



7th South Asia Regional Ministerial
Conference
Commemorating Beijing
- *Delivering for Women in South Asia* -
Dhaka, Bangladesh
3-5 October 2010



Organized by:

Ministry of Women & Children's Affairs
Government of Bangladesh

UNIFEM
(part of UN Women)

INFORMATION NOTE – 5 October 2010

Seventh South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference, “Commemorating Beijing”
3 – 5 October 2010
Dhaka, Bangladesh

- ❖ The Seventh South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference, “Commemorating Beijing” was co-hosted by the Government of Bangladesh and UNIFEM.
- ❖ The Honourable Prime Minister of the Peoples’ Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina was the Chief Guest and inaugurated the Conference on 3 October 2010.
- ❖ The Honourable Prime Minister called for concerted efforts among South Asia countries to address the challenges of establishing women’s rights in all spheres. Women and Child trafficking she said is a major problem in South Asia. She called for a united stand to combat it. She stressed on the importance of proper implementation of laws on women’s rights in SAARC countries. “Every country has its own laws to establish women’s rights. What we need is the law’s proper implementation”, she said. “Prime Minister, deputy leader of the house, leader of the opposition and five ministers of the Government are women. This proves how much Bangladesh has advanced in the path of women empowerment”, the Prime Minister said
- ❖ In her remarks, as Special Guest at the inaugural ceremony of the 3 day conference Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury, Honourable State Minister for Women and Child Affairs said this is a time to rejoice and celebrate as it is the 15th anniversary of Beijing. She said it is necessary to create linkages between the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and the MDGs – to all three of which Bangladesh is signatory. She said that there is increased economic participation in the non-formal sector; increased gender parity in school enrollment and that gender responsive budgeting is already in place. A widow allowance has been introduced for vulnerable groups and the legislative framework is in place to combat violence against women, with a civil protection law for domestic violence already approved by cabinet. The economic recession has a differential impact on women and as women play a

major role as managers of food security, they are more vulnerable to climate change, food security and natural disasters.

- ❖ **Remarks were made by Mr. Tariq-ul-Islam, Secretary-in-Charge, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Government of Bangladesh.** He said that the Government of Bangladesh is proud to host this meeting with UNIFEM. He said that the Prime Minister of Bangladesh is very proactive on women's empowerment. Good governance he said can be ensured through institutional mechanisms.
- ❖ In her welcome remarks, **Ms. Anne. F. Stenhammer, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM South Asia** said that the meeting provides an opportunity not only to take stock but also to move from conceptual understanding to systemic change. The macro-environment has changed since Beijing and needs to be looked at with fresh eyes. She stressed the importance of changing attitudes and mindsets as the key for sustainable and lasting change. The HIV/AIDS epidemic and the continued conflict in the South Asia region is a factor that is posing new challenges to women's lives, she said. The conference is focusing on two critical challenges to gender equality in the region – economic security and rights of women and gender-based violence. The aim is to arrive at a consensus document that is specific, concrete and doable.
- ❖ **The Conference drew up and adopted a Resolution** on gender-based violence and economic security and rights, providing guiding principles of work for the next two years.
- ❖ The participating delegates are from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.** Ministers and Secretaries in charge of Women's Development are leading the delegations. Other members of delegation include senior officers of governments of the region, representatives of women's organizations and gender experts.

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