

## **MALDIVES FORWARD MOVING STRATEGIES**

We, Ministers, Secretaries and senior officers of the governments, NGOs, women's groups from the SAARC Countries gathered at Maldives on 26-27 September 2000, at the Third Beijing Biennial Regional Ministerial Meeting jointly organized by UNIFEM, South Asia Regional Office and the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security, Government of Maldives.

The objective of this meeting was to continue the process of regional sharing and learning and to take stock of insights and observations presented at the United Nations Special Session on Beijing plus Five and re-examine the feasibility of the recommended actions within the regional context. Through a process of frank and collective analysis of the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and the growing menace of Trafficking within the region, we arrived at the following consensus about critical gaps and strategies that have characterized our region in the years since the Beijing Conference:

### **I. In the five years since the Beijing Conference, we have witnessed considerable development in the following areas:**

- \* Drawing up of national plans of action and national policy instruments to implement the PFA
- \* Moving towards legal reforms and strengthening of laws
- \* Expansion of institutional mechanisms for securing gender equality and equity
- \* Increased commitment and development of plan of actions to combat gender-based violence and trafficking of women and children
- \* Intensification of efforts to make national statistical systems sex-disaggregated and reflective of women's contribution
- \* Increased NGO activism, and networking, and mobilization of the women's Movement around key gender concerns
- \* Increasing consensus in favour of and efforts at affirmative action to secure greater representation of women at local levels

### **II. In spite of such achievements there are serious challenges in almost all our countries with respect to the realization of the Beijing vision and commitments:**

- \* Lack of transparent and accountable governance
- \* Negative impact of structural adjustment programmes and globalization on women
- \* Increased incidence of gender-based violence, acid throwing, incest, sexual abuse and sexual harassment, trafficking of women and children
- \* Continuing invisibility of women in higher levels of governance, political leadership and civil service and the continuing resistance of mainstream political parties to provide space for women
- \* Marginalization of the Women's Ministries: gender continuing to be seen as a "women's issue" and as responsibility of Women's Affairs Ministries only
- \* Insufficient human, technical and financial resources and political will to implement national plans of action and for addressing gender concerns in particular
- \* Inadequate sex disaggregated data and analysis

- \* The serious lack of co-ordination and horizontal linkages among different agencies, both government and non-government, working in the area of gender
- \* Continuing gender gaps in education and health
- \* Non-responsiveness of media towards gender issues
- \* Lack of gender perspectives in macro economic policies and national budgets and investment decisions

**III In the light of the above analysis of achievements, shortfalls and challenges, we agree to direct our efforts in the coming years towards the following priority concerns:**

**Trafficking**

- \* Re-examine the SAARC Convention on Trafficking with a view to expand the definition of trafficking and give the Convention a rights-based perspective
- \* Disseminate widely changes suggested by the process supported by UNIFEM last year and lobby at national and regional levels for acceptance of the changes
- \* Initiate bilateral engagements between countries on possible areas of cooperation
- \* Initiate regional dialogue and exchange between governments (all concerned parts of government including enforcement machinery etc), NGOs and other stakeholders. In this connection His Majesty's Government of Nepal has agreed to host the first regional meeting in the first quarter of 2001.
- \* Set up inter ministerial anti trafficking mechanisms/cells/secretariat
- \* Train immigration and border police etc

**Information sharing**

- \* Share best practices from the region on advances in information technology, micro-credit etc on an ongoing basis: in terms of the extent to which they are furthering women's rights
- \* Share information on
  - Laws relating to VAW, personal laws, inheritance and property laws and marriage laws
  - The challenges of globalization and poverty eradication strategies/programmes in different countries

**Monitoring of progress on the implementation of CEDAW and PFA**

- \* Pursue the development of expertise on the use of concluding comments to assist monitoring

**Gender Budget and Gender Audit**

- \* Development of expertise in this area will be a regional priority.

**Creating monitoring mechanisms within countries**

- \* Set up a high powered monitoring committee in each country to review the progress of implementation of CEDAW and the PFA

### **Globalization**

Carry out studies to assess the positive and negative impact of globalization on women and the availability of guarantees for economic and social rights including social security for women in formal and informal sectors of employment focussing on:

- Women and Poverty
- Women and the economy and women's economic rights

### **Political Participation**

- \* Share experiences of affirmative action at the grassroots levels and the national level
- \* Look at electoral systems that benefit women
- \* Create a ten-point manifesto for women representing a shared political agenda

### **National Women's Machinery**

\* Work towards the transformation of the national women's ministries/departments from project implementation mechanisms to catalysts that bring about policy changes and law reforms.

### **Institutional arrangements**

- \* To actualize the priorities participants agreed on setting up an institutional mechanism. This involves an annual regional meeting of Minister/ Secretaries of Women's Affairs Ministries, NGOs and women's groups to monitor progress on the implementation of CEDAW and the PFA using the above priority framework. The first annual regional meetings will take place in September 2001. The meeting will focus on :
  - Developing indicators for measuring implementation of CEDAW and PFA(Draft will be developed in advance)
  - Transforming national women's machineries: every country will in advance carry out detailed studies on the working of their machineries
  - Preventing trafficking of women and girls

UNIFEM is requested to support and facilitate the entire process including the priorities and the institutional framework.

**The meeting gave a call for observing the year 2001 as the international year for the empowerment of women.**