs to the domestic sector, where women bear most of the care burden. “It is important”, she said, “that these invisible costs and contributions, are entered into the economic calculus so that the national economic policies reflect on-the-ground realities more realistically”.

She stated that women's empowerment and gender equality is not only one of the eight Millennium Development Goals, but it is also recognized as being central to achieving the other goals in the Millennium Declaration, adopted by Heads of 189 countries. Though 171 countries have ratified CEDAW, the challenge lies in ensuring that the

commitments made in the BPFA and the CEDAW are implemented. “An intersection between rights and economics is crucial for this and ...gender budget could be a useful tool towards this”, she said. Women's economic rights can be advanced and the negative impacts of globalization countered by macro-economic frameworks, which recognize the paid and unpaid work of women and by continuing the work on gender statistics and assessment of paid and unpaid work. She concluded by voicing her confidence in the meeting, in terms of new innovative thinking, in drawing commonalities in the region and in providing future direction to UNIFEM's work in the region.

The Hon'ble Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji, Prime Minister of Bhutan, in his inaugural address, commended UNIFEM's leadership in continuing the Beijing Dialogue.



“Women's issue is not women's issue alone but a societal issue”, he said. Speaking on Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, he said, it accentuates

human dignity, human value and internal happiness, attaching importance to the realization of the full potential of its human capital.

South Asia is one of the worst offenders in the crime of discrimination, exploitation and violence against women. He noted that feminized poverty, impoverishment of women, under-valuation of their labour and increased work burdens are key features, which mark the region .A strengthened collective resolve, which included governments, donor agencies and civil society, is needed to address the continuing discrimination against women and to close the gap between rhetoric and reality.

He stressed the need to focus on common threads, on a regional approach, and the use of regional mechanisms. These promoted cooperation among countries, particularly on issues with cross border ramifications, such as trafficking or women working abroad. Advocating positive action by governments in the form of pro-women legislation, allocation of resources, access to credit and good governance, he impressed the need for coordination and convergence of various gender-related programmes. Keeping in mind the processes of globalization and global transformations in the world economy, which influence the parameters of social development, he noted that the challenge is on how best to manage these threats and processes. Ways need to be found wherein benefits are enhanced and negative effects on people, particularly women, mitigated.

To ensure justice and equality, laws need to be enacted and resources provided to mainstream gender in development policies and plans. “In the not too distant future, I hope we will hear more and more of the feminization of politics, commerce and governance.....the success of the agenda for equality and justice adopted at Beijing and processed in such a fora, rests not in words, but in resources, implementation, enforcement, integration, accountability and above all, political will,” he concluded.

H.E. Ms. Aneesa Ahmed, Minister of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security in the Maldives, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing profound appreciation to His Excellency, the Prime Minister of the RGoB for hosting the meeting in collaboration with UNIFEM. “Your presence here reflects Bhutan's political will at the highest level, to carry the Beijing torch forward”, she said. Noting that the meeting would take direction from his speech, she acknowledged UNIFEM as being the catalyst in preserving the momentum of the Beijing Conference and the Beijing + Five in South Asia. Recapitulating the previous three reviews, and the foundation of cooperation that has been laid, she said it was urgent at this meeting to generate a new momentum and strengthen resolve to free South Asia of inequalities based on gender. Priorities need to be determined and governments encouraged to “invest more in women to reverse the trends of feminization of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment in the region.” She emphasized that investment in women leads to a multiplier effect throughout the family, work and social structures. Looking forward to the opportunity of sharing best practices and experiences, the meeting, she said, will be helpful in reinforcing commitment to working together in meeting the challenges ahead.



**PROGRESS OF WOMEN IN SOUTH ASIA  
MS. CHANDNI JOSHI, REGIONAL PROGRAMME DIRECTOR  
UNIFEM SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL OFFICE**



The meeting began with a presentation on the progress of women in South Asia by Ms. Chandni Joshi, Regional Programme Director UNIFEM.

Providing a

historical context and setting the backdrop of the meeting, Ms. Joshi traced women's advancement through the UN conferences held for women, from 1975 to the present. These included the First World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, the International Decade for Women (1975-1985), the Second World Conference on Women (1985) in Copenhagen, the third in Nairobi in 1985 and the fourth in Beijing in 1995. All of these had the common thread of Equity, Development and Peace running them. Listing the 12 Areas of Critical Concern, she brought focus on the Outcome Document of the Beijing + Five Review, held in 2000, and the emerging issues, which it highlighted, viz. Trafficking in Women and Children, HIV and AIDS and Globalization. She tracked some regional events and some international and global commitments made on gender equality in diverse international conferences, post Beijing + Five. She emphasized that world leaders agreed to make gender equality and women's empowerment central to all other goals of these conferences.

Spotlighting the Millennium Summit of September 2000, Ms. Joshi said that it emphasized the need for time bound targets, analyzed the role of governments, civil society, international organizations, bilateral and UN agencies, and identified resource allocation as a priority. 191 nations adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, which includes the 8 Millennium Development Goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators, all time bound to track progress. Goal 3, on promoting 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment', is cross-cutting and central to achieving the other seven goals, she observed.

Linking the international process of following up on the PFA with UNIFEM's regional process of biennial regional reviews, she informed that the meeting at Paro was the fourth such meeting. The previous reviews had been held in New Delhi, Kathmandu and Bandos Island in 1996, 1998 and 2000 respectively.

Ms. Joshi highlighted the fact that according to the Human Development Report of 2002, South Asia's Gender Development Index (GDI) of 0.535 is 99 points lower than

the average of developing countries. Analyzing the 12 critical areas of the BPFA, she identified some of the achievements/pride pointers, as well as the gaps and challenges, which are presented below.

12 Critical Areas of the BPFA	Pride Pointers	Gaps/Challenges
Women and the Economy	New employment & trade opportunities, increased access to credit, better recording of FWPR in the Census, evolution of networking mechanisms amongst female informal sector workers, development of new alternative modules to strengthen women's economic and social security	Negative impact of globalization, income poverty/casualization of labour/unregulated conditions, invisibility of women's work and contribution to the national economy, Care Economy not recognized/accounted for, limited access to productive resources, increased vulnerability of women to trafficking and the risk of HIV/AIDS due to prevailing socio-economic conditions, stereotypical gender biased parameters restricting women's work (glass ceiling); & lack of economic literacy
Women and Governance	Affirmative action has led to millions of women in local governance; Sustained advocacy for women's representation in Parliament and in key public/private bodies; several indicators for survival, security and autonomy as well as gender analysis of budget being used increasingly	Glass ceiling for advancement of women to senior decision-making positions; limited representation of women in political bodies; continued invisibility of women leaders at all levels of decision-making; resistance of mainstream political parties to make space for women.

Women and Human Rights	CEDAW being used as an overarching framework for substantive equality; increase in gender responsive judgments using CEDAW; greater visibility & dialogue on VAW, HIV/AIDS & anti-trafficking; new legislations to address different forms of violence domestic violence, trafficking, rape, acid throwing, female foeticide; increased work on masculinities and male responsibilities	Slow compliance with human rights standards; inadequate human rights education & gender sensitization; lack of legal awareness & legal literacy; prolonged judicial process and low conviction rates; VAW still considered a private matter or a social problem unlike other crimes; crime against women continue to rise
Trafficking in Women and Girls	Signing of SAARC Convention on Trafficking by all Governments; Ratification of the Convention in progress; National Plans of Action to combat trafficking in place in most countries; Situational analysis of the issue underway; Review of relevant laws using the 3 "P" approach Prevention, Protection and Prosecution in progress.	Cross border collaboration; Setting minimum standards; Issues related to prevention, rescue & rehabilitation using a rights based approach needed

Education & Health Women	Increase in literacy levels and narrowing of gender gap Reduction in maternal and child mortality and morbidity	Gender stereotypical educational curriculum and structures persists; Focus primarily on women's reproductive role, rather than a life-cycle approach to women's health Resource allocations to social sectors grossly inadequate
Women and Peace	Governments, civil society & women's groups playing active role in promoting & building peace processes and peace constituencies Greater awareness of the impact of armed conflict on women & children	Women & children only looked as victims of war & conflict, not as builders Inclusion of women's perspectives in peace making, peace building, rehabilitation, resettlement & reconstruction
Women and Media	Increased coverage of women's issues in the print and broadcast media Growing interest of mainstream media in gender	Negative portrayal of women as sex objects, consumers, at best as victims, often colluding in their own oppression Lack of broadcast norms to facilitate a more equitable & realistic representation of gender

Institutional Mechanisms	<p>National Policies &amp; Plans of Action for empowerment of women formulated</p> <p>Innovative schemes developed for women</p> <p>Gender analysis of budgets as tools for engendering planning, monitoring and audit initiated</p> <p>High level monitoring mechanisms set-up</p> <p>Statutory bodies set-up</p>	<p>More visibility, resources and strengthening of National women's machineries</p> <p>Institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in sectoral &amp; hard core ministries</p> <p>Collection &amp; use of improved sex-disaggregated data for planning, monitoring and tracking</p>
Women & the Environment		<p>As men move to urban areas, women are left behind to cope with fragile environments &amp; ecosystems that are already strained</p> <p>The impact of environmental destruction and degradation continues to overburden women</p> <p>Inadequate research documentation &amp; promotion of women's indigenous technical knowledge and coping mechanisms</p>

The Girl Child	<p>CRC ratified by all S.A. countries</p> <p>SAARC Decade of the Girl Child observed</p>	<p>Negative cultural attitudes towards girls perpetuate 'son preference'</p> <p>Juvenile sex ratio continues to plummet</p> <p>Exploitation of and violence against girls continues</p>
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Ms. Joshi recapitulated the main objectives of the Maldives Meeting in order to facilitate linkages and enable follow-through at Paro. The emphasis at Maldives had been on continuing regional sharing and learning, re-examining Beijing + 5 in the regional context, collectively analyzing BPFA and CEDAW and the growing pandemic of trafficking, while charting strategies for the future. She noted that the gaps and obstacles that persist in the region include the continuing feminization of poverty and the practices of denial, deprivation, discrimination and exclusion, propelled by socio-cultural impediments, socialization processes and mindsets. A declining sex ratio (74 million “missing women” in South Asia) marks the region and there is a growth of fundamentalism and communalism, human rights violations based on gender, increased militarization and insurgency and shrinking state accountability in the wake of globalization.

She presented a Score Card to give a quick glance at the progress made since Maldives, on issues identified as priority. It was observed that though some progress has been made with regard to trafficking, much more remains to be done, particularly with regard to initiating bi-lateral engagements between countries on possible areas of cooperation and in the training of immigration and border police. Progress was noted in the areas of re-examining the SAARC Convention on Trafficking with a rights based perspective and in setting up inter-ministerial anti-trafficking mechanisms.

The Score Card showed that information sharing needs to improve, particularly with regard to sharing best practices in the region. These included issues as diverse as information technology, micro-credit, and responding to the challenges of globalization and poverty eradication strategies. It was noted that better progress has been made on sharing information on laws relating to VAW and personal laws related to inheritance, property and marriage. Expertize on gender budgeting and gender auditing as a regional priority is developing, and data is being generated on the impact of globalization on women. With regard to political participation, progress was noted

only in the area of sharing experiences of affirmative action at the grassroots and national levels. National Women's Machineries are evolving from being project implementation mechanisms to catalysts in bringing about policy change and law reform.

The Score Card also demonstrated that expertise is being developed on the use of Concluding Comments to assist tracking progress on the implementation of CEDAW and BPPA by countries setting up high powered committees. With regard to institutional arrangements, UNIFEM is facilitating annual regional meetings of governments, NGOs and women's groups to track progress on the above instruments. She identified pride pointers for the region, which are listed below:

#### Pride Pointers of South Asia

##### Affirmative action by governments

- Increase in gender sensitive judgments
- Ratification of international conventions
- Gender continuing to be an integral part of the political discourse
- Collectivizing of women around economic and social issues
- Continued vibrancy of the women's movement & visibility of women's groups
- Many National Development Plans aim at achieving gender equality and gender justice
- Governments of several countries recognizing and spearheading campaigns on VAW
- Almost every country is reviewing discriminatory laws and introducing new legislation to combat VAW in its various forms
- Women increasingly overcoming the culture of silence/subordination
- Though slowly, the service delivery approach giving way to the human rights approach

Please see Annexure 3 for Ms. Chandni Joshi's Power Point presentation.