

ISLAMABAD DECLARATION: REVIEW AND FUTURE ACTION
CELEBRATING BEIJING PLUS TEN, 2005
Fifth South Asia Ministerial Conference 3-5 May 2005
Islamabad Pakistan

1. WE, Ministers, Secretaries and Senior Officers of the Governments and SAARC Secretariat, women's groups, NGOs, and researchers from – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan invited as an observer state, gathered at Islamabad on 3-5 May 2005 at the Fifth South Asia Ministerial Conference "Celebrating Beijing Plus Ten" jointly organized by the Government of Pakistan and UNIFEM South Asia Regional Office.
2. This conference acquires a special significance, since the year 2005, marks the tenth anniversary of the historic Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995 as well as the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration. We have all gathered in Pakistan after the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to celebrate a ten year journey of regional cooperation and learning, reviewing our progress and identifying current challenges and road map for future action.
3. While recalling and reaffirming the commitments for the realization of women's human rights and gender equality made in the Beijing Platform for Action 1995, the outcome document of the Beijing + 5 and the resolutions of B+10 review at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the substantive framework provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ratified by all countries of the region, Security Council resolution 1325 and all other relevant follow up documents adopted.
4. **We acknowledge developments in the following areas:**
 - a) The formulation of national policies and action plans to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women
 - b) Increased access to education for women and girls
 - c) Establishment of national machineries on women and institutional mechanisms towards effective realization of women's human rights
 - d) Drafting new legislations and/or amending laws especially on violence against women, sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children
 - e) Emerging jurisprudence on women's rights
 - f) Forging partnerships between Governments, women's groups, civil society and interest groups, elected representatives, the media and the private sector
 - g) Increase in women's access to economic opportunity, credit, and employment.
 - h) Enhanced affirmative actions towards increasing women's representation in political decision making at different levels
 - i) The adoption of policies on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care.
 - j) Adoption of regional instruments such as SAARC Social Charter and the SAARC Convention on Trafficking.
5. We recognize the **gaps and challenges** in implementation in the following areas:
 - a) Inadequate implementation of plans, policies and programmes relating to women
 - b) Lack of expeditious enactment of legislation and non-repeal and amendment of discriminatory laws
 - c) Inadequate progress in meeting the commitments under Article 9 of CEDAW on gender equality in citizenship laws.
 - d) The feminization of poverty and its further accentuation due to adverse effects of globalization
 - e) Inadequate progress in giving equal access to economic opportunity, land and livelihoods with dignity and personal security

- f) Continued prevalence of all forms of violence against women, including in conflict situations
- g) Inadequate commitment, awareness, measures and resources to combat violence against women.
- h) Inadequate attention to eliminating socio-cultural practices and mindsets that continue to discriminate and disadvantage women
- i) The increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women, particularly younger women.
- j) Lack of gender sensitive policies and interventions to combat communicable diseases, anaemia, TB, malaria etc.
- k) Inadequate progress in achieving women's equal representation in national legislatures
- l) Inadequate, and lack of gender sensitive reproductive and sexual health information and services and care to women
- m) Lack of sufficient male involvement and participation in promoting women's rights and substantive equality
- n) Continued lack of gender perspectives in macroeconomic policies, trade negotiations, national budgets and investment decisions
- o) Inadequate, reliable and relevant sex disaggregated data and gender analysis at all levels
- p) Insufficient resource allocations, authority status for national machineries on the advancement of women, and their marginalization
- q) The lack of regional cooperation and partnership initiatives to address problems of regional concerns such as trafficking in women and children, HIV/AIDS and promoting and protection of the rights of migrant workers
- r) The increasing vulnerability of women in marginalized groups
- s) The negative portrayal of women in the media.
- t) Inadequate initiatives to address the needs and concerns of women in remote areas and in disadvantaged communities.
- u) Inadequate progress in meeting and monitoring time bound commitments

6. In light of the above, we agree to prioritize our efforts and actions on a two-year plan on the following areas:

- a) Violence against women
- b) Economic empowerment of women
- c) Political empowerment of women
- d) Disaster preparedness and management
- e) Health and Education

7. In pursuit of the above priorities we will:

a) Develop and strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender equity and equality

- i) Ensure sufficient resource allocations, authority and status for national machineries for women including women's ministries and national commissions.
- ii) Ensure that mainstream institutions integrate women's human rights and gender concerns into their policies and programmes, and establish appropriate gender management systems
- iii) Repeal/amend discriminatory laws against women and initiate integrated efforts to implement laws
- iv) Ensure gender analysis of budgets and identification of allocations and expenditures at all levels needed to support women's advancement
- v) Promote men's' and boys' participation in creating a gender just society
- vi) Enhance and encourage corporate social responsibility
- vii) Further strengthen partnerships with women's groups and civil society organizations,
- viii) Promote and strengthen gender sensitive media

- ix) Acknowledge and appreciate the positive contribution of the UNIFEM in sustaining and carrying forward the Beijing process and advocating women's rights in the region and lobby for sufficient resource allocations for the organization and appropriate status for it within the UN system.
- b) Ensure linkages between Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and MDGS as mutually complementary processes**
- i) Recommend to integrate the "Islamabad Declaration: Review and Future Action" at appropriate multilateral forums and through these emphasize integration of gender perspectives in the high level plenary meeting to review the Millennium Declaration and Goals
 - ii) Recommend that CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action are integrated into national indicators and all other processes, and the medium term development framework (MTDF) to monitor achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

8. Eliminate violence against women (VAW) and girls

- a) Ensure that international commitments under CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the Beijing + 5 meeting are fulfilled in regard to elimination of violence against women.
- b) Prioritize the following:
 - i) Law and administrative reforms and actions to address violence against women, through health and other relevant initiatives
 - ii) Ratification of the SAARC Convention on Trafficking by all member countries.
 - iii) Use existing research in law reforms, policy formulation and programmes and encourage further research.
 - iv) Reform of the criminal justice system to make it more responsive to violence against women and sensitization of the judiciary, the administrative and law enforcement machinery particularly the police and health professionals to violence against women.
 - v) Consider ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW
- c) Promote concrete actions - safety net, support systems and leadership development to address the reality of violence in women's lives which exposes which inter alia women to HIV/AIDS
- d) Promote and strengthen gender sensitive community based interventions to address VAW
- e) Check negative forces and strengthen civil society to promote zero tolerance against VAW

9. Economic Empowerment of Women

- a) Provide adequate infrastructure to support women's economic opportunity, independence and livelihood that ensures dignity and personal security
- b) Provide and strengthen adequate social security systems.
- c) Ensure that women's contribution is visible in the national accounting system
- d) Protect the rights of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors and home-based work.
- e) Support women's right to own property and land, to inheritance, to equal access to credit, to be fully employed and to receive equal remuneration for work.
- f) Ensure the participation and voice of women in the formulation of macro-and micro-economic policies
- g) Address the need to promote shared responsibility in care-giving roles in the family and prevent women from being overburdened by multiple tasks and responsibilities.

- h) Support and facilitate processes to engender global and regional trade agreements and treaties

10. Political empowerment of women

- a) Secure political will of the States, political parties and other actors along with mechanisms for implementation of gender sensitive electoral codes and legislation for affirmative actions for women in the legislatures and to prevent any reversal or dilution of affirmative actions already taken.
- b) Work towards ensuring that women are directly rather than indirectly elected.
- c) Create an enabling environment to allow women legislators to participate in and contribute to the deliberations and decisions of the elected bodies of which they are members
- d) Ensure greater representation of women as office bearers and candidates.
- e) Ensure gender analysis of budgets and identification of allocations and expenditures at all levels needed to support women's advancement in the political arena

11. Emergency situations and disaster preparedness

- a) Ensure women are at the center of the rescue, relief and recovery efforts, and at all levels of decision making and planning in all types of natural disasters and conflict situations
- b) Support and promote regional women's networks and ensure that the needs of women and realities of women's lives are reflected in national policies and actions through the phases of relief and recovery and post conflict reconstruction
- c) Work towards capacity building of women and to ensure appropriate allocation of resources to deal with emergency situations.

12. Concrete Immediate Actions

- a) Propose that in the next two years the SAARC gender database housed at the SAARC Secretariat is organized, resourced and equipped to address the full range of challenges on sex disaggregated data and is able to share best practices from the region on gender equality
- b) Incorporate SAARC and country level indicators for the MDGs that reflect commitments made under Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW.
- c) Agree to meet, discuss and review progress on the Islamabad Declaration: Review and Future Action at the annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women with the assistance of UNIFEM.
- d) Agree to hold six monthly meetings of secretaries of national machineries of the member states and to address the issues of trafficking of women and children and review of the "Islamabad Declaration: Review and Future Action" to be sponsored by the UNIFEM.
- e) Agree that civil society groups of the region will participate in the public hearings being organized by the UNSG on MDGs to give their inputs in the formulation and expansion of indicators relating to MDGs.
- f) Each government will develop a plan based on this document with time bound goals and targets within the two year frame and shared it within the region
- g) A website to be created to share information.

5 May 2005